

An Introduction to *The Auction: A Modern Novel*

Little critical attention has been paid to *The Auction: A Modern Novel* and that which has is minimal. It is listed in several sources that compile fiction published in the eighteenth-century, but little is said of it other than basic details such as the title and the year of publication. Some sources attribute the text to A. Woodfin, while others, such as Block, fail to do this despite identifying her with others of her novels.¹ The *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* gives a brief summary of the novel, but it is incorrect.² That so little and disparate coverage of this novel exists demonstrates how much further research needs to be undertaken to gain significant insight into this marginalised novel.

Synopsis

The novel begins with a description of Sir William, a country gentleman who prioritises hunting over all else. He marries but dislikes his wife for bearing daughters only (all but one, Fanny, die in infancy). After her death he remarries and has a male heir, as well as another daughter. The daughters are depicted as opposites; Fanny is beautiful, modest and virtuous, but underappreciated by the family, while Charlotte, adored by her mother, is plain, rude and domineering. Whilst they are growing up a wise Aunt, Mrs. Lockhart, visits and tells the history of her misfortunes, which includes the auction of the title.

Charlotte's mother and her sister plan to marry Charlotte to her cousin, with whom Fanny is secretly in love. Fanny's unhappiness provokes her to run away to London, where she faces many trials to her virtue from libertines. Realisation that she is missing prompts the cousin, Mr. Worthy, to confess that he loves her, and, alongside the death of his son, prompts her father to repent his behaviour. Both endeavour, with Mrs. Lockhart and others including Worthy's servant Ned, to find her in London. While Fanny is tested several subplots narrating 'histories' of women who are 'ruined', including Charlotte, Miss Brown and Kitty, parallel her story. She is eventually found and marries Mr. Worthy, later inheriting her father's estate.

¹ Andrew Block, *The English Novel 1740-1850: A Catalogue Including Prose Romances, Short Stories and Translation of Foreign Fiction*, (Dawsons, 1961)

² F.W. Bateson, *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature. Volume II: 1600-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.1000

Characters who have acted virtuously are rewarded with matrimony and money. Those who have been ruined or ruiners die, or, if they repent, live the rest of their lives in humbled seclusion.

The Author

The Auction: A Modern Novel (1760) was published anonymously, and was only attributed to A. Woodfin on the title page of her later 1764 novel *The Discovery: Or, Memoirs of Miss Marianne Middleton*, 'By Mrs. Woodfin, Author of *Harriot Watson* and *The Auction, A Modern Novel*'.³ Little is known about Woodfin, not even, as the *Orlando Project* entry notes, her date of birth.⁴ Nevertheless, if we believe Woodfin's claim that she was 'in her sixtieth year' when writing the 'Advertisement' to *The Discovery* it is possible to surmise that she was born between 1703 and 1704.⁵ This means that her first known published novel, *Northern Memoirs: Or, the History of a Scotch Family* (1756) was not published until she was in her early fifties, and that the other four novels attributed to her were all published during this decade of her life, over an eight-year time span. A later novel, *The History of Eliza Musgrove* (1769) was also attributed to her, although there is doubt over this as Phebe Gibbes claimed authorship in 1784.⁶

It is interesting that all of her known literary output occurred within just these eight years of her life, although so little is known about her that it is nearly impossible to determine the reasons for this. One could speculate, given the frequent claims of eighteenth-century female novelists that they write only because their financial position leaves them with no other choice, that she experienced financial difficulties in these years. Alternatively, she may have been cautious about publishing her work earlier in the century before she felt confident that the concept of female writers had become more acceptable to society. However the reasons need not be gender related; perhaps she just did not have positive response from publishers, or simply did not write at all, before this period of her life.

³ A. Woodfin, *The Discovery: or, The Memoirs of Miss Marianne Middleton*, (London: Lowndes, 1764), title page. All future references refer to this edition.

⁴ Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, 'A. Woodfin entry: Life', in *The Orlando Project* <<http://urlPass.com/b3qq>> [accessed 15/12/2010]

⁵ *The Discovery*, p.iv

⁶ *Orlando Project*, 'A. Woodfin entry: Writing'

The Orlando Project claims that Woodfin lived in London all her life.⁷ The reference in a novel to the ‘little school’ she claims to have run in ‘Bullen Court , off the Strand’, combined with the convenience of being close to London booksellers as a writer, supports this notion.⁸

The Publisher

‘A receipt for the five guineas and five guineas in books paid by Lowndes in return for all the rights to her latest novel,’ *The Discovery*, is, according to Raven ‘one of the very few surviving records to mention Mrs. Woodfin.’⁹ Unfortunately no like record survives for *The Auction*, published by Lowndes four years earlier, but it seems reasonable to assume that Woodfin would have been offered a similar amount. Thomas Lowndes is one of the better-documented publishers of his time. Although he does not have a personal entry in the ODNB, he and his son are mentioned in the entry for his grandson as ‘noted dramatic publishers’.¹⁰ Lowndes is included in *The British Book Trade Index* which lists his trading dates as 1749-1784 and his location as Fleet Street, London.¹¹ He was therefore situated in the centre of traditional book trading London as a bookseller, printer and owner of a circulating library, indicating that he was a prominent figure in the London literary scene.¹² His literary reputation must have grown through his involvement in the publication of the highly popular *Evelina* and his supposed delineation ‘under the name “Briggs”’ Francis Burney’s later novel *Cecilia*.¹³

It is possible that Lowndes’ reputation has survived due to the recognition he received during his career, but it could also be a consequence of ‘modern attention’ being paid only to ‘the publication of the great works of the century’; Lowndes and Cadell, Raven argues, are ‘remembered for their publication of Smith, Gibbon and Hume’.¹⁴ Whatever the case, it remains true that *The Auction* was first made available by a publisher who was both fairly prominent and successful. This should have secured the novel a relatively respectful entrance into the eighteenth-century literary marketplace.

⁷ *Orlando Project*, ‘A. Woodfin entry: Life’

⁸ *Orlando Project*, ‘A. Woodfin entry: Life’

⁹ James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.59. All future citations refer to this edition.

¹⁰ Robin Myers, ‘Lowndes, William Thomas, bap.1793, d.1843, bibliographer’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17100?docPos=2>> [accessed 15/12/2010]

¹¹ ‘Lowndes, Thomas’, in *The British Book Trade Index* <<http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk/Details.htm?TraderID=43980>> [accessed 15/12/2010]

¹² *The British Book Trade Index*

¹³ C. Timperley, *Dictionary of Printers and Printing*, (London: H. Johnson, 1839), p.753

¹⁴ Raven, p.50

The Physical Book

The physical appearance of the book certainly suggests that it was a fairly respectable production. It is carefully printed with only one small error in volume two where two consecutive chapters are titled 'chapter VI'. The printer ornaments throughout the book, though an inexpensive method of decoration, still show that a level of care has been taken over the book's appearance; furthermore the printer has also made an effort to vary the ornaments rather than to repeat the same one at each chapter head. The text is fitted neatly onto the page with reasonable margin space surrounding it, indicating that the publisher did not feel the need to reduce costs by cramming as much print onto each page as possible. Although the book is obviously not of the highest quality available, it has a neat and acceptable appearance that demonstrates that time and care were taken over printing it.

It is harder to assess the level of respect the book received from individual readers. The copy of the book at Chawton House Library is in good condition; it was bound by its owner in calf skin with gold decoration on the edge of the inner spine, and bears the coat of arms of 'John Spencer, Esq.' It is however difficult to say whether these are signs that the book was owned with pride, or signs that the owner wanted to physically disguise the book as respectable enough to fit in the library of a distinguished person even if the text itself was not considered so. This, combined with lack of substantial evidence, has been one of the problems encountered when attempting to gauge how eighteenth-century readers responded to *The Auction*.

Reception of the Book In the Eighteenth-Century Marketplace

The publication date printed on the first edition of *The Auction: A Modern Novel* is 1760, but reviews of the novel dated 1759 suggest that the popular technique of printing the date of the following year in an attempt to make material seem more current was employed. This attempt to make the novel seem recent corresponds with its self-categorisation as '*A Modern Novel*'. Whether this label specifies that the novel intends to participate in an established, profitable and critically respected genre of 'modern novels' predating its own existence or whether it claims to establish an entirely new genre is difficult to ascertain. Regardless, it is still an unusual title; a search of the ECCO database found no other eighteenth-century novels using this phrase to classify their novel in their title. Perhaps this distinguishing feature was an

attempt to draw the attention of eighteenth-century readers and persuade them to purchase the novel.

Evidence suggests that the novel was not totally overlooked following its initial publication; a pirated copy was printed the same year in Dublin by James Potts,¹⁵ suggesting some degree of immediate success, and a second edition published in 1770 in London again by Thomas Lowndes indicates that the novel had done well enough in the long-term to justify a reprint.¹⁶ Records show that *The Auction: A Modern Novel* existed in the literary marketplace until the end of the eighteenth century; it continued to be advertised in works published by Lowndes and Potts throughout the seventeen-sixties, and is included in the lists of works sold by Lowndes' son William Lowndes as late as 1790, at which point he was selling it for 6s,¹⁷ and 1794, at which point it was being sold for 3s.¹⁸ There is also evidence that the novel's availability was not restricted solely to London; a list of books sold by Thomas Wilson and Son in York published in 1777 includes it for 3s.¹⁹

Although the evidence suggests the novel was available to readers over a considerable range of time and reasonable distribution, it is difficult to use this information to assess the extent to which the reading public of the mid to late-eighteenth-century actually read this book. The halving of the price from the standard 6s to 3s between 1790 and 1794 could suggest that William Lowndes felt forced to lower the price because the book was not selling for the required 6s; whether this indicates a decline in interest in *The Auction* after 1790, or that the novel had never sold well and William Lowndes at this point decided to attempt to sell it for less, is perhaps indeterminable. However the novel must have been selling fairly well at least up until 1770 in order for Lowndes to reprint it, and so the number of copies sold probably began to drop after this point.

¹⁵ A. Woodfin, *The Auction: A Modern Novel*, (Dublin: James Potts, 1760), in *Early English Collections Online* <<http://urlPass.com/b3qs>> [accessed 15/12/2010]

¹⁶ A. Woodfin, *The Auction: A Modern Novel*, (London: Lowndes, 1770), in *ECCO* <<http://urlPass.com/b3qr>> [accessed 15/12/2010]. All future citations refer to this edition.

¹⁷ W. Lowndes, *A Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, Oratorios and Plays; printed and sold by W. Lowndes, No.77 Fleet-Street, London*, (London: W. Lowndes, 1790), p.4

¹⁸ W. Lowndes, *A Catalogue of Books for the Year 1794 Comprising an Assortment of the Most Useful Articles in Every Branch of Literature...*, (London: W. Lowndes, 1794), p.98

¹⁹ Thomas Wilson and Son, *A catalogue of several valuable libraries and collections of books lately purchased...*, (York: Thomas Wilson and Son, 1777), p.110

Although these figures might reveal something about the extent to which the novel was purchased, they do not necessarily reveal to what extent it was actually read, since an individual could buy a copy but never read it. Some clues can be gleaned by examining copies of the texts owned by eighteenth-century readers; the copy of *The Auction* at Chawton House, for example has crease marks in the top right hand corners of some pages, suggesting that a reader folded the corners down to mark their place while reading, and there is a page torn from the back. The second volume is in neater condition, with no such markings; perhaps this particular reader was not interested enough to finish the entire novel. Of course this is just the evidence of one individual's engagement with the novel, and in order to obtain a more general impression of the extent to which eighteenth-century readers engaged with the text further examination of other surviving copies would be needed.

Contemporary Reviews

The Auction: A Modern Novel received few reviews, and those it did receive were mostly unflattering. The *Critical Review* cannot number it 'among the first-rate novels we have seen'²⁰ and similarly the *British Magazine* classifies it as a 'second-rate performance'.²¹ Then, as now, critics wrote *The Auction* out of the history of 'first-rate' novels.

The Critical Review's suggestion that the novel would be more appropriately titled 'The Hackney Coach' implies that the critic found the novel out-dated and imitative rather than 'modern' or 'novel'.²² Although the reviewer grudgingly writes that the novel is 'not altogether without merit', the praise he does give is undermined; there are only 'a few' scenes 'well worked up' and just 'some tolerable painting'.²³ All three reviews seem to share this opinion that the story and characters deserve 'some' credit; *The Monthly* finds the story 'frequently interesting' and its characters 'not ill-supported',²⁴ and *The British Magazine* concludes that it contains 'many interesting scenes, and some character'.²⁵ It is the 'poor' style and narrative 'destitute of humour or sentiment' to which *The Monthly Review* objects

²⁰ 'Art.V. The Auction: A Modern Novel.', *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*: 8, (1759: December), p.452-458, p.452

²¹ 'The Auction: A modern Novel.', *British Magazine, or, Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies*: 1, (1760: January), p.40

²² *Critical Review*, p.452

²³ *Critical Review*, p.452

²⁴ 'Art. 4. *The Auction: A modern Novel.*', *Monthly Review*: 21, (1759: December), p.573

²⁵ *British Magazine*, p.40

and *The Critical Review*'s comparison of the novel to a 'hackney coach' suggests a similar disdain for the writing style.²⁶

The Auction is treated leniently, however, for the same reason that many writers who described their own 'poor' writing style justified their work; *The British Magazine* recommends it to the public on account that 'the moral has the tendency to promote humanity and virtue' and *The Critical Review* commends its 'plan' to 'display the trials and triumphs of virtue, in opposition to the disasters and mortifications which attend the practice of libertinism and vice.' The didactic intentions of *The Auction* made its lack of stylistic 'merit' more acceptable, and justified its place on readers' shelves.

The Critical Review and *The Monthly Review* first attack *The Auction* on the basis of the inappropriateness of the title for a work that only offers a 'paultry description' of an auction 'en passant'.²⁷ Modern readers of *The Auction* may have a similar reaction; why is the title derived from an event that has little significance to the overall plot, instead playing only a small role in a subplot? While *The Critical Review* merely condemns the novel for this choice, *The Monthly Review* offers an interesting explanation. 'It has indeed been hinted to us,' the reviewer writes, 'that the Author is indebted, for this part of the work, to the pen of a writer eminent in the literary world'.²⁸ Unfortunately the reviewer gives no hints as to who this 'eminent' writer might be, and while it could be argued that the style of this section 'bear(s) a different stamp' to the 'rest of the performance', this is also explicable as an adjustment in tone to signal the shift from third person narrative to the first person dialogue of Mrs. Lockhart.²⁹ Further research to prove or disprove this reviewer's claim would be difficult but could improve understanding of why such emphasis is given to this comparatively insignificant event, as well as potentially revealing more about the Woodfin's literary connections and influences.

The Novel and Modern Criticism

Despite Watt's theory of the continual 'rise' of the novel throughout the eighteenth-century, recent critics such as Thomas Keymer have described a 'fall' in the trade throughout the

²⁶ *Critical Review*, p.452

²⁷ *Critical Review*, p.452

²⁸ *Monthly Review*, p.573

²⁹ *Monthly Review*, p.573

1750s, arguing that there is ‘hard statistical evidence that the output of fiction did indeed suffer a significant dip in the later 1750s’.³⁰ According to Keymer, *The Auction* emerges at a time when many contemporary literary figures like Millar felt that ‘the Demand for that Species of Writing (was) over’.³¹ The novel was perceived by critics as having ‘sunk into formulaic mass production or cynical commodification’, leading to ‘self-conscious rejections of prior convention’ by ‘all but the period’s dullest novelists’.³² It would be easy to dismiss *The Auction* as one of the period’s ‘dullest’ novels that regurgitated the formulas of this dying genre rather than engaging in ‘self-conscious rejections of prior conventions’. However, I feel that the novel engages with these self-conscious rejections in several ways that make it important to the development of new models for the novel. I will discuss two of these below; firstly, its innovative use of epigraphs and secondly its engagement with models of female writing.

Epigraphs

Janine Barchas has described the 1750s as a period in which the novel ‘briefly trials’ the use of epigraphs.³³ *The Auction*, published in 1760 when this trend, according to Barchas and Genette, was beginning to fade, may seem out-dated rather than innovative on this account. Barchas writes that such ‘B-grade novels’ generally took their epigraphs from drama and notes that favourite writers to use included Shakespeare, Dryden and Pope.³⁴ In *The Auction*, as expected from this kind of ‘B-grade’ novel, Dryden, Shakespeare and Pope rank amongst the top four most quoted writers and in textbook accordance with Barchas’ claims, the vast majority of epigraphs are lifted from plays.

What is unusual is the placement of epigraphs at the beginnings of each chapter. Genette claims that the gothic novel is the ‘the channel by which epigraphs in large numbers get into the prose machine’³⁵ and Barchas too argues that these epigraphs move into the central text in the gothic and historical novels of late-century fiction, citing Radcliffe, Lewis and Scott as

³⁰ Thomas Keymer, *Sterne, the Moderns, and the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.56. All future citations refer to this edition.

³¹ Keymer, p.57

³² Keymer, p.54-55

³³ Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture and the Eighteenth-century Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.86. All future citations refer to this edition.

³⁴ Barchas, p.89

³⁵ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.146. All future citations refer to this edition.

chief innovators in this trend.³⁶ *The Auction* is in this respect very anachronistic and is potentially one of the earliest English novels to use epigraphs this way.

It is possible that Woodfin's motive for bringing epigraphs into the central text was economic; they increase the physical volume of the novel, justifying a higher price. Genette suggests that the 'sense of backing' achieved by the literary authority epigraphs imply is a 'less costly' replacement for the backing of a preface or dedication; perhaps epigraphs appeared to Woodfin, or Lowndes, as the easiest means through which to give the novel validity.³⁷ Woodfin's replacement of a dedication with epigraphs could be understood as motivated by more than just material concerns. In the only dedication she wrote she expressed her distaste for dedications and her reluctance to write one, chiefly it seems to avoid either dishonest flattery or 'the Danger of scandal'.³⁸ By dedicating her work to Pythagoras, she avoids having to engage with a specific living superior, while still validating her novel through a superior figure. Perhaps the use of epigraphs in *The Auction* are intended for a similar end; by implicating a largely male literary canon in her epigraphs (with only the interesting exception of Eliza Haywood in chapter twelve of volume twelve) Woodfin protects her work under the acceptable patriarchal "patronage" of authors without having to rely on living aristocrats. The advantage is that these figures are renowned enough to literally speak for themselves in her epigraphs, and so Woodfin does not have to risk engaging in false flattery, or indeed risk using her own words at all, in order to raise the standard of her novel.

Reliance on the authority of literary figures through abundant epigraphs can be understood as a means through which Woodfin attempts to protect not only her own reputation, but that of her work. Barchas argues that epigraphs allowed authors to '(signal) with borrowed authority the *gravitas* of the novel's literary heritage'.³⁹ Woodfin's dramatically increased use of epigraphs could be read sceptically as padding out the text not only on a physical level, but also on a literary level; the epigraphs add words already credited with 'merit' to a novel that potentially lacks it, as well as a signalling the author's literary authority.

If this is the case, that authority would be severely undermined by the repetition of epigraphs. One conclusion is that Woodfin ran out of quotes to use, but I think this seems unlikely as the

³⁶ Barchas, p.89

³⁷ Genette, p.156

³⁸ *The Discovery*, p.iv

³⁹ Barchas, p.88

repetitions do not occur at random and instead seem to carry some structural logic. Epigraphs are the main way that mentions of ‘auction’ throughout the novel are linked. Chapter seven of volume one (which contains the main auction) has two epigraphs introducing it, lending it an air of increased importance. One of these epigraphs links directly back to the title epigraph, highlighting the relationship between the title and this chapter. The quotation from *Macbeth* before this chapter is later repeated before chapter four in volume two, in which Charlotte sees an auction. Epigraphs are being used innovatively in an attempt to structure and unify the text.

These epigraphs could be read as a formal replacement of chapter titles used by authors such as Fielding, and therefore more conventional than first assumed. Some of the epigraphs do seem to function solely as labels of what is to follow in the chapter; the epigraph for chapter three, ‘’Tis education forms the common mind;/ Just as the Twig is bent, the Tree’s inclin’d’, for example, is followed by an account of the education and upbringing of Sir William’s children.⁴⁰ However, other epigraphs do not function so descriptively and the fact alone that epigraphs draw attention to another text entirely inevitably brings a further layer of meaning not conveyed by descriptive chapter titles. Furthermore, occasionally epigraph meaning contradicts that of the chapter. The dramatic, sentimental epigraph for the first chapter, ‘I’m all over love:/ Nay, I am love: Love shot, and shot so fast,/He shot himself into my Breast at last’ is at odds with the simple, materialistic manner in which Sir William chooses his wife.⁴¹ Although this could be read as ironic juxtaposition, there are occasions where the subject matter of epigraph and chapter seem at the best loosely related. All the quotations in the novel, however, are connected by the theme of love and passion. Perhaps therefore their purpose is to carry this mood through the novel, rather than to set specific scenes.

Whatever the authorial intention, the consequence of chapter epigraphs is increased intertextuality that creates conscious engagement with the act of reading constantly throughout the text. These epigraphs, then, are potentially what makes this novel conscious of its structure and its genre, rather than a passive repetition.

⁴⁰ *The Auction* vol.I, p.13

⁴¹ *The Auction* vol.I, p.1

Feminisation

It is interesting to look at *The Auction* within the context of recent critical theories concerning the relationship between femininity, the novel and eighteenth-century society; the conflict between the 'new respectable image' of women as moral superiors with the power to civilise society the emerging female-centric dialogue created and the 'restricted subject matter' this ideology imposed is a tension apparent in *The Auction*.⁴²

Terry Eagleton and Nancy Armstrong have seen Richardson as 'a purveyor of femino-centric fictions' in which 'women's influence over men was perceived...as a component of modernity' leading to a 'feminisation of discourse'.⁴³ The Pamela-like female protagonist, virtuous and flawless, reforms the barbaric, unthinking male through her pure example. The influence of this *Pamela* formula upon *The Auction* can be seen, although it is complicated and perhaps weakened by a plot that is less focused and a narrative that is less united. Sir William, a barbaric male interested solely in hunting, repents and is transformed into a more 'feminised' character. His decisions are ruled by sentiment rather than materialistic concerns; he goes to London because of overwhelming 'Agonies' where earlier he married because he 'want(ed) a housekeeper'.⁴⁴ Domestic concerns, previously 'in the third place of Esteem' behind 'his Horses and Dogs', become the principal motivations for his actions.⁴⁵ It is Mrs Lockhart from whom he seeks advice and by whom he is morally guided; she 'preached up the Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness', 'reminded him of Heaven's Protection' and he must 'acknowledge(d) the Force of her Arguments' and 'promise' to behave in the manner she has recommended.⁴⁶

Much as the portrayal of women as a civilising force potentially elevates their place in society and the novel, the representation simultaneously disempowers the female character and narrator; the ideology must be maintained so that the female heroine is always the model of 'modesty, passivity (and) chastity'.⁴⁷ *The Auction* therefore faces the same problem that

⁴² Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction 1660-1800*, (London: Virago, 1989), p.3. All future citations refer to this edition.

⁴³ E.J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.2

⁴⁴ *The Auction* vol.I, p.12 and vol.I, p.4

⁴⁵ *The Auction* vol.I, p.5

⁴⁶ *The Auction* vol.II, p.24-25

⁴⁷ Todd, p.4

Katherine Rogers sees in the later fiction of Charlotte Smith; the heroine becomes 'flat' and so all the interest must be projected onto the plot.⁴⁸ *The Auction* cannot avoid the inevitable *Pamela* plot of 'female virtue, first in distress and then rewarded' which, by 1760, had grown predictable, and so the plot, like the heroine, becomes tedious.⁴⁹ Perhaps *The Auction* is a good example of how this constrictive model of writing could be held accountable for poor quality in a novel.

Yet it may be unfair to classify *The Auction* as a novel which follows this model without divergence. Its mimicry of *Pamela* in chapter eleven could be read not as an attempt to apply a successful model to the novel, but as a self-conscious acknowledgement of the inescapable model of the female novel into which the text was slipping. Moreover, the histories of the 'fallen' women who provide parallels to Fanny throughout should be examined more closely. On first appearance it appears that these women are deprived of a main narrative voice; their voice must instead be heard indirectly through 'histories' within a story. Interesting amongst these women however, is Kitty, whose sudden emergence towards the conclusion of both volumes is intriguing. The novel seems to drift into her history and it is allowed precedence as it ends the first volume, rather than material relating to Fanny. She succeeds in usurping narrative space until her account is abruptly cut off at the mention of Fanny; it is almost as though the writer, like Ned, runs away with Kitty's narrative, but upon being checked by a reminder of the ideal virtuous female must return to the mapped plotline of 'female virtue in distress, then rewarded.'

The Auction therefore, arguably like all novels, is not just a passive absorption of existing models of the novel; it is in many ways an active engagement with this dialogue, and as such is as important to gaining insight into eighteenth-century society and literature as other better-remembered novels from the period.

⁴⁸ Katherine Rogers, 'Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 11:1, (Autumn 1977), p.63-78, p.66.

⁴⁹ Todd, p.5

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Appendix One

Bibliographical Description

Author (and attribution as it appears on title page, or note of pseudonym or anonymity)	Mrs A. Woodfin No attribution on title page, anonymous
Title (as it appears on title page)	THE AUCTION: A Modern Novel
Imprint (Place of publication: publisher, year of publication as they appear on title page)	(London: Printed for T. Lownds, near the corner of Salisbury-court, Fleet-Street, MDCCLX)
Physical description (details relating to all copies, e.g. number of vols., number of pgs, size, price – sometimes shown on title page, quality of paper and printing, illustrations, etc.)	2 vols – 276p, 260p Printer ornaments at beginnings of chapters First letter of each chapter decorated Fairly wide margins – average Paper and printing average-good quality
Physical description (details relating only to this specific copy, e.g. binding & decoration, binding anomalies, annotations etc.)	Gold decoration on edge of inner spine and edge of binding Bound in calf skin Crease marks at top right hand corner of some of the pages Vol. 2 slightly less worn. Page of advertisements torn from the back of vol.1

<p>Provenance</p> <p>(e.g. bookplates, inscriptions)</p>	<p>Bookplate of ‘John Spencer, Esq.’ coat of arms</p>
<p>Details of advertisements</p> <p>(you can summarise if there is a long list e.g. genre, price range, a few characteristic or notable titles)</p>	<p>Long list of advertisements ranging from plays, operas and novels to ‘the art of angling and sea fishing’</p>
<p>Paratext</p> <p>(title page epigraph, subscription list, dedication, preface, introduction, etc. noted or summarised)</p>	<p>Epigraphs on title page: ‘You cheat the world/With florid Outside ‘til you meet Surprise;/ The Conscience, working inwards like a Mole,/Crumbles the Surface and reveals the Dirt/From whence your Actions Spring’ and</p> <p>‘If you would have the Nuptial Union last,/Let Virtue be the Bond that ties it fast.’</p> <p>No preface or introduction</p> <p>Epigraphs are however used for every title</p>