

## Publishing History

The novel, titled '*Fancied Events: or, The Sorrows of Ellen*' by 'Mrs Villa – Real Gooch,' as printed on the title page, was printed and published in 1799 by Georges Cawthorn at the British Library on 132 The Strand. There is no evidence of any other English editions printed but it was translated into German a year after it was published, in 1800.<sup>1</sup> The fact that it was translated is useful when determining the novel's popularity as it must have been well received in England for interest to develop abroad. Also, it seems that the Minerva Press bought the text off Cawthorn 3 years later as an advertisement appeared in a novel called *Stella of the North* by Helen Craik which is another signifier towards its popularity.<sup>2</sup> The idea that the novel was well received is backed up by The New London Review which praises Gooch for her 'plaintive and affectionate sensibility.'<sup>3</sup> However, generally, throughout her career as an author, reviews for Gooch's work, shifted from sympathy to contempt.<sup>4</sup>

As a publisher, there have been various accounts of Cawthorn being slightly underhand in his dealings with authors and other publishers. He is listed as being a bookbinder, bookseller, stationer, printer, publisher, librarian and the owner of a circulating library on The Strand,<sup>5</sup> which, due to the centrality of such a location, implies that the library was successful. Circulating libraries sometimes developed into publishing houses as they had more of an awareness over which books were popular to read. It was purchased by J.Bell in 1769 and in 1779 was called 'The British Library,' as stated on Gooch's title page. It grew in size, rapidly increasing stock<sup>6</sup> but in 1793 J.Bell became bankrupt and turned to Georges Cawthorn for help, believing his attention to be friendly assistance. However, it later became clear that Cawthorn was out for his own success, regardless of Bell's misfortune. He claimed in *The Oracle* in 1795 that he was the new owner of 132 Strand yet in the same newspaper the following month, Bell claimed that the business had moved to number 90, The Strand. Thus, Cawthorn was saying that it was he who had taken over Bell's business when in actual fact, Bell had just moved to a different location and Cawthorn had fitted up a new library on the old premises.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that Cawthorn was simply trying to capitalise on the success of both businesses, spreading false rumours that Bell's business no longer existed. Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, there were two British libraries on the Strand which must have resulted in some rivalry between both publishers. Gooch's works were actually published by both of them at different times, as Bell published her *Poems on Various subjects* (1793) before Cawthorn published *Fancied Events* (1799) and *Truth and Fiction* (1801).

Further evidence of Cawthorn's underhand dealings are evident through his association with Byron, before Byron became famous. Writers were not legally

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<sup>1</sup> Raven, James *The English Novel 1770-1829, A Bibliographical Survey* (Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 783-784

<sup>2</sup> Orlando Project; <http://orlando.cambridge.org>; March 2007

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> The British Book Trade Index; <http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk>; March 2007

<sup>6</sup> By 1790 circulating libraries had increased their market share of fiction by 24 percent. They had also shifted their resources toward female works, and especially toward anonymously female works, far more pointedly than other publishers had. Jacobs, Edward, *Eighteenth Century British Circulating Libraries and Cultural Book History*, In: *Book History*, Vol. 6 pp 1-22 (MUSE)

<sup>7</sup> Hamlyn, Hilda, M (1947): *Eighteenth Century Circulating Libraries in England*, In: *The Library*, vol. 5, 1, pp. 197-222

recognised to have control over the copyright of their works until the enforcement of the Statute of Queen Anne (1710) in 1774<sup>8</sup> which recognised authors as being possible proprietors of their own works. After 10 or more mainstream publishers had already turned Byron down for *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, he contracted with Cawthorn, ‘an outsider.’<sup>9</sup> After Byron rose to fame he refused Cawthorn permission to print a 5<sup>th</sup> edition and ordered the poem to be suppressed. Even though he was denied permission to print, Cawthorn went on re-printing and probably sold 20,000 more copies than he was allowed to by his contracts, all without payment to the author.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Cawthorn’s underhand dealings and the fact that Byron only went to him after being turned down by many others, suggest that he was one of the least respected publishers. This reflects back upon Gooch’s popularity and conveys the idea that she did not have much choice of whom to go to in order to get her work published.

It is also relevant to examine the price of her novel, in order to gain an understanding of her popularity and to what section of the market Gooch was appealing. The price of *Fancied Events* was 7 shillings which was an average figure when taking into account other published books in the year, 1799. The more expensive books generally cost 16, 15 and 10 shillings whilst the cheaper novels cost 2, 3 and 4 shillings.<sup>11</sup> At the price of 7 shillings, ‘*Fancied Events*’ falls somewhere in the middle and was thus an average price for the novels in this period. It still would only have been affordable for a small minority but would have been made more accessible due to the fact that Cawthorn was the owner of a circulatory library. The fact that it was not priced at the lower end does signify that the novel was not aimed at a wider audience. Gooch’s previous novels, *The Contrast* (1795) and *The Wanderings of the imagination* were cheaper at 6 shillings but after *Fancied Events* they became more expensive, perhaps signifying its popularity as *Truth and Fiction* (1801), the novel published after *Fancied Events*, cost 18 shillings.<sup>12</sup>

The title of the novel and the epigraph are also important when considering the intentions of the publisher. The title would have had resonances of Goethe’s, *The Sorrows of Werther*, which was still very popular at the time Gooch’s novel was published, whilst the epigraph by Scottish farmer and poet, Robert Burns, would have been another signifier towards Cawthorn’s intentions.<sup>13</sup> Werther is a sensitive artist and a lover of nature who takes his life after being rejected by the one he loves. Not only would this have signified the sentimental elements of the fiction but would also have associated it with a major work in order to gain credibility. Likewise, Burns’s *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect* (1786) was very popular at this time. There was a strong sense of identity through his poetry, both as a Scot and a member of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Statute of Queen Anne was passed in 1710 with the aims of allowing authors more rights over their work and limited the term of protection due to the fact that guild copyrights were perpetual. However, it was basically ignored and the confirmation of it did not occur until 1774 in the court case Donaldson Vs Beckett. As a result, the author could claim payment, the representation of the author was promulgated and immaterial property became defined. Rose, Mark ‘Literary Property Determined’ in *M. Rose, Authors and Owners: the invention of copyright* (Harvard University Press, 1993) pp. 92-112

<sup>9</sup> St. Clair, William, *The reading nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 163

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 163-4

<sup>11</sup> Raven, James *The English Novel 1770-1829, A Bibliographical Survey* (Oxford University Press, 2000) pp 765-807

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

labouring class. The epigraph is a verse from the poem, *In the prospect of death* and the lines arguably hint at elements of Gooch's fiction,

Thou know'st that thou hast found me  
With passions wild and strong;  
And, list'ning to their 'witching voice,  
Has often led me wrong.<sup>14</sup>

The verse is an interesting choice for Gooch and Cawthorn when considering the events in her life which had been already documented due to her earlier publications. The idea that an outside agent 'has often led me wrong' is also important as the line conveys the idea that Gooch is attempting to displace blame, in order to encourage people to read her novel and not regard her as too guilty to be read. The choice of Burns is also significant due to the fact that he was regularly engaged with at least one woman or another from his teenage years onwards and was known for his notorious love affairs and sentimental friendships<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that Burns was the choice for the epigraph as he was renowned to have these love affairs which would have been yet another indicator towards the nature of Gooch's fiction.

**1128 words**

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<sup>14</sup> Barchas, Janine 'The title page: advertisement, identity and deceit' in *Graphic design, Print culture and the Eighteenth- Century Novel* (Cambridge University Press,2003) p 61

<sup>15</sup> Orlando Project; <http://orlando.cambridge.org>; March 2007