

Sophie Hannon

***A Critical Introduction to Constantia; or, a True Picture of Human Life, Represented in Fifteen Evening Conversations, After the Manner of Boccace. In Two Volumes. To which is prefixed, A Short Discourse on Novel Writing.***

Cheryl Nixon suggests that in the eighteenth century, 'England engaged in an intense debate concerning the definition of the novel'.<sup>1</sup> Nixon adds that 'writers and readers wrestled with the unique conceptual issues central to the novel, debating questions raised by its [...], form [...] purpose [...], and history'.<sup>2</sup> Taking these three points as a basis for examination, this introduction aims to consider how a rare and unexplored book from the Chawton House Library Collection entitled *Constantia; or, a True Picture of Human Life, Represented in Fifteen Evening Conversations, After the Manner of Boccace. In Two Volumes. To which is prefixed, A Short Discourse on Novel Writing*, enters into this debate on the eighteenth-century novel.<sup>3</sup> I will consider: where *Constantia* fits in with the ambiguous definition of the eighteenth-century novel; what the text suggests about the role of the novel in eighteenth-century society; and the way in which *Constantia* presents the eighteenth-century British novel as an international construct.

**Defining the novel: the problems of classification**

By the end of the eighteenth century, critics and writers alike seemed to have reached a general agreement that the novel, as subsequently defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was 'a long fictional prose narrative, usually filling one or more volumes and typically representing character and action with some degree of realism and complexity'.<sup>4</sup> However, until this point, the term was much more unstable. *Constantia*, a text that by modern definition would be deemed a 'novel', was published anonymously in 1751 for A. Millar

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<sup>1</sup> Cheryl Nixon (ed.), 'Introduction' to *Novel Definitions: an anthology of commentary on the novel 1688-1815* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008), pp. 15-57, (p. 18).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> From now on, I will refer to this text by the abbreviated form *Constantia*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Novel' definition 4.b., in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00327739?query\\_type=word&queryword=novel&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=e68v-vahK6g-6309&hilite=00327739](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00327739?query_type=word&queryword=novel&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=e68v-vahK6g-6309&hilite=00327739), [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010].

‘over-against Catharine-street in the Strand’.<sup>5</sup> James Raven states that Millar was ‘one of the principal booksellers of the century’ and was ‘known for his liberality’.<sup>6</sup> This is substantiated by the advertisements for ‘BOOKS printed for A. Millar’ at the end of both volumes of *Constantia*, which list a wide range of publications including poems, histories, familiar letters, adventures, a collection of songs, a translation of the works of Horace, an educational text for use in schools, a political treatise and a selection of travel writing. Furthermore, this list demonstrates the insecurity surrounding the use of the word ‘novel’ in the eighteenth century, as none of the texts advertised which would now be classified as novels, for example Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones* are listed as novels. Instead, both are presented to the public as ‘histories’, highlighting the emphasis placed on verisimilitude in eighteenth-century literature.

Interestingly, neither the advertisements for *Constantia* in the *General Advertiser* or the review in the *Monthly Review* refer to the text as a novel. However, *Constantia* seems to fit the conventions of an eighteenth-century novel. It was published in two duodecimo volumes, and although the book itself has no note of the original price, evidence from James Raven’s comprehensive bibliography of *British Fiction, 1750-1770* shows that it was sold at a cost of 6s. bound.<sup>7</sup> In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt suggests that ‘novels were in the medium price range. They gradually came to be published in two or more small duodecimo volumes, usually at 3s. bound’, which fits exactly the description of *Constantia*.<sup>8</sup> Having examined a copy of the original edition held at Chawton House Library, there is reason to suggest that the book was put together fairly quickly and was not particularly expensive to produce.<sup>9</sup> The paper used to print the novel is relatively thin, the text contains no illustrations, and there is a section in the second volume which has been bound incorrectly. The text nonetheless has an air of grandeur about it; the two volumes are bound identically with a marbled covering and are ornamented with gold detail on the spine and gilt on the page edges. This would usually indicate that a book had been privately bound. However,

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<sup>5</sup> Anon, *Constantia or a True Picture of Human Life, Represented in Fifteen Evening Conversations, After the Manner of Boccace. In Two Volumes. To which is prefixed, A Short Discourse on Novel Writing* (London: A Millar, 1751), title page.

Further references to *Constantia* will be given parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.

<sup>6</sup> James Raven, *The Business of Books* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> James Raven, *British fiction, 1750-1770: a chronological check-list of prose fiction printed in Britain and Ireland* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1 for a detailed bibliographical description of *Constantia*.

evidence from advertisements in the *General Advertiser* shows that the book was presented for sale already bound.<sup>10</sup>

The Eighteenth Century Collections Online database shows only one London edition of *Constantia*, published in 1751. James Raven suggests that this was not in fact uncommon, and that ‘the majority of titles were never reprinted’.<sup>11</sup> However, the only review in existence of *Constantia*, which appeared in the *Monthly Review* in June 1751 suggested that:

Our author has concluded the history of the persons who composed this little society in the introduction to the second Volume [...] except [that] of Calista, to whose birth and circumstances the reader is left an entire stranger. This is a circumstance that makes it probable that the author intends, if the sale of this work is answerable to his hopes, to enlarge it by an additional Volume or two.<sup>12</sup>

A lack of any further reviews and the fact that only three advertisements for *Constantia* appear in 1751 both suggest that this text’s popularity did not meet the author’s expectations. There is no evidence that any later editions of *Constantia* were printed, and also nothing to suggest that if the author intended a further volume, it ever materialised. Both ECCO and Raven show that *Constantia* was also published in Dublin in 1751, but this is likely to be a pirated edition, owing to ‘Ireland’s reputation for piracy’.<sup>13</sup>

It is difficult to summarise *Constantia*, as it is essentially a collection of fourteen short stories. The basic premise of the novel is that a group of people happen ‘by mere chance’ (C, v.1, p. 10) to be gathered at the house of Lady Constantia, who decides that ‘it would furnish a pleasing and rational evening’s amusement, if each of [the company] would try either to compose or to remember some little story’ (C, v.1, p.13). These stories, related over the course of fifteen evening conversations, vary in their content but include, ‘The Faithful Shepherd, or the Tartar Prince, an Oriental history’, ‘The obstinate Genoese; or, the amazing Adventures of Signior Salardo, An Italian History’, and ‘Heroic Charity; or, the Vision of King Alfred, From our ancient chronicles’ (C, v.2&2, contents pages). After each tale has been recounted, it is then discussed by the group, who critique it for its probability and moral value. Interestingly, these stories are referred to in the *Monthly Review* as ‘the novels

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2 for an example of an advertisement.

<sup>11</sup> James Raven, ‘The Anonymous Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1830’, in Robert J Griffin (ed.), *The Faces of Anonymity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 141-166, (p. 160).

<sup>12</sup> Review of *Constantia, or a True Picture of Human Life*, *Monthly Review* 5 (June 1751), pp. 8-23, (p. 12).

<sup>13</sup> M Pollard, *Dublin’s Trade in Books 1550-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 84.

contained in the body of the work'.<sup>14</sup> I would suggest that the fact the stories within *Constantia* are referred to as novels, but that the work over all was not contemporaneously recognised as one, serves to demonstrate that readers and indeed writers in the eighteenth century 'do not appear to have been sufficiently aware of the formal issues involved for the term [novel] to be at all stable'.<sup>15</sup>

In his study *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gérard Genette highlights the importance of the aspects of a published work which accompany the text proper, for example the title, the author's name, a dedication, a preface, and even aspects outside the physical text itself such as reviews or letters to the author. He names these 'accompanying productions' of a book the 'paratext'. Genette suggests that:

although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in, the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the form [...] of a book.<sup>16</sup>

The preface to *Constantia*, I would suggest, is as important as the story itself in the study of the development of the novel. As Nixon suggests, 'prefaces to novels, written by the novel's authors, provide one of the century's most important sources of commentary on the novel'.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the preface, which is titled 'A Short Discourse on Novel Writing', the author invites the reader to decide 'how far the following sheets will be found consistent with these notions' (C, v.1 p. xx). One can infer then, that although *Constantia* is not presented as a 'novel' as such on its title page, the implication that there is a correlation between the text itself and the content of the preface, demonstrates the author's intention to present *Constantia* as a novel to the eighteenth-century literary marketplace.

### **Dulce et utile: the aims of the eighteenth-century novel**

The *dulce et utile* formula was central to contemporary discussion about the role of the novel in the eighteenth century. In his anthology *Novel and Romance: 1700-1800*, Ioan

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<sup>14</sup> Review of *Constantia*, *Monthly Review*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> J.A. Downie, 'The Making of the English Novel' in *Eighteenth-century fiction*, 9 (1996-7), pp. 249-266, (p. 260).

<sup>16</sup> Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1997), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Nixon, p. 35

Williams cites a section from a review from the *Monthly Review* of a novel published in 1790 entitled *The Denial; or The Happy Retreat*. The review reveals that by this period, the established idea was that the model narrative of a novel:

should be as little interrupted as possible by digressions and episodes of every kind: yet if an author chooses to indulge occasionally, in moral reflections, *in the view of blending instruction with amusement*, we would not wish, altogether, to frustrate so good a design.<sup>18</sup>

*Constantia*, published four decades before this review, anticipates this idea. The author devotes a large section of the preface to a discussion of the purpose of the novel in society as simultaneously didactic and entertaining.

The preface begins by raising the issue that ‘amongst those topics of complaint, which if not general are at least common, we hear it urged as a point of great consequence, that scarce any are read but books of amusement’ (C, v.1, p. iii). The author criticises popular English novels, commenting that ‘amusement seems to be too much their aim, and that the pleasure arising from reading them is not sufficiently heightened by what is acquired in point of instruction’ (C, v.1, p. x). However, the author does not advocate the removal of the entertaining aspect of literature altogether, as they note that ‘all people have not a taste for grave reading’ (C, v.1, p. x). What is argued instead, is that books ought to ‘mingle the pleasant with the profitable’ (C, v.1, p. xi). As a review of *Constantia* in the *Monthly Review* of 1751 suggests, the author ‘mentions the many advantages that may be drawn from [books of amusement] when rightly conducted’.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, *Constantia* is reminiscent of the preface to Samuel Richardson’s pioneering novel *Pamela* (1740), which states that it is intended to ‘Divert and Entertain, and at the same time to Instruct, and Improve the Minds of the YOUTH of both Sexes’.<sup>20</sup>

In an article for *The Rambler* written in 1750, a year before *Constantia* was published, Samuel Johnson wrote about the ‘force of example’ in the novel, highlighting the belief prevalent in the eighteenth century of the power of the novel to instil moral values, or, more

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Review of *The Denial; or The Happy Retreat* (1790)’ from *The Monthly Review*, (December 1790), cited in Ioan Williams (ed.) *Novel and Romance 1700-1800: A Documentary Record* (London: Routledge 1970), p. 370.

<sup>19</sup> Review of *Constantia*, *Monthly Review*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, [first published 1740]), p. 1.

controversially, promote bad ones.<sup>21</sup> Evidence for reading of *Constantia* is scarce as, as Robert Darnton suggests, ‘reading remains the most difficult stage to study in the circuit that books follow’.<sup>22</sup> However, Mary O’Dowd’s *A History of Women in Ireland* indicates that it was read by Alicia Synge, daughter of Bishop Edward Synge of Elphin in Ireland. O’Dowd notes that *Constantia* ‘was slightly more lightweight than the volumes recommended by her father but was still, nevertheless, in the category of serious reading’.<sup>23</sup> Although this is evidence only of one reading experience, it is nonetheless significant, as it suggests that *Constantia* fulfilled its aim of promoting a moral example through an entertaining narrative.

The author of *Constantia* asserts that ‘it is not so much the matter as the manner that disgusts young people in receiving instruction’ (C, v.1, p.xiv).<sup>24</sup> He justifies his choice to use short stories by asserting that they ‘are the most expedient’ because long works ‘divide and distract the thoughts of an impatient reader’ (C, v.1, p. xvi). Moreover, the author suggests that this type of narrative is particularly effective because, rather than forcing a moral lesson on its reader, as in serious religious or educational treatises, ‘the maxims that arise from [novels], conceived through the reader’s own reflection, have much more weight than they could derive, either from argument or authority’ (C, v.1, p. xviii). The author uses the new form of the novel almost opportunistically, as the ideal vehicle through which to promote moral values, and present vices in a negative light.

At the end of the story of ‘The amazing Adventures of Signior Salardo’ in *Constantia*, the storyteller, Sir Lawrence, asserts that:

the authors of moral fictions, think themselves at liberty to colour pretty strongly that their pieces may have life and force sufficient to make an impression on the memory, as well as to persuade the understanding; and provided the sentiment be right, I think in this they are not to blame. (C, v.1, p. 35)

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 1:4 (31<sup>st</sup> March 1750), p. 18, <http://pao.chadwyck.co.uk/PDF/1272902690308.pdf>, [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010].

<sup>22</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by D. Finkelstein (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 9-26, (p. 20).

<sup>23</sup> Mary O’Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 222.

This reference to reading was found by searching for the novel in ‘Google Books’.

<sup>24</sup> The OED explains that an eighteenth century meaning of the word ‘disgusts’ was ‘to raise or excite such aversion in (a person) as dissuades or deters him from a proposed or intended purpose’.  
[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50065956?query\\_type=word&queryword=disgust&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=2&search\\_id=OPcY-zHtsUw-3109&hilite=50065956](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50065956?query_type=word&queryword=disgust&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=OPcY-zHtsUw-3109&hilite=50065956)

A contemporary review of the text, however, suggests that although the stories in *Constantia* provide 'some useful moral', they are too 'romantic' and 'improbable', making the content of the text inconsistent with the claim in its title that it will portray 'a True Picture of Human Life'.<sup>25</sup> It could be suggested then, that the author took advantage of the eighteenth-century emphasis on truth, and used it in his subtitle as a means of ensuring popularity. However, I would suggest that although some of the stories are indeed quite romantic, the issue of probability, or what has more recently been termed 'formal realism', is carefully controlled by the characters' discussions of the stories.<sup>26</sup> Each tale is evaluated in terms of its probability and moral value; for example, the group approve of the story of 'The Generous Lovers', because 'it is written with a high regard to probability, as well as to virtuous sentiments' (C, v.1, p. 183) and Sir Lawrence's tale is admired as it is 'singular, striking, and instructive' (C, v.2, p. 107). Characters who display folly or vice, such as the jealous husband in 'The Marvellous Discovery' are duly censured, and those who display virtuous behaviour are praised. Perhaps the author's reference to a 'True Picture of Human Life' relates not so much to the stories themselves, but rather to the shared experience of telling and critiquing stories, which was becoming more prevalent in the eighteenth century with the rise of literary criticism.

### **The eighteenth-century British novel: national or international?**

In *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) Ian Watt suggests that the genesis of the novel can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century and the works of three English writers; Samuel Richardson, Daniel Defoe, and Henry Fielding. Although Watt's theory has remained highly influential, one of the fundamental problems with it is, as William Warner argues, 'its muted but implicit presumption of British priority in the development of "the" novel'.<sup>27</sup> The author of *Constantia* anticipates Warner's concern. One of the central premises of the text is that the eighteenth-century British novel is derived not from entirely British discourses, but from a rich international history of novel writing, which can be traced as far back as the third century AD to the ancient Greek writer Heliodorus who the author of *Constantia* describes as 'the first author of novels' (C, v.1, p. iv). One intriguing entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a 'novel' as 'any of a number of tales or stories making up a larger work', and lists

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<sup>25</sup> Review of *Constantia*, *Monthly Review*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ian Watt, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 32.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* as an example.<sup>28</sup> This is of particular relevance to the study of *Constantia*, which claims on its title page to be written 'After the Manner of BOCCACE'.

Richard Bates outlines the history of the translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* in his chapter on Italian Literature in the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*. Bates suggests that 'Boccaccio's classic had existed in English since the version of 1620, probably the work of John Florio' and that there existed 'anonymous English versions of 1702 (based on an earlier French version) and 1741 (probably the work of Charles Balguy)'.<sup>29</sup> It is likely then, that *Constantia*, published in 1751, drew inspiration from the translation offered to the British literary marketplace in 1741 by R. Dodsley 'at Tully's Head in Pall-mall'.<sup>30</sup>

The texts are almost identical in structural terms, as both employ a frame narrative. *The Decameron* opens with a description of the Bubonic Plague and leads into the introduction of a group of ten Italian citizens who decide to abandon the city of Florence where the Plague is rife, in order to seek refuge in a villa outside the city walls. In order to entertain themselves, each member of the group tells a story every day, making a total of one hundred short stories. In this sense, there are three 'levels' of *The Decameron*; 'the world of the author, the world of the narrators, and the world of the narratives'.<sup>31</sup> *Constantia* follows almost exactly the same model. We are introduced to the world of the author through the preface, the world of the narrators in the introduction and through the conversations about the stories, and the world of the narratives through the short stories themselves.

The ultimate model for the novel, in the opinion of the author, comes from the Spanish, in particular Miguel de Cervantes's *Novelas Exemplares* (1613), which he notes 'were deservedly commended and imitated' (C, v.1, p. vii). It was Cervantes, according to the author of *Constantia*, who:

thought [...] that it would be rendering a great service to society, so to mingle the pleasant with the profitable [...] upon this plan he wrote his exemplary novels, to which he gave that title, because in each of them there was such an example, as properly considered, might be highly beneficial in the conduct of human life. (C, v.1, p. xi)

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<sup>28</sup> 'Novel', definition 4.a., in The Oxford English Dictionary Online, [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00327739?query\\_type=word&queryword=novel&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=gISI-MsLES5-9619&hilite=00327739](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00327739?query_type=word&queryword=novel&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=gISI-MsLES5-9619&hilite=00327739), [accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010].

<sup>29</sup> Richard Bates, 'Italian Literature', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, Vol. 3 1660-1790, ed. by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 395-405, (p. 396).

<sup>30</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (London: R. Dodsley 1741), title page.

<sup>31</sup> G. H. McWilliam, (trans. and ed.), 'Translator's Introduction', in Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1995), pp. xxxi-cxlv, (p. lxi).

The preface then traces the imitation of this kind of moral writing through Europe, noting the works of Scarron, Segrais and Huet, amongst others. The author then mentions the work of Le Sage, and makes particular reference to the *Diable Boiteaux* which was a hybrid form of the novel; the first part translated from the Spanish text the *Diablo Coivelo* by Luis Velez de Guevera, and the second ‘the proper work of le Sage’ (C, v.1, p. ix). He continues that:

the success of this gentleman’s pieces, when published in English, gave rise to that sort of writing here, and without being suspected of partiality, we may venture to assert, that we have more than one performance of this kind not inferior to any thing that has appeared in other languages. There is no necessity of pointing these pieces out, since they are enough known already. (C, v.1, p. x)

I would suggest that these pieces the author is referring to are the works of Fielding, in particular *Joseph Andrews* which claims to be ‘Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes’.<sup>32</sup>

*Constantia* clearly follows on from this trend of imitative writing; the models of both Boccaccio and Cervantes are evident in the text. ECCO shows a 1743 version Cervantes’s *Novelas Exemplares*, translated by Thomas Shelton, which has been ‘Revised and Compared with the Original’.<sup>33</sup> The work of Boccaccio and Cervantes was popular reading matter in the eighteenth century; indeed, Stuart Gillespie suggests that ‘translation was effectively turning foreign prose writers into English classics’.<sup>34</sup> However, Mary Helen McCurran notes that ‘scholars frequently find evidence for the appropriation or nationalization of the foreign literary work, in which the outsider text is rewritten to conform to the target culture’s ideologies and literary standards’.<sup>35</sup> I would suggest that Mrs Anguish’s translation of ‘The Marvellous Discovery; or, Innocence rescued from the Grave. Out of the Spanish’ in *Constantia* has strong parallels with one of Cervantes’s *Novelas Exemplares*, ‘The Jealous Extremaduran’. In turn, this story is clearly based on those told on the seventh day in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* which all focus on ‘the tricks, which, either in the cause of love or

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<sup>32</sup> Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (London: Penguin, 1999, [first published 1742]), p. 48.

<sup>33</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Novellas Exemplares*, trans. by Thomas Shelton (London: C Hitch, 1743), title page.

<sup>34</sup> Stuart Gillespie, ‘Translation and Canon Formation’, in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English Vol. 3 1660-1790*, ed. by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 7-20, (p. 14).

<sup>35</sup> Mary Helen McCurran, ‘National or Transnational? The Eighteenth-Century Novel’ in *The Literary Channel: the inter-national invention of the novel*, ed. by Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002) pp. 50-72, (p.50).

for motives of self-preservation, women have played upon their husbands'.<sup>36</sup> However, in Boccaccio's tales the women are guilty of immoral and adulterous behaviour, whereas in the more modern imitations of these stories, the women are completely innocent and it is their husbands' irrational behaviour at fault.

Indeed it was not only imitative texts which were adapted to suit modern tastes, but also translations of original texts too. G.H. McWilliam suggests that 'before the appearance in 1886 of John Payne's magniloquent English version [of *The Decameron*], Boccaccio's taste for the erotic and the profane had been consistently glossed over or toned down in varying degrees by his English translators'.<sup>37</sup> The preface to the 1741 translation of Boccaccio's work states that 'BOCCACE is so licentious in many places, that it requires some management to preserve his wit and humour, and render him tolerably decent'.<sup>38</sup> However, Boccaccio suggests in the epilogue to *The Decameron* that 'anyone perusing these tales is free to ignore the ones that give offence, and read only those that are pleasing'.<sup>39</sup> In the same way, the stories in *Constantia*, being unrelated, can be read separately, and in this sense, individual readers are able to take moral lessons from those stories which they can relate to, and read the others only for pleasure.

*Constantia* is clearly firmly grounded in the European novelistic tradition, and an attempt to produce and offer a text that could be to Britain what Boccaccio's *Decameron* was to Italy, and Cervantes's *Novelas Exemplares* to Spain. However, as the translator of the latter suggests on the title page of the 1743 edition, Cervantes is 'inimitable'.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps this is why *Constantia*, like so many other novels written in the eighteenth century was 'left to gather dust'.<sup>41</sup> Whilst it may not have made such an impression in its own time, it serves as an invaluable source of evidence in the study of book history and the development of the eighteenth-century novel.

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<sup>36</sup> Boccaccio, (1995 translation), p. 484.

<sup>37</sup> G.H. McWilliam, p. cxliv.

<sup>38</sup> Boccaccio, (1741 translation), p. vii.

<sup>39</sup> Boccaccio, (1995 translation), p. 801.

<sup>40</sup> Cervantes, title page.

<sup>41</sup> Raven, *The Anonymous Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1830*, p. 143.

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## Appendix 1. Bibliographical Details

<b>Author</b>	Anonymous
<b>Title</b>	CONSTANTIA: OR, A TRUE PICTURE OF HUMAN LIFE, Represented in Fifteen Evening Conversations, After the Manner of BOCCACE. In TWO VOLUMES. To which is prefixed, A Short DISCOURSE on Novel Writing.
<b>Imprint</b>	LONDON: Printed for A Millar, over-against Catharine-street in the Strand. M,DCC,LI.
<b>Physical Description</b> (details relating to all copies)	2 volumes. Duodecimo. No price indicated.  Vol 1 – 250 pages Vol 2 – 404 pages  Paper of standard quality  No illustrations, some ornamentation e.g. on title page and at start of each new short story.
<b>Physical Description</b> (details relating only to this specific copy)	2 volumes bound identically. Marbled cover. Spine brown leather with gold ornamentation. Reads 'CONS-TANTIA'. Gold decoration on page edges.  Vol 2 pp. 395-401 bound incorrectly.  Pencilled in on first page of 1 <sup>st</sup> vol: 'ANONYMOUS 1 <sup>st</sup> EDITION. Vol 2 – pp. 395-401 misbound – but complete'.
<b>Provenance</b>	'From the library of John Charles Hardy. C20th collection'.  'Chawton House Library 5297'.

<p><b>Details of Advertisements</b></p>	<p>There is an extensive list of ‘BOOKS printed for A. Millar’, including novels, poems, histories, familiar letters, adventures, a collection of Scottish and English songs &amp; a translation of Horace. A few memorable titles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and his friend, Mr. Abraham Adams. Written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of Don Quixote. The fifth edition, revised and corrected, with alterations and additions, and illustrated with cuts. By Henry Fielding, Esq: 2 vols.</li> <li>- A Poetical Translation of the Works of Horace: with the original texts and notes, collected from the best Latin and French commentators on that author. By the Rev. Mr Philip Francis, Rector of Skeyton in Norfolk. On a royal paper, in two vols. quarto.</li> <li>- Moral Maxims. By the Duke de la Roche-Foucault. Translated from the French. With notes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Paratext</b></p>	<p>The title page gives only the title of the work and details of its publisher.</p> <p>There is a detailed preface about novel writing. It is not signed off.</p> <p>There is no dedication, epigraph or subscription list in this text.</p> <p>At the end of each volume there is an advertisement for other titles published by Andrew Millar (as discussed above).</p>

**Appendix 2: Advertisement**

from the *General Advertiser* (1744) (London), Thursday, April 11, 1751; Issue 5140.

*This Day is published,*  
In Two Volumes, Twelve:  
(Price 6 s. bound)

**C**ONSTANTIA : or, A True Picture  
of Human Life, represented in Fifteen Evening Conversations.  
In the Manner of **BOCCACCIO** To which is prefixed a short Dis-  
course on Novel-writing.

Printed for A. Millar, opposite Catherine street in the Strand.