

ENGL3041 – Adventures in the Literary Marketplace

Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins – *The Victim of Fancy*

Assignment 1.1: Bibliographical Description

Author (and attribution as it appears on title page, or note of pseudonym or anonymity)	Published anonymously: By A Lady. Author of the Conquests of the Heart.
Title (as it appears on title page)	The Victim of Fancy, A Novel. In Two Volumes.
Imprint (Place of publication: publisher, year of publication as they appear on title page)	London: Sold by R. Baldwin, Pater-Noster Row; and G. and T. Wilkie, St. Paul's Church-yard, MDCCLXXXVII. (1787)
Physical description (details relating to all copies, eg number of volumes, number of pages, size, price – sometimes shown on title page, quality of the paper and printing, illustrations, etc.)	Vol.1, 186 pp. Vol. 2, 152 pp. 8vo. [octavo] Thick paper. Medium sized, easily legible print. Large margins. No illustrations.
Physical description (details relating only to this specific copy, eg binding & decoration, binding anomalies, annotations etc.)	Bound in contemporary full tree calf, extra gilt on the spine, red label. Two volumes bound in one. Marble effect on the outside cover.
Provenance (eg bookplates, inscriptions)	From the John Charles Hardy Library, with his bookplate, and an additional contemporary armorial bookplate with the name Wm. Smallbone.
Details of advertisements (you can summarise if there is a long list e.g. genre, price range, a few characteristic or notable titles)	None.
Paratext (title page epigraph, dedication, preface, introduction, etc. noted or summarised)	Epigraph on title page taken from <i>Progress Of Fashion</i> , no indication of author. Dedicatory Poem: DEDICATION. To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq. 2 pp. Attributes Hayley with poetic genius and as an unacknowledged but generous friend to

	<p>female writers. Advertisement: 1p. Presents novel as an attempt to adopt and justify the moral from <i>The Sorrows Of Werter</i>, which had previously provoked censure. Acknowledges the inferiority of own work to the genius of that author.</p>
--	--

182 words.

Assignment 1.2: Publishing History

Publishing in the eighteenth century is described by John Brewer as ‘an expanding maze or labyrinth [that] offered the potential author many entrances and numerous routes to eventual publication, each full of hazards, pitfalls and dead ends.’¹ The decline of traditional patronage systems and the emergence of professional authorship meant that authors had to ‘exploit the resources and opportunities of the literary system’ in order to ‘procure the services of a bookseller’.² Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins was in a fortunate position in that her family had established links within the literary industry by the time she sought publication. Her father was a clerk of the Company of Painter-Stainers, a livery company that in the eighteenth century was extensively involved with fine art and boasted ‘many artists and academicians’ as liverymen.³ Tomlins had the opportunity to become ‘acquainted with many persons of talent of that period, who, through their intercourse with her father professionally, were introduced to her society.’⁴

¹ John Brewer, ‘Authors, Publishers and the Making of Literary Culture’ in *The Book History Reader* ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 244.

² *ibid.* p. 246.

³ ‘Introduction to the Company’, Painters’ Hall, The Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers. <<http://www.painters-hall.co.uk/introduction>> [Accessed March 2007].

⁴ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Volume XCVIII (London, July to December 1828) p. 471.

Brewer suggests that ‘the best friend an aspiring author could have was someone already experienced in the ways of Grub Street.’⁵ Though neither were predominantly authors of fiction, Tomlins’ father and brother could boast this experience in that they were both published writers. Thomas Tomlins produced *A Canvassing Book, for the Purpose of Elections by the Livery* in 1776, whilst Sir Thomas Edlyne Tomlins was a prolific legal writer and editor of Baldwin’s *St James’ Chronicle*, and the *Whitehall Evening Post*.⁶ The relationship with the Baldwin publishing family is significant. In 1785 R. Baldwin, of Paternoster Row, published legal writing for Sir Thomas Edlyne Thomas and two years later published Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins’ *The Victim of Fancy* along with G. and T. Wilkie of St. Paul’s Churchyard.⁷ Considering her brother’s established relationship with Baldwin, it is almost certain that Tomlins was able to capitalize on the connection to secure publication of her own novel.

The Baldwin family enjoyed an established history as ‘a book trade clan’.⁸ Indeed, the family published ‘over 1200 titles between 1750 and 1780, and a further 542 – often in association with others – between 1780 and 1800.’⁹ Tomlins also seems to have been fortunate in the location of her publishers. Paternoster Row and the neighbouring St. Paul’s Churchyard were a particularly ‘fast-growing book-trade

⁵ Brewer, p. 247.

⁶ Thomas Tomlins, *A canvassing book, for the purpose of elections by the liver ... to establish and confirm the freedom of elections by them: to support their unbiassed choice already made of Benjamin Hopkins, Esq; for their chamberlain: and to re-elect him ... In two parts.* (London, 1776.) *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale Group. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007]; *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Volume XVI (London, July to December 1841) p. 321-2.

⁷ Sir Thomas Edlyne Tomlins, *A familiar, plain, and easy explanation of the law of wills and codicils, and of the law of executors and administrators* (London, 1785.) *ECCO.* <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007]; Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins, *The Victim of Fancy, A Novel, In Two Volumes* (London: R. Baldwin and G. and T. Wilkie, 1787).

⁸ James Raven, ‘Location, Size and Succession: the bookshops of Paternoster Row before 1800’ in *The London Book Trade : Topographies of Print in the Metropolis from the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote, (New Castle, DE and London: Oak Knoll, British Library, 2003). p. 103.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 103-4.

quarter' and James Raven asserts the 'concentration of leading booksellers' premises in the long strip of the Row made good commercial sense.'¹⁰ Booksellers shared warehouses and the narrow lane led to the development of 'the shop-room as a place to attract passing custom' so that 'by 1800 the Churchyard and the Row comprised one of the greatest publishing centres in Europe.'¹¹

The Victim of Fancy was advertised in *The Monthly Review* for a price of '5s sewed' and in *The Critical Review* for '6s'.¹² It is published anonymously, 'By a Lady', and acknowledges authorship of *The Conquests of the Heart*, suggesting that perhaps Tomlins' first text was popular enough to advertise the merit of her second. In considering the paratexts of this work there is a wealth of information to contextualize the novel. The epigraph on the title page is anonymous but is found in a 1786 publication, *The Progress of Fashion: Exhibiting a View of its Influence in all the Departments of Life*. The text discusses the way in which women should be educated, claiming that man should let his daughter 'store her mind with those ideas which shall exalt her above the little attentions of dress and dancing'.¹³ Tomlins focuses on the claim that women 'engage themselves more strongly' in leisure pursuits which are not meant to be 'followed as employment'.¹⁴ The chosen passage emphasizes the weaker 'frames and constitutions' of women, which provokes speculation about Tomlins' intent. Her excessively sentimental heroine could be a model for the "uneducated" woman that *The Progress of Fashion* criticizes. As such

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 91.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schowering (ed.) *The English Novel, 1770-1829 : a Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, Volume One, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000). p. 414.

¹³ *The Progress of Fashion: exhibiting a view of its influence in all the departments of life*. (London, 1786.) ECCO. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007]. p. 74.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 73-4.

it is possible the epigraph encourages her readers to consider the novel in a satiric light.

The novel also includes a dedicatory poem and an advertisement. Tomlins' dedication to William Hayley again highlights the issue of gender. In a 'long rhymed utterance', Tomlins appears to thank Hayley for his 'noble line, / Which says to Woman, "Poesy is thine"¹⁵. There is no obvious instance that encourages such gratitude but Tomlins claims that though he is 'Unsung by those to whom [he] point[s] the way', she speaks for 'a thousand hearts' when paying homage to him.¹⁶ Morchand Bishop reports that Hayley 'at once accepted the dedication', suggesting that he certainly welcomed a connection with Tomlins and her work. There is no conclusive evidence as to why Tomlins addressed her text to Hayley but his actions around the time of Tomlins' publication could have recommended him to her. Charlotte Smith, one of England's 'most prominent novelists and poets' of the period, separated from her destitute husband in 1787 and was left with no inheritance and a family to support.¹⁷ Hayley 'acted as a liaison between Smith and their mutual publisher, Thomas Cadell' and therefore it is possible that Tomlins' dedication is a reaction to the great kindness of Hayley in securing Smith's publication.¹⁸ Even if this is not the matter Tomlins refers to, it is obvious that Hayley understood and supported female authors and their difficulties.

The advertisement draws attention to the novel's association with Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which I will discuss in more detail in my

¹⁵ Morchand Bishop, *Blake's Hayley: The Life, Works, and Friendships of William Hayley*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1951). P. 319; Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins, 'DEDICATION. To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.' in *The Victim of Fancy*.

¹⁶ E. S. Tomlins, 'DEDICATION. To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.'

¹⁷ Richard C. Taylor, 'Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell: A New Letter', *Modern Philology*, Vol. 88, No. 2. (Nov, 1990), pp. 149-152.

Jstor Scholarly Journals <<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0026-8232%28199011%2988%3A2%3C149%3ACSTTCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>> [Accessed March 2007]. p. 149.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

critical assignment. However, it is significant for Tomlins' publication with respect to the huge impact the German novel had throughout Europe. It first appeared in 1774 and was 'an immediate success'.¹⁹ A second version of this text was printed in 1787, the same year of Tomlins' novel which endeavours to 'bring forward that moral' of Goethe's work.²⁰ Tomlins claims to fear it may be 'considered as a presumption', but by highlighting the link between that bestselling novel and her own she is almost certainly hoping its popularity will increase her readership.²¹ Indeed, *The Victim of Fancy* was translated in to French in 1795 under the title *La Victime de l'imagination, ou l'enthousiaste de Werther*, signifying that the popularity of Tomlins' novel had benefited from the association and was predicted to have the same influence abroad.²²

1027 words.

Bibliography.

Bishop, Morchand, *Blake's Hayley: The Life, Works, and Friendships of William Hayley*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1951).

Brewer, John, 'Authors, Publishers and the Making of Literary Culture' in *The Book History Reader* ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002).

Garside, Peter, James Raven and Rainer Schowering (ed.) *The English Novel, 1770-1829 : a Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, Volume One, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000).

Raven, James, 'Location, Size and Succession: the bookshops of Paternoster Row before 1800' in *The London Book Trade : Topographies of Print in the Metropolis from the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote, (New Castle, DE and London: Oak Knoll, British Library, 2003). 89-113.

Swales, Martin, *Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Martin Swales, *Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 1.

²⁰ *ibid*; E. S. Tomlins, 'ADVERTISEMENT' in *The Victim of Fancy*.

²¹ *ibid*.

²² Garside, p. 414.

Taylor, Richard C, 'Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell: A New Letter', *Modern Philology*, Vol. 88, No. 2. (Nov, 1990), pp. 149-152.

Jstor Scholarly Journals <<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0026-8232%28199011%2988%3A2%3C149%3ACSTTCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>> [Accessed March 2007].

Tomlins, Elizabeth Sophia, *The Victim of Fancy, A Novel, In Two Volumes* (London: R. Baldwin and G. and T. Wilkie, 1787).

Tomlins, Thomas, *A canvassing book, for the purpose of elections by the liver ... to establish and confirm the freedom of elections by them: to support their unbiassed choice already made of Benjamin Hopkins, Esq; for their chamberlain: and to re-elect him ... In two parts.* (London, 1776.)

Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale Group. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007].

Tomlins, Sir Thomas Edlyne, *A familiar, plain, and easy explanation of the law of wills and codicils, and of the law of executors and administrators* (London, 1785.) *ECCO*. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007].

'Introduction to the Company', Painters' Hall, The Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers.

<<http://www.painters-hall.co.uk/introduction>> [Accessed March 2007].

The Progress of Fashion: exhibiting a view of its influence in all the departments of life. (London, 1786.) *ECCO*. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed March 2007]. p. 74.

The Gentleman's Magazine, Volume XCVIII (London, July to December 1828).

The Gentleman's Magazine, Volume XVI (London, July to December 1841).

Assignment 1.3: Author Biography

A novelist and poet, Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins was born in 1763 in London, the second child and eldest of four daughters to Thomas Tomlins whose family originated in Ledbury in Herefordshire.²³ She never married, instead devoting her life to her family and her writing. On her father's death in 1815, she retired to The Firs,

²³ Polly Stevens Fields, 'Tomlins, Elizabeth Sophia (1763-1828)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27521>> [Accessed March 2007]; E. I Carlyle, 'Tomlins, Sir Thomas Edlyne (1762-1841)', rev. Jonathan Harris, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27523>> [Accessed March 2007].

an isolated cottage owned by the family in Chalden, Surrey, with her mother and three sisters.²⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine* reports that on the 7th August 1828, 'Miss Tomlins had the misfortune to be thrown from a pony' receiving bruises that proved fatal the following morning when, 'in an apparent fainting fit, she expired without a struggle, in the 66th year of her age.'²⁵

As all four daughters moved with their surviving mother to Surrey on their father's death, it can be presumed that none were married and all were beyond the age at which marriage was a likely option. This period rendered any 'female over the age of twenty seven an old maid' and an 'economic burden' on her family yet there is no evidence to suggest that the Tomlins' daughters lacked the necessary acquaintance or education to make them eligible for marriage.²⁶ It is possible that Tomlins' career as an author afforded her some degree of financial independence but it is also reasonable to speculate that the family's circumstance was such that the necessity to marry well was removed. Indeed, there is much to suggest that Thomas Tomlins provided a comfortable upbringing for his children. He was a middle-class professional, working as a solicitor in London and was 'upwards of fifty years clerk of the Company of Painters-Stainers'.²⁷ This position was later held by his son, and grandson Frederick Guest Tomlins.

The education and career of the eldest son is well documented. Knighted in 1814 for a parliamentary role, Sir Thomas Edlyne Tomlins had been 'a scholar at St Paul's School' and then 'matriculated from Queen's College, Oxford'.²⁸ His sister too is remembered in her obituary for her 'intellectual superiority' and her work on

²⁴ Stevens Fields.

²⁵ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Volume XCVIII (London, July to December 1828) p. 471.

²⁶ Jean B. Kern, "The Old Maid, or "to grow old, and be poor, and laughed at"" in *Fetter'd or Free?: British women novelists, 1670-1815* ed. by Mary Anne Schofield, (Ohio : Ohio University Press, 1986), p.202, 201.

²⁷ *The Gentleman's Magazine*. p. 471.

²⁸ Carlyle.

translating ‘the first History of Napoleon Bonaparte’ is testament to her language skills. Indeed, she resigned the opportunities of her own life ‘to educate [her] numerous family’ and her aptitude was such that ‘amidst the scoffs of the vulgar, and the high regards of the noble-minded, she actually superintended [her fathers] professional concerns for seven years’ before he died.²⁹

The sacrifice that Tomlins made for the advantage of her family is acknowledged in her brother’s poetry.

The Maid, unconscious of her pow’r,
Unconscious of the fleeting hour,
Still wastes, unkind and heedless Fair,
“*Her* sweetness on the desert air.”³⁰

Thomas Edlyne Tomlins dedicates his poem, dated 1790, to a twenty-seven year old sister whose ‘vivacity and tenderness of disposition’ is being squandered as that ‘fleeting hour’ of youth departs and she is left unmarried and, subsequently, barren as the ‘desert air’.³¹ *The Gentleman’s Magazine* echoes his sentiment in her obituary, stating that ‘Miss Tomlins resigned the advantages of beauty and talent’ in loyalty to her family.³² Significantly, her obituary describes her ‘noble spirit of devotion to a father, whose severe notions of duty led him to receive the sacrifice only as a right.’ Despite her ‘excellent mother’ being alive, it is clear that, as the eldest daughter, Tomlins assumed a key role in the running of the family.³³ Though she was therefore ‘anxiously and almost incessantly employed’ by her family duties, her literary production was surprisingly abundant.³⁴

²⁹ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. p. 471.

³⁰ Thomas Edlyne Tomlins, ‘To Eliza, Gardening’ in Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins, *Tributes of Affection: with The slave; and other poems. By a lady; and her brother*. (London, 1797) p. 69. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group.

<<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed February 2007]

³¹ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. p. 471.

³² Stevens Fields.

³³ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. p. 471.

³⁴ *ibid.*

Her early work, a ‘ballad trilogy of love, betrayal, and death, ‘Connal’ (1782), ‘Mary’ (1783), and ‘Athol’ (1784),’ was almost immediately followed by her first novel, *The Conquests of the Heart*, published in 1785. Her second novel, *The Victim of Fancy*, was published just two years later and described somewhat condescendingly by *The Gentleman’s Magazine* as ‘the most popular of all [the] performances’ she produced.³⁵ Tomlins’ heightened role within the family unit did not limit her creative energies. She translated from French, wrote ‘fugitive pieces’, and contributed regularly to ‘nearly every respectable periodical work’ of the period.

Tomlins’ 1797 co-publication with her elder brother, a collection of poetry entitled *Tributes of Affection*, re-enforces her literary standing. Indeed, it is her ‘poetical talent’ that is acknowledged by *The Gentleman’s Magazine* as that ‘which entitles her to notice’ within its pages.³⁶ Her best known poem, ‘The Slave’ is one of several anti-slavery poems in the collection and recognizes the shift in Tomlins’ writing. The ‘highly romanticized’ and sentimental novels of her youth have been replaced by significant political interventions that reflect the unstable political climate in England at the end of the eighteenth-century.³⁷

Thomas Tomlins was ‘well known in political circles’ at this time and it appears that his daughter shared his sentiments.³⁸ In what is almost certainly a reference to the French Revolution, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* claims that Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins ‘hailed the dawn [...] of a better and more refined age; and, subsequently, she mourned the demolition of her hopes, by the mock champions of liberty’.³⁹ *Memoirs of a Baroness* was published in 1792 followed by *Rosalind de Tracy* in 1797. These later novels are noted for their portrayal of the marginalized,

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. p. 471.

³⁷ Stevens Fields.

³⁸ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. p. 471.

³⁹ *ibid.*

especially addressing the working women of London who were ‘dying in squalid conditions’.⁴⁰ *Rosalind de Tracy* provides a further voice for Tomlins in that the preface is written as a direct defence of the novel genre, claiming that ‘women’s virtues are shown in affliction’.⁴¹ ‘The Slave’, a poem that highlights the ‘twin themes of personal liberty and politics’ and Tomlins’ later novels allow her to assert her political views ‘about deprivations of economics and personal freedom.’⁴²

935 words.

Bibliography.

Blain, Virginia, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (London : Batsford, 1990).

Carlyle, E. I, ‘Tomlins, Sir Thomas Edlyne (1762-1841)’, rev. Jonathan Harris, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004). <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27523>> [Accessed March 2007].

Kern, Jean B, ‘The Old Maid, or “to grow old, and be poor, and laughed at”’ in *Fetter’d or Free?: British women novelists, 1670-1815* ed. by Mary Anne Schofield, (Ohio : Ohio University Press, 1986). 201-214.

Thomas Edlyne Tomlins, ‘To Eliza, Gardening’ in *Tributes of Affection: with The slave; and other poems. By a lady; and her brother* by Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins (London, 1797). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>> [Accessed February 2007].

Stevens Fields, Polly, ‘Tomlins, Elizabeth Sophia (1763-1828)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004). <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27521>> [Accessed March 2007].

The Gentleman’s Magazine, Volume XCVIII (London, July to December 1828).

⁴⁰ Stevens Fields.

⁴¹ Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy (ed.) *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (London : Batsford, 1990), p. 1086.

⁴² Stevens Fields.