BOOK ABRIDGMENT

IN

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

by

Jordan Howell

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in English

Summer 2017

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ABSTRACT

In the following dissertation, I examine the commercialization of abridgment and posit that the ubiquity of abridged literature challenges long-held assumptions regarding literary history, the history of reading, and the formation of the English literary canon.

It is unfortunate that so much modern scholarship tends to characterize book abridgment as subordinate to “original” authorship, dismissing it as a parasitic literary practice that feeds off legitimate literature. But the historical reality is that many of the literary texts that we write about and teach to our students are not the texts average English readers are likely to have encountered. Following the lapse of the Print Licensing Act in 1695, commercial print production surged and people across England’s urban centers were confronted with a deluge of print, much of which was relatively affordable, such as broadsides, pamphlets, and daily gazettes. Books, however, remained expensive. Abridgments performed a valuable socio-cultural function by expanding access to once-expensive literature while also reducing the time investment to consume literature. Abridgments expanded access geographically, as well, because provincial and colonial American printers found a ready market for abridged texts. By 1800, roughly three times as many abridgments of Robinson Crusoe had been printed than had editions of the original, mostly by Scottish publishers operating out of Edinburgh and Glasgow. In North America, the first unabridged edition of Robinson Crusoe was not printed until 1819,
whereas abridgments had been printed regularly since the 1780s. Abridgments expanded access intellectually by adapting style, form, and rhetoric for diverse audiences with varying levels of reading proficiency. The Methodist luminary John Wesley found *Paradise Lost* too esoteric for the average English reader, so he altered, abridged, and annotated it without breaking Milton’s blank verse. Moreover, it was John Wynne’s abridgment of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that was widely read by students at the universities, not Locke’s original. This story is repeated time and time again, not only for novels but for historically significant works across all genres of literature. “Book Abridgment in Eighteenth-Century England” contributes new knowledge regarding the popularity of abridgment, but it also underscores the plasticity of literature, the instability of textual history, and the artificiality of the literary canon.

In the first chapter, I identify methods of book abridgment that were prevalent prior to 1800. Whereas some books were basically cut and pasted into smaller, shorter books (effectively retaining the text from the original), others were paraphrased, excerpted into compendiums, or abridged during the process of translation. Following an examination of the methods of abridgment, I turn to printing records to assess the rise in book abridgment from a relatively obscure practice during the sixteenth century to a ubiquitous practice by the conclusion of the eighteenth century. The chapter concludes with an overview of British copyright law pertaining to book abridgment so as to establish the legality of book abridgment throughout the long eighteenth century.

The following three chapters will examine the ways in which book abridgment evolved in print and literary culture. Contrary to modern scholarship that regards book
abridgment as parasitic, the great intellectuals of the Scientific Revolution recognized that abridgments played a significant role in the dissemination of knowledge, which was integral to the advancement of learning. I examine John Wynne’s *Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696), which was published in 33 editions (and 5 languages) prior to 1801. Wynne’s abridgment, though interesting in and of itself, is representative of the broader debates concerning prose style and rhetorical brevity following the founding of the Royal Society. Abridgers were well-situated to condense ideas, cut superfluous or long-winded expressions and descriptions, and establish a model of brevity that adapted old works brought closer to a model of perfection that was judged not by flourishes and elegance of language, but by the ease of learning and retention of knowledge.

Just as abridgment was flourishing within scientific circles, the practice emerged in prose fiction. In this chapter, my aim is to answer a single question: to what extent do abridgments figure into the origins of the English novel? I suggest that some abridgments constitute a reaction to the models of narration, characterization, and storytelling found in early novels, particularly those by Defoe and Swift. Abridgers had a tendency to curtail in-depth representations of the human psyche, such as is found in the first-person narrations of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722). Unlike nonfiction abridgments, which sought to simplify and expedite instruction and the retention of knowledge, abridgments of novels sought to expedite reading itself, condensing action so as to increase the rate of action and thereby align the generic attributes of the emergent novel tradition with run-of-the-mill formula fiction.
In the final chapter, I move away from examining abridgment as a form of print production and instead look to the ways in which the process of abridgment is complicit in the transformation of existing dramatic literature into new theatrical performances. Abridgment was utilized throughout the long eighteenth century as a means of reforming older plays to make them suitable for modern audiences. At a time when adaptations, particularly of plays by Shakespeare, were lauded as modern and elegant improvements of rustic, obsolete, and older plays, abridgments served as something of a compromise between the past and the present. In the case of Sir William Davenant’s abridgment of *Hamlet* (1676), the shortened version exhibits qualities that are at times very modern. Beyond *Hamlet*, I show that it was quite common throughout the century to reform older plays by abridging lines and scenes that were no longer suitable for modern audiences while retaining lines and scenes that still held popular appeal.

I will conclude with a brief note on the evolution of prose fiction abridgments into the late eighteenth century, including abridgments for young readers, and how book abridgment contributed the formation of the literary canon.
INTRODUCTION

Oxford, 1479. Just three years after William Caxton brought the printing press to what was a war-torn and backwards nation, All Souls fellow James Goldwell commissioned an abridgment of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.\(^1\) This particular abridgment of *Ethics* had existed for decades as a widely-circulated manuscript translated into Latin by Leonardo Bruni, a Florentine humanist best known as an early practitioner of modern historiography.\(^2\) Like so many other translations and abridgments, the work is more of a summary than a verbatim, or near-verbatim, copy. Bruni cut and altered as he pleased and effectively transformed the work into a textbook of sorts for students at Oxford University.\(^3\) Richard Grafton published an English translation of Bruni’s abridgment in 1547, after which time the abridgment fell out of print and into obscurity.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) Ianziti, *Writing History*, 149.

As the first abridgment to be published in the British Isles, Bruni’s abridgment of Aristotle’s *Ethics* emerged from a tradition of learning that emphasized intense mental and physical interaction with primary source materials. Scholars and students alike spent much of their time deeply absorbed in transferring content and ideas from one sheet of paper to another, usually from a printed work or manuscript into a personal commonplace book. So when Bruni abridged Aristotle’s *Ethics*, no one would have thought this was out of the ordinary. No one would have said scoffed at the idea of rephrasing Aristotle for university students. Abridgment was commonplace.\(^5\) For the educated, abridgment would have played a significant role in the development of their intellectual lives. Summarizing and excerpting not only taught students how to become better consumers of information, it also based on inescapable economic realities: books were expensive, as was paper.

This dissertation is broadly concerned with abridgments of English literature. The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold: to examine abridgments within literary history and the history of print, and to carve out a space for a critical appreciation of abridgments, including ways in which we can productively read abridgments alongside the texts from which they were derived. Abridgment, quite literally, was everywhere. It was common across all genres of literature. It was common in letter writing and public

\(^{5}\) Book abridgment dates to ancient Rome. See *Justin’s Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, written sometime prior to the fifth century “To be sure, the text of Justin encompasses material of varying degrees of credibility” (1). In his preface, Justin claims to have “excerpted from his forty-four published volumes all the most noteworthy material. I omitted what did not make pleasurable reading or serve to provide a moral, and I produced a brief anthology to refresh the memory of those who had studied history in Greek” (13). See R. Develin, “Introduction” in *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, by Justin, trans. J.C. Yardley, American Philological Association Classical Resources Series, ed. James J. Clauss (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).
speaking. It was taught within schools as part of lessons on grammar and translation. To come to terms with the extent of abridgment within England, I have examined hundreds of abridgments dating from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries. As a result, this dissertation draws examples from a wide variety of English literature, including fiction, poetry, philosophy, history, and drama. Over the course of this study, my primary concern has been to examine abridgments as rhetorical operations that enter into conversation with the source texts from which they were derived. In other words, I wanted to know how abridgments operated within genres, reflected evolving audience expectations, and thus function as a barometer of changing literary fashions.

**Defining Abridgment**

Generally speaking, abridgment is about compression. Text and ideas are cut, paraphrased, or translated in such a way that the result is a work that is shorter than the original. But there’s a catch. In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson defines the verb “To Abridge” to denote diminishment or deprivation, such as to have one’s liberties abridged; however, for the primary definition Johnson points to textual compression: “To make shorter in words, keeping still the same substance.” Johnson’s definition also reflects the potentially contradictory functions of abridgment: to compress as well as to preserve. In other words, the quality of an abridgment was judged not by the extent of the cutting but rather by how accurately that which was retained managed to convey the “substance” of the original to its ideal reading audience. Temple Henry Croker suggests that preservation is integral to the design of abridgment, which he
defines as, “an epitome, summary, or substance of a discourse, in which only the essential part of what is elsewhere treated of more at large is preserved.” And Ephraim Chambers expresses a similar position in his *Cyclopædia* (1778), defining abridgment as “a summary, or contraction of a discourse; wherein the less material things being more briefly insisted on, the whole is brought into a lesser compass.” Although Chambers does not mention “preservation” specifically, his insistence that the ideal abridgment should accurately represent “the whole” certainly suggests some aspect of preservation. But Croker’s and Chambers’ references to “an essential part” and “less material things,” respectively, also point to imperfections in the original work that an abridgment is designed to improve upon. Both suggest, at the very least, that authors endow their literary creations with ideas and verbosity that are tangential to the core purpose of the work. In their entry for abridgment, the editors of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* imply that brevity, not verbosity, is the sign of a mature author: “The art of conveying much sentiment in few words is the happiest talent an author can be possessed of. This talent is peculiarly necessary in the present state of literature.”


7 Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 1 (London: Printed for W. Strahan, 1778-1788).

8 *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, ed. William Smellie, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar; and sold by Colin Macfarquhar, 1771). Of course, this attitude was not limited to abridgment. See Blaise Pascal, “Je n’ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n’ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte.” [I made this [letter] very long, because I did not have the leisure to make it
This tension between fidelity and improvement is common within abridgments. For example, we see advertised on the title page of Samuel Parker’s *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, Sozomen, & Theodorit* (1707) that the work had been “faithfully abridg’d from the originals,” thereby indicating to the reader not only a kind of ideological fidelity to the original but also a certain degree of authenticity—that the abridgment does indeed derive from the the previously published “originals.”\(^9\) These sentiments are further emphasized in the preface to the reader. “That which I have especially aim’d at,” writes Parker, “is to make my Book as Universally Serviceable as I could, to the Learned as a Remembrancer, and to the Unlearned as an Instructor…not to omit, if it were possible, so much as any one Incident, or Circumstance, which might be of Consequence for Those who have convers’d with the Originals.”\(^10\) The substance of Parker’s claim—that abridgments can compress the extent of textual expression while simultaneously preserving content, knowledge, or ideas—was widely expressed by abridgers throughout the long eighteenth century.

If we continue to read Parker’s remarks, however, we will encounter another apparent contradiction within the advertisement of the abridgment. The title page not only advertised the work as a faithful abridgment, but it went on to advertise a number of additions that were not to be found in the originals:

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\(^10\) Parker, *The Ecclesiastical History*, xx.
The abridger has added necessary notes and illustrations in the margin. A preface giving an account of his authors. An index of the memorable persons, &c. mention’d in the abridgment. And a letter to Mr. Bold, occasion’d by his late discourse concerning the resurrection of the same body. To which is added a letter to the abridger.\textsuperscript{11}

The same gesture toward improvement and additions can be found in An Epitome of Ortelius (1601), which advertises the work as “amplyfied with new Mappes wanting in the Latin editions.”\textsuperscript{12} In a 1722 abridgment of Robinson Crusoe, the editor states in the preface that, “I do assure my Readers, whatever they may alledge against this Abridgment, there are not only many Errors corrected, but several palpable and gross Contradictions rectified and amended.”\textsuperscript{13} Correction could also take the form of expurgation or political censorship where entire paragraphs or scenes may have been stripped. In other words, an abridgment was rarely ever a simple redaction of text. Publishers often sought to demonstrate that the abridgment included something that was not to be found in the original, or that the abridgment improved upon something that was deficient in the original.

\textsuperscript{11} Parker, The Ecclesiastical History, xx.

\textsuperscript{12} Abraham Ortelius, An Epitome of Ortelius His Theater of the vworld, abridged ed. (London: John Norton, 1601).

Because abridgments assume so many forms, authors and publishers have historically employed numerous, somewhat-synonymous terms to advertise a work as an abridgment, including epitome, abstract, extract, summary, digest, synopsis, précis, outline, breviary, or abbreviature. Likewise, it was not uncommon to see abridgments advertised as compendiums, anthologies, or collections. The terminology of abridgment, far from fixing the usage of synonymous terms, serves only to conflate and confuse the practice of textual compression. Opelt notes that, among abridgments of antiquity, certain levels of generic distinction did in fact exist, Horster and Reitz contend that any attempt to distinguish among “genres” of abridgment is troubled by the “inconsistency of…terminology.”

It is for this reason that we need to generate a unique definition that accounts for the variety of forms that abridgment assumed. Broadly, I employ the term “abridgment” as a kind of catchall term for any methodical compression of a literary work. Moreover, abridgment is a form of derivative literary production. This means two things. First, abridgments are distinct products that could be bought and sold in the print marketplace. Second, abridgment is an editorial practice that aims to both compress and preserve the original from which it was derived.

Why Abridgments Matter

Abridgments are, by definition, unoriginal. The existence of a source work is prerequisite. Like translation and adaptation, abridgment is a form derivative literary production. In essence, then, abridgment, translation, and adaptation merely constitute different strategies of textual and paratextual transformation. Countless volumes have been written on translations, translation theory, and translation as a unique form of authorship. Much ink has been spilled debating the cultural significance of theatrical adaptations. Each of these forms of derivative literary production has been widely accepted by virtue of the labor and invention invested by the author, translator, or adaptor. However, scholars have been hesitant to afford this same respect to abridgments. Pat Rogers has characterized chapbook abridgments of Defoe’s novels as works that “feed upon” other works. This parasitic characterization is made more explicit by D.R. Woolf, who notes that the Renaissance-era historical chronicle, typified by Holinshed’s Chronicles, had by the eighteenth century dissolved into “parasite genres” of historical writing that appealed to a wider audience, the most popular of which were abridged histories designed for lower-income consumers. Similarly, Leah Price characterizes “excerpting, abridging, [and] compiling” as “crudely parasitic operations,” as “textual


mutilations” intended only to reduce length and complexity for less discerning, or novice, readers.\textsuperscript{17} In modern scholarship, abridgment is colored by what seems to be an inherently negative connotation, that once-healthy original works were ultimately harmed by parasitic abridgments. At the very least, such statements would have us believe that book abridgment does not yield significant contributions to the arts and sciences.

It is true that abridgments alter original works, sometimes beyond recognition. It would be difficult to argue that, in altering text and paratext, abridgment does not also alter an author’s intended meaning. But to judge abridgment upon such grounds, and to deride abridgments as literary parasites, suggests that authorial intention assumes primacy over reception and interpretation. E.D. Hirsch has shown that authorial intention cannot entirely be disregarded, as expression and interpretation are “by nature two-sided and reciprocal…each pole existing through and for the other, and each completely pointless without the other.”\textsuperscript{18} Authors are well aware of the literary conventions in which they are taking part as well as the ways in which the culture and politics of their social and private lives influence their writing. To disregard authorial intent would be a fallacy.\textsuperscript{19} Yet herein lay the contradiction. We tend to value the great literary experiments of the past, except when those experiments are abridgments. We tend to regard original expression as the lowest common denominator of literary masters, but expression within

\textsuperscript{17} Leah Price, \textit{The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2, 49.


abridgments alters the original and thus constitutes deviation. In such cases, abridgments are treated as copycats, plagiarism, or even piracy.

Such misconceptions ignore historical realities. Rather than characterize abridgments as parasites, it is more useful to contextualize them within the literary milieu for which they were designed. Michael McKeon writes that seventeenth-century literary culture was marked by an “instability of generic categories,” which only began to stabilize and reflect modern generic categories during the eighteenth century.²⁰ This period witnessed the decline of the heroic epic and the rise of prose fiction, along with the emergence of new literary genres like the novel, the essay, and the scientific article. Furthermore, the modernization of print culture, and the expansion of print outside of London resulted in the materialization of exponentially more printed works than at any previous time in human history. “If the novel originated in early modern Europe,” suggests McKeon, “it should be possible to observe and describe its emergence within a historical context whose richness of detail has no parallel in earlier periods.”²¹ The same is true of abridgment, and perhaps at no earlier time in history is the emergence and maturity of a distinct form of literary production and editorial practice so well documented. During this period, book abridgment matured from a private manuscript practice, and from schoolhouse pedagogy, into modern and marketable literary products. Abridgments were not immune to the “instability of generic categories.” In the first


chapter I demonstrate that abridgments were actually a force for generic stabilization throughout the long eighteenth century, a discussion which I continue in the second chapter in regards to abridgments of scientific literature. In the realm of imaginative literature, abridgments typically deviated from their sources by updating and “correcting” content and style so as to reflect the tastes and values of new audiences, which in turn enhanced the visibility and popularity of older works, keeping them in print. By re-introducing older works to a new generation of readers, and by refashioning those works through abridgment, publishers impressed an emerging literary tradition onto the public consciousness. This was especially so with novels which were abridged into children’s editions, thus leading to successive generations of readers who were raised on the classics of English literature. By the start of the nineteenth century, abridgments had contributed significantly to the social stratification of the print marketplace and the formation of the English literary canon. In short, I hope to show that abridgment was everywhere. Throughout the long eighteenth century there existed a culture of abridgment within English print and literary culture that spanned all genres of literature and all classes of readers. The culture of abridgment extended to the stage as older plays were abridged and adapted for revival performances, and in doing so playwrights typically used abridgment and adaptation to censor older plays so as to reflect the changing tastes and values of the playhouse audience. Abridgment was typical in classroom instruction, especially to help students master the intricacies of English grammar. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Abbé Gaultier even published a textbook on the matter, *A Method of Making*
Abridgments (1800). Translators looked to the elegant brevity of classical poetry as inspiration for English poetry, and in doing so paraphrased and abridged tedious, word-for-word translations into a new poetic tradition. Abridgment so pervaded English society, that in the act of writing a novel, or an essay, or a play, authors were keenly aware of how their own works might be altered, shortened, and published by another, which in some cases led authors to either write their own abridgments or to self-abridge during the act of writing.

Studies that attempt to discover a genealogy of abridged literature, describe abridgment as a practice, or explain the methodological considerations of abridgers are few and far between. Nevertheless, the current study is heavily indebted to a handful of precursors. In what is to date the only substantive study on the practice of book abridgment, Chloe Wheatley addresses the manner in which abridgments of histories redefined the past according to the religious or political affiliations of the intended audience. Ultimately, Wheatley and I utilize many of the same primary sources to different ends. Drawing from the poetry of Spencer, Du Bartas, Cowley, and Milton, Wheatley focuses on how Early Modern writers used epitome to appropriate history so as to “teach readers about the shaping choices that could be used to form and reform the historical record.” My broader goals are to show how the practice of book abridgment

24 Wheatley, Epic, 8.
evolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and how methods of abridgment reflect rhetorical strategies that developed in response to generic instability in the sciences, philosophy, and fiction.\(^{25}\)

Many other authors deserve recognition for their scholarship on book abridgment. Early practitioners of analytical bibliography produced textual collations that compared abridgments to originals. Henry Clinton Hutchins and Lucius Hubbard were among the first to suggest that the abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* warranted serious academic inquiry.\(^{26}\) Despite characterizing chapbook abridgments as parasites, Pat Rogers rescued the abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* from the academic graveyard.\(^{27}\) In his monumental study of prose fiction published in magazines, Robert D. Mayo noted that abridgment became a popular method for reducing longer works to meet the demands of magazine print culture.\(^{28}\) More recently, articles and essays by Andrew O’Malley, Dale B.J.

\(^{25}\) In addition to Wheatley, Marietta Horster and Christiane Reitz recently published a collection of 26 essays on “condensing texts,” as they refer to abridgment. The authors featured in this collection attempt to go beyond comparative analysis between originals and abridgments by developing theoretical models to better “examine genres of abridgement as the result of literary and cultural processes” and thus explain the “various processes of abridging and arranging” (6). However, given that the scope of this collection focuses on works of antiquity, it is of limited use for scholars of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature. See Marietta Horster and Christiane Reitz, eds. *Condensing texts—Condensed texts* (Stuggart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010).


\(^{27}\) Rogers, “Classics and Chapbooks,” 43.

Randall, and Julia Rudolph address abridgments of individual works or genres and the role that these works played in the development of a modern print and literary culture. The present work is also heavily indebted to Jennifer Snead, who convincingly demonstrated that editors designed abridgments to encourage active reading practices.\textsuperscript{29} “By reading abridgements within their eighteenth-century context, as enabling rather than limiting readers,” Snead aims to provide “a model by which to broaden understanding of editorially emended texts—and the readers they interpellate—in other historical periods” (78). Aside from these studies, book abridgment has been brought into scholarly discourse mostly as an afterthought.

**Chapter Outline**

In the following chapters, I will examine the emergence of book abridgment as a distinct literary practice, the institutionalization of abridgment as a unique form of literary production, as well as the ways in which the evolution of the print and literary economies exerted pressure on abridgment, forcing its methods to adapt in response to the emergence of modern copyright law.

In the first chapter, I identify methods of book abridgment that were prevalent prior to 1800. Whereas some books were basically cut and pasted into smaller, shorter books (effectively retaining the text from the original), others were paraphrased, excerpted into compendiums, or abridged during the process of translation. Indeed, book

abridgment did not assume any one form during the long eighteenth century. Following an examination of the methods of abridgment, I turn to printing records to assess the rise in book abridgment from a relatively obscure practice during the sixteenth century to a ubiquitous practice by the conclusion of the eighteenth. The chapter concludes with an overview of British copyright law pertaining to book abridgment so as to establish the legality of book abridgment throughout the long eighteenth century.

The following three chapters will show abridgment materialized in print and literary culture. In the second chapter, I outline the historical emergence of nonfiction prose, particularly the scientific essay, and the ways in which abridgment contributed to the rise of that genre during the late seventeenth century. Contrary to modern scholarship that regards book abridgment as parasitic, the great intellectuals of the Scientific Revolution recognized that abridgments played a significant role in the dissemination of knowledge, which was integral to the advancement of learning. As a case study, I examine John Wynne’s *Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696), which was published in 33 editions (and 5 languages) prior to 1801. Wynne’s abridgment, though interesting in and of itself, is representative of the broader debates concerning prose style and rhetorical brevity following the founding of the Royal Society. Thomas Sprat addressed the need for brevity in prose in *The History of the Royal Society* (1667). And while has been made of Sprat’s call for “mathematical plainness” in scientific prose, one thing is for certain: few members of the society immediately heeded the call. I conjecture that Sprat’s call for “mathematical plainness” in scientific prose was realized within abridgments. Abridgers were well-situated to
condense ideas, cut superfluous or long-winded expressions and descriptions, and establish a model of brevity that adapted old works brought closer to a model of perfection that was judged not by flourishes and elegance of language, but by the ease of learning and retention of knowledge.

In the third chapter, I turn my attention to the rise of prose fiction in the literary marketplace. In this chapter, my aim is to answer a single question: to what extent do abridgments figure into the origins of the English novel? My interest in the relationship between abridgments and the origins of the English novel are primarily concerned with the half-century or more of literary history that spanned the end of the seventeenth century and start of the eighteenth century. I suggest that some abridgments constitute a reaction to the models of narration, characterization, and storytelling found in early novels, particularly those by Defoe and Swift. Abridgers had a tendency to curtail in-depth representations of the human psyche, such as is found in the first-person narrations of Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Moll Flanders (1722). And in referring to “English novel,” I mean the various materializations of both formulaic and experimental prose fiction which modern scholars point to as precursors to the novel—as being similar to novels while lacking certain formal attributes that later generations of scholars would come to define as “novelistic.” Abridgers were keenly aware of the interconnectness of generic expectations and reading practices. Unlike nonfiction abridgments, which sought to simplify and expedite instruction and the retention of knowledge, abridgments of novels sought to expedite reading itself, condensing action so as to increase the rate of
action and thereby align the generic attributes of novels with run-of-the-mill formula fiction.

In the final chapter, I move away from examining abridgment as a form of print production and instead look to the ways in which the process of abridgment is complicit in the transformation of existing dramatic literature into new theatrical performances. Abridgment was utilized throughout the long eighteenth century as a means of reforming older plays to make them suitable for modern audiences. At a time when adaptations, particularly of plays by Shakespeare, were lauded as modern and elegant improvements of rustic, obsolete, and older plays, abridgments served as something of a compromise between the past and the present. In the case of Sir William Davenant’s abridgment of *Hamlet* (1676), the shortened version exhibits qualities that are at times very modern, such as updated English and the regularization of meter and rhyme, yet at other times very old fashioned, such as the retention of Shakespeare’s obscure puns, conceits, figures and tropes. Unlike many of the more significant and drastic adaptations (see Tate’s *King Lear*), Davenant’s abridgment preserves the artistic unity of Shakespeare’s plot, action, and character and ultimately influenced productions of *Hamlet* throughout the eighteenth century. Beyond *Hamlet*, I show that it was quite common throughout the century to reform older plays by abridging lines and scenes that were no longer suitable for modern audiences while retaining lines and scenes that still held popular appeal.

I will conclude with a brief note on the evolution of prose fiction abridgments into the late eighteenth century, including abridgments for young readers, and how book abridgment contributed canon formation.
Chapter 1

WHAT IS ABRIDGMENT?

In 1739, Samuel Johnson drafted a brief on the legality of abridgment on behalf of his employer, Edward Cave, publisher of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. Cave was in a tight spot. Just a few months prior he published an extract from Joseph Trapp’s *The Nature, Folly, Sin and Danger of Being Righteous Over Much* (1739). Trapp’s publishers filed a complaint with the Court of Chancery, to which Cave “entered a demurrer and answer to [the] bill of complaint, denying that he ever intended to print Trapp’s work in its entirety.” At the heart of the issue was whether or not publishing a shortened version of a complete work was allowed under the copyright act of 1710. To be sure, the practice of abridgment was neither new nor exceptional. It was commonplace, as it had been for centuries. But what, exactly, constituted a free and fair abridgment? Were extracts abridgments? Must the abridger alter not only the length of

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1 Samuel Johnson, “Considerations on the Case of Dr. T’s Sermons, abridged by Mr. Cave, 1739.” *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 57 (July 1787), 555-557.

2 The extract from Trapp appears in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 9 (June 1739), 288-292.


4 *An Act for the Better Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, during the Times Therein Mentioned*, 8 Anne c.19 (1710).
the original but also the language and ideas therein? What is an abridgment? The answer, in short, is a lot of things. Nevertheless, there was little agreement among authors, publishers, and the courts on the matter. Over the course of the long eighteenth century, abridgments varied wildly in degrees of adaptation. Some abridgments were copied verbatim from original works but with a few phrases and sentences deleted from each paragraph. Other abridgments bear little resemblance to the original and might rightfully be labeled adaptations as well as abridgments. Moreover, translations were frequently abridged though seldom advertised as abridgments. It was not uncommon for histories to include excerpts from historical documents, and even the excerpts might be abridged and pared down. When one begins to look closely at the historical record, abridgment was commonplace, and methods of abridgment differed markedly from text to text, and from author to author.

In this chapter, I aim to establish what I have observed to be some fundamental patterns within abridgments published prior to 1801. First, I will lay the groundwork for a taxonomy of abridgments. I will identify common structures for abridgment, as well as three methods commonly employed to compress the original work into a more narrow compass. I will then show that abridgments were never really outliers in English print culture, as we’ve been led to believe. Abridgment was not only commonplace but the demand for abridged literature increased dramatically over the course of the eighteenth century. Lastly, I will establish the legality of abridgment. While there are some notable moments when abridgment seemed to exist within a legal gray area, such as in 1739 when Samuel Johnson was employed by Edward Cave, overall the historical arc of
abridgment bends toward growing acceptance by judges, legislators, authors, and publishers.

1.1 Designing Abridgments

Among the earliest modern attempts to establish a taxonomy of abridgments can be found in Robert D. Mayo’s *English Novel in the Magazines*. “Abridgment,” according to Mayo, is a “condensed version of a work of fiction, not greatly reduced in scale. Most abridgments followed more or less the author’s own wording, and therefore attempted to afford the same pleasures as the original.” Mayo then directs his readers to two additional forms of abridgment. “Epitome,” he writes, is a “highly condensed summary of a work of fiction, intended chiefly to acquaint readers with the fable of the book,” whereas a “Redaction,” is a “condensed version of a work of fiction, usually avoiding the phraseology of the original, and frequently changing also the title and all the proper names.” Mayo’s terminology, which describes abridgments according to the extent of textual cutting and alteration, serves his purpose quite well. In writing the first comprehensive assessment of novel publishing in eighteenth-century magazines, Mayo needed to establish terminology that allowed him to clearly and quickly categorize the ways in which eighteenth-century novels were altered to fit the material limitations of periodical publishing. However, Mayo’s reliance on length as a determiner of types of


abridgment, as well as his focus on works of fiction, limits the application of these terms beyond his own study. These definitions fail to account for all types of abridgment, especially those published prior to the popularization of novels. Furthermore, Mayo’s definitions are too reliant on the product that results from the compositional practice of abridgment. Really, terms like “abridgment,” “epitome,” and “redaction” are as arbitrary as the various terms used to advertise abridgments prior to 1800.

There is often very little difference between works advertised as abridgments and those advertised as epitomes, abstracts, digests, summaries, and so forth. Too few authors and publishers employed these terms with any consistency. As such, terms like abridgment, epitome, and redaction refuse close association with any one method of abridgment or the rhetorical operations employed to reduce the work. In other words, in establishing a taxonomy of abridgment, I have found it necessary to distinguish types of abridgment first according to structure and organization, and secondly according to the compositional practice employed to compress the original work.

In this section, I will distinguish between two methods for structuring and organizing material within an abridgment, methods that date back to at least the late sixteenth century. Around 1599, Francis Bacon suggested in a letter to his friend Fulke Greville that abridgments, or “epitomes” as he was prone to calling them, can be structured into two distinct designs: “Epitomes also may be of 2 sorts: of any one Art, or...
part of Knowledge out of many Books; or of one Book by itself.”7 In other words, Bacon’s first type of abridgment constitutes a collection of excerpts or summaries drawn from multiple works that are then collected into a compendium, most often a reference work. I refer to this type as *compendiary abridgment*. Once completed, this type of abridgment represents a field of study or body of knowledge. This method is seen most frequently in abridgments of laws and statutes, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference works. Compendiary abridgments tend to exhibit a few guiding principles. First, compendiary abridgments functioned primarily as reference works wherein intellectual content has been compressed to its most essential components. Second, as reference works, the contents within were grouped under some organizational logic, usually chronologically, alphabetically, or thematically under heads.

Bacon’s second kind of epitome is comprised of excerpts or summaries drawn from a single work. I refer to this type as *monographic abridgment*. The latter may consist of one work compressed into a more narrow compass, as Bacon suggests; however, in practice it was also popular to abridge into one volume multiple works by a single author, such as Richard Boulton’s *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle* or Edward Midwinter’s abridgment of all three volumes of *Robinson Crusoe* into *The Wonderful Life, and Most Surprising Adventures, of Robinson Crusoe… Faithfully*

Moreover, if we consider that these designs for abridgment exist as opposite ends of a spectrum, then somewhere in between a *compendiary abridgment* and a *monographic abridgment* you would get something of a mix, such as Peter Shaw’s *The Philosophical Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq; Abridged, Methodized, and Disposed under the General Heads of Physics, Statics, Pneumatics, Natural History, and Medicine.*

Monographic abridgments are distinct from compendiary abridgments for several reasons. The latter is usually organized around a central theme or topic (i.e., law or biography), and the contents are excerpted and/or abstracted from multiple works and then assembled into a single, coherent organizational logic. By contrast, the textual content of a monographic abridgment is derived from one longer work (or multiple related works) that has been compressed through the excision of words, phrases, or entire paragraphs that were deemed superfluous by the abridger. In other words, the purposes

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for abridgment are contrary: in the former, abridgment takes the form of excerpts from multiple works that are brought together to produce a collection, whereas abridgment in the latter constitutes the subtraction of unwanted textual content so as to produce a shortened version of the whole.

Not only were compendiary abridgments structured differently from monographic abridgments, but it stands to reason that each produced a different kind of reading experience. In producing a shortened version of a whole, monographic abridgments were more likely to enable a linear reading experience, wherein a reader follows a train of thought through multiple chapters or from start to finish. By contrast, the organizational logic of compendiary abridgments enables, indeed encourages, a non-linear reading experience, wherein readers consult a table or index to find the appropriate textual content for reference. Excerpts may be taken verbatim from their sources, though most frequently excerpted material exhibits silent emendations to spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, and anything else that affects ease of reading.

The intellectual underpinnings of compendiary abridgment can be traced back to the tradition of commonplacing, by which I mean the scholarly tradition of keeping a codex comprised of blank leaves onto which one transcribes excerpts from various texts. Of the many extant designs of commonplace books, most are organized alphabetically by title, name, or topic or organized thematically according to subject headings. According to Peter Beal, both commonplacing and abridgment developed in conjunction as “educational aid[s]” for the “practical application” of organizing and storing “a large amount of miscellaneous learning or information which was felt to be worth
remembering.”10 Richard Yeo notes that famous lexicographer Pierre Bayle began his Dictionary from his own commonplace book, in which he “made abstracts of all the books he read, and wrote his observations upon them,” and that the value of this type of note taking was “to prompt [readers’] memory of earlier reading or to explore topics outside their current knowledge.”11 And Ann Blair suggests thatexcerpting “was said to aid the memory in at least two ways: the act of writing itself helped to ingrain the passage in the memory, and the excerpts could then be learned by heart to exercise the memory.”12 However, as books became more widely available following the invention of print, readers increasingly turned to printed commonplace books, compendiums, dictionaries, and other reference works to help them navigate growing bodies of knowledge. Blair suggests, “the experience of overabundance not only fostered the diffusion and development of various aids to learning or ‘reference genres’ but also affected the way scholars worked, from reading and taking notes to composing books of their own.”13 Blair goes on to note, “Early modern pedagogues taught their pupils to copy choice passages they encountered in their reading into notebooks,” which ultimately provided “a viable method for managing and benefiting from all the newly available


information” available in the age of print. Legal historian John D. Cowley largely agrees, noting that the “whole body of the law is contained in a vast number of volumes” that even in the early days of print English law very quickly amounted to a body of literature too large for even an experienced lawyer to navigate with accuracy and expediency,” and thus by “about the middle of the fifteenth century some sort of rough guide to the literature available became acutely necessary” (126). In her study of Giles Jacobs’ New Law Dictionary, Julia Rudolph builds on Blair’s work to argue that abridgments of legal statutes “developed in close relationship to manuscript commonplace traditions, and these texts must be understood within the context of legal education.” The influence of the commonplace tradition is evident in these early abridgments of the law. Cowley notes that the “two principal features” of abridgments of laws and statutes, “namely, Abbreviation and Alphabetical Arrangement under heads or titles, are present from the fifteenth century onward.” The contents of the Vetus Abbreviamentum (1481), published by John Lettou and William Machlinia, are organized alphabetically by title with an accompanying index to facilitate easy reference.

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14 Ann Blair, Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 73.


Alphabetical organization would remain popular, but it was equally likely that an editor would employ a mixture of chronological and alphabetical organization. *A Kalendar, or Table, Comprehending the Effect of all the Statutes ... Whereunto is Annexed an Abridgment of all the Statutes* (1606) devotes the initial 104 pages to a chronological summary of statutes from the Magna Carta to King James, which is followed by 345 pages of alphabetically arranged topics from “Abilitie & non Abilitie” (105) to “Yarne and Thrummes.”¹⁹ And works like *The Penal Statutes Abridged...Calculated to serve the desirable End of An Alphabetical Common Place Book of the Penal Laws* (1777) makes the connection between abridgments and commonplace books all the more obvious.²⁰

The nature of commonplace books and compendiary abridgments depart, however, in the nature of the extracted material. Commonplace books were typically collections of *sententiae*, rhetorical figures or “pithy remarks” that were “valued not only as a form of expression in words, but as a way of encapsulating generally accepted opinions.”²¹ Joachim Camerarius defined the *sententiae* as “a short clause or sentence, comprising a general saying susceptible of very wide application.”²² In both definitions, the purpose of *sententiae* gestures toward the general rather than the specific. When

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¹⁹ Ferdinando Pulton, ed. *Kalender, or table, comprehending the effect of all the statutes that have beene made and put in print* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1606), 449.


collected under heads such as “Virtue” or “Honor,” *sententiae* were chosen to encapsulate the general qualities commonly associated with that larger theme or topic. Compendiary abridgments, though compiled through similar means as a commonplace book, gesture toward the specific rather than the general. An abridgment of laws and statutes is not designed to offer aphorisms on moral and instructive insights so prevalent in commonplace books. Rather, extracts within compendiary abridgments sought to clarify the abstruse letter of the law for England’s fast-growing civil society. Likewise, compendiary abridgments of rhetoric or philosophy were employed by students and scholars alike to learn or remember specific principles to apply in their own work.

Abridgments generally follow one of two designs. Either one work is abridged into a shorter work, or excerpts are taken from multiple works and assembled into a compendium. Both designs of abridgment were prevalent throughout the long eighteenth century. In the next section, I will identify three distinct editorial practices that were commonly employed to produce an abridgment.

1.2 Practices of Abridgment

Abridgments are literary products available in the print marketplace. Book abridgment, by contrast, is a set of compositional and editorial practices employed by abridgers, editors, translators, and publishers to create abridgments. These compositional and editorial practices appear to have varied wildly from author to author. Wheatley offers this definition for the compositional practice of book abridgment: “The term epitome, in its most basic usage, refers simply to the rhetorical operation by which a
reader reduces a source to its most essential matter, whether by extracting a commonplace saying from a source, outlining a source text’s argument or chapter divisions, translating a work into English, or paring down the stylistic excesses of a copious text.”23 I have found Wheatley’s definition to be broadly applicable because it hinges on the idea that book abridgment is a rhetorical operation that consists of various compositional practices, such as extraction and translation, and these rhetorical operations and compositional practices can differ from text to text. The method of abridgment seen in abridgments of English law, for example, differs significantly from methods used to abridge novels and prose fiction, both of which differ from methods used to abridge poetic verse, lyrics, or plays.

Even among abridgments of novels and prose fiction, methods of abridgment might vary significantly depending on genre and audience expectations. The Wonderful Life, and Most Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe ... Faithfully Epitomized (1762) published by Charles Hitch and his associates Hawes, Crowder, Woodgate, and Ware, is a long paraphrase of the original three installments of the Robinson Crusoe narrative.24 It


was published as a single volume, a moderate duodecimo, for readers who would have been familiar with the story that had, by the 1760s, become a literary sensation. By contrast, readers in 1765 would have been unfamiliar with the *Gothic Story of the Castle of Otranto* published in *The Universal Magazine*, and its appearance in a periodical publication suggests that the abridgment served more as an advertisement to encourage readers to go out and buy the book. Nearly all of the intellectual content within the abridgment is textually identical to the source, excepting the excision of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, especially in the last two chapters. The abridgment includes just enough of the original to whet the appetite, operating in a fashion very similar to excerpts found in modern literary magazines. While modern scholars commonly refer to both these works as abridgments, the modern usage of the term fails to recognize the diversity of editorial methods used to compress literary expression. I suggest there exist at least three distinct methods of book abridgment that were commonly practiced throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

- First, abridgment might be achieved through simple subtraction of words, phrases, or whole passages, but otherwise the content carried over from the original remains recognizable. I refer to this method as *editorial abridgment*. This method is seen most frequently in abridgments of verse, lyrics, and plays, although it became more prevalent in novels, especially serialized abridgments, in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

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Noster-Row, 1719); Daniel Defoe, *Serious Reflections during the life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: Printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship and Black-Swan in Pater-Noster-Row, 1720).
• Second, an abridger might forego the tedious task of cutting individual lines of text in favor of rewriting the work entirely, thereby achieving compression through paraphrase and summary. I refer to this method as *summary abridgment*. This method is seen most frequently in abridgments of prose works, especially novels.

• Lastly, abridgment can also be found in works of translation and extreme adaptation. I refer to this method as *transformative abridgment*. Even if the word count of the abridgment equals or exceeds that of the source, it was not uncommon for translators to compress phrasing, reduce amplifications, simplify ideas, or in any other way expurgate passages or concepts deemed distasteful, antiquated, or too obviously foreign to English readers.

These three methods are representative of the vast majority of monographic abridgments published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These terms, editorial abridgment, summary abridgment, and transformative abridgment, track closely to Mayo’s definitions of abridgment, epitome, and redaction. However, there is a crucial difference. Whereas Mayo’s definitions hinges on both methods and the amount of text cut from the original, I’ve attempted in these definitions to focus only on the method. The extent of abridgment, I have found, is entirely arbitrary and not particularly helpful in determining a type of abridgment.

This taxonomy is not comprehensive, nor should it to be interpreted as a set of rigid guidelines. Rather, I hope to convey that these practices were as fluid and malleable
as literary production itself. Works that I refer to as editorial abridgments will bear a more obviously identical resemblance to their sources than will works I refer to as summary abridgments. However, editorial abridgments are just as likely to be interspersed with summarized or paraphrased passages as summary abridgments are to be interspersed with passages taken verbatim or near-verbatim from the original. The taxonomy is, at the very least, a starting point for a more thorough and critical description of the practice of book abridgment.

1.2.1 Editorial Abridgment

Editorial abridgment is the practice of cutting words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. Typically, what remained was a verbatim reduction of the source. Any textual alterations to what remained tended to be minor, typically changes in spelling, or replacing an unidiomatic word or phrase with something more modern. There were clear economic reasons for resorting to this method of abridgment. Publishers and printers could work directly from a printed text, which the abridger would have annotated accordingly, with any corrections noted in the margins. By cutting out the manuscript stage of the print/production model, the span of time separating product-conception and product-production is greatly reduced. In the end, editorial abridgment aims to shorten the whole, but in doing so retain enough of the original so as to be recognizable, and therefore produce a reading experience comparable to the original.
Oscar Sherwin’s study of *An Extract from Milton’s Paradise Lost. With Notes* (1763) shows that this was the John Wesley’s preferred method of abridgment, which he did on horseback while travelling the English countryside:

It must have been a remarkable sight—a small man in scrupulously neat clerical dress jogging somewhat awkwardly along the road, the reins hanging loosely on his horse’s neck, a book in one hand and busy pencil in the other, working through a word here, a phrase there, a sentence or paragraph elsewhere. Often on the back of his best riding horse he prepared other men’s work for republication...He read the best books on a subject, then extracted the more important passages and summarized their arguments. He never doubted his ability to abridge any book in the world. His method was to mark the important parts, put the extracts together, alter a few of the hard words, append notes taken from various authorities, add a preface, and then publish it.  

Wesley treated the labor of creating the abridgment as an intellectual contribution to the reading public, especially among those of more limited means, as he exposed potentially millions of readers to an original work that he personally edited to facilitate ease of comprehension. Wesley also abridged the Puritan theology of Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and Jonathan Edwards, the Anglican theology of William Law, and accounts of the American Revolution by Joseph Galloway. Wesley also abridged sentimental novels like Henry Brooke’s *The Fool of Quality*. Through these abridgments, Wesley reached potentially tens of thousands of readers, which in turn shaped the theological and philosophical debates of the late eighteenth century.

As Wesley perused books written by others, pencil in hand, he had to be ever mindful of the competing demands of his labor. On the one hand, Wesley had to cut the

book down to an affordable duodecimo in one volume. Wesley’s *Extract* omits some 1870 lines from Milton’s original which consisted of 10,565 lines, or just under 18%. On the other hand, Wesley wanted to preserve as much of the original as possible so as to provide a reading experience similar to Milton’s original. With this in mind, Wesley abridged Milton in such a way as to combine lines and thus retain the blank verse. That being said, where does one draw the line? The decision of what to cut depends, to a great extent, on assumed levels of literacy and reading comprehension among his potential readers. Wesley must have felt partial to preserving some content, even if it was likely beyond the comprehension of his intended audience, those whom Sherwin describes as having “neither much money nor much time to spend upon bulky books.”

So to further preserve content that even Wesley thought to be too difficult for many readers to comprehend, he appended explanatory notes that defined or translated esoteric words, or explained theological or mythical allusions. In Wesley’s *Extract*, hundreds of notes were included in appendices following each book. An example from the notes of Book V shows that the purpose of this labor was largely explanatory:

Ver. 7. *Aurora*—The Morning.
Ver. 8. *Mattin-Song*.—Morning-Song.
*The Prime*.—The first Hour of the Day.
Ver. 52. *Interdicted*.—Forbidden.
Ver. 118. *So it be unapproved*.
Ver. 145. *Orisons*.—Prayers
Ver. 176. *Wandring fires*.—Planets. *Not without Song*.—The Music of the Spheres was much talked of among the antient Philosophers.

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While the notes may reflect Wesley’s own concern that Milton’s vocabulary was beyond
the comprehension of the average reader, their presence also suggests that Wesley sought
to preserve the original as much as possible. He could have easily revised “Mattin-Song”
into “Morning-Song” without breaking meter or syntax.

Although editorial abridgments tended to preserve much of the original literary
content, it was also commonplace within abridgments of older works to modernize the
language, syntax, and correct material that had, in the intervening years, become
unidiomatic. In The Institutes of Gaius and Rules of Ulpian (1880), author James
Muirhead states plainly that the purpose of the epitomizer is, “to exclude what had
become obsolete.”28 This definition is too narrow to apply to all aspects of abridgment
and fails to recognize the preservationist tendencies of abridgers; however, it does point
to one of the primary reasons that books were abridged: changes in language, literary
tastes, and cultural values encouraged authors to update older works for a new audience.
Wesley’s annotations noted above show that Milton’s English, as well as his heightened
diction, were not entirely compatible with mid-eighteenth-century readers. Furthermore,
Wesley’s audience was not only English, but also (ideally) adherents to Methodism. As
Jennifer Snead notes, “this Methodist emphasis on literacy was part of a broader ideology

27 John Wesley, ed. An Extract from Milton’s Paradise Lost. With Notes, by John Milton,
abridged ed. (London: Printed by Henry Fenwick, 1763), 138-139.

28 James Muirhead, The Institutes of Gaius and Rules of Ulpian (Edinburgh: T. & T.
Clark, 1880), xv.
of self-improvement…in his abridgements he aimed to cultivate responsible readers who would actively engage in meaning-making.”

Wesley’s embrace of editorial abridgment, especially for his *Extract*, was not uncommon among works consisting primarily of verse. This is because verse resists paraphrase, or at the very least, paraphrasing thousands of lines of rhyming, metered verse into hundreds of lines of rhyming, metered verse would have taken exceptional talent and considerable time. Any alterations to the textual content tended to be minor, or at least minor in comparison to the amount of labor required for paraphrasing. And more often than not, excisions remained invisible to the reader. Take, for example, the abridgment of Aphra Behn’s *A Voyage to the Isle of Love* (1684) published by Arthur Bettesworth as *The Land of Love* (1717). Behn’s *Voyage*, originally included within her *Poems Upon Several Occasions*, is a pastoral elegy wherein the protagonist, Lisander, wanders through strange and foreign lands in search of Aminta, who dies tragically in the end, leaving Lisander to bemoan the sorrow and tragedy of their love. The abridgment retains most of Behn’s original language, although her Pindaric style of versification is occasionally revised into heroic couplets. Of the roughly 2200 lines Behn composed for the original, approximately 500 lines are cut in Bettesworth’s abridgment, with about 200

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lines near the end significantly altered. I am purposefully ambiguous on the exact number
of lines cut or altered, because the last third of the poem is heavily altered and therefore
difficult to assess with any accuracy. That being said, the example below shows the types
of revisions and excisions made to the 1684 source text for the abridgment:

At my [our] approach new Fires my Bosom warm;
New vigor I receive from every Charm:
I found invention with my Love increase;
And both instruct me with new Arts to please;
New Gallantry [Stratagems] I sought to entertain,
And had the Joy to find ‘em not in vain;
All the Extravagance of Youth I show,
And pay’d to Age the Dotage I shall owe;
All a beginning Passion can conceive,
What beauty Merits, or fond Love can give.
With diligence I wait Aminta’s look,
And her decrees from Frowns or Smiles I took,
To my new fixt resolves, no stop I found,
My Flame was uncontroul’d and knew no bound;[

Unlimited Expences every day
On what I thought she lik’d, I threw away:
My Coaches, and my Liverys, rich and new,
In all this Court, none made a better show.31

This excerpt, taken from the section of the poem entitled “Little Cares, or Little Arts to
Please,” recounts the arrival of Lisander at the village of “Little Cares” in search of his
love, Aminta. The first change, revising “my” to “our”, is a legitimate correction of an
inconsistency in the plot, as Lisander arrived at the village accompanied by the character
Love. The rest of the changes, however, are corrections of a different sort. In its original
form and within its original publication, Behn’s Voyage can be read in the context of the
author’s unique appropriation of the pastoral mode. Unlike the Early Modern pastoral

mode (see Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”) that are reminiscent of rural simplicity, Behn’s pastorals evoke the material excess and sexual libertinism of the Restoration. Dorothy Mermin characterizes Behn’s pastorals as a “realm, mostly heterosexual, in which gender distinctions are blurred by episodes of bisexuality and sexual hierarchy is to some extent suspended” and where “female sexual freedom” is depicted without apology.32 Reading Behn’s *Voyage* within the context of her collection of poems, it is easy to come to the same conclusion. But Jane Spencer notes that by the early eighteenth century, Behn’s pastorals “marked her out as old-fashioned,” with her “Baroque love of lavish detail” giving way to a culture that favored “plainer, tighter, more elegant” poetics, which leaves Spencer to contend that *The Land of Love* was revised so as “to create a more modern, and moral, volume for a politer generation of readers.”33 The generic norms of the pastoral mode had swung back toward rural simplicity, and the excesses of money, property, and passion were expunged from the poem. Yet even after considerable alteration, the abridgment retains more of the original than it excludes. Spencer shows that Behn’s reputation, and that of *Isle of Love*, still held cultural currency in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, so there was a real impetus to minimize alterations so as to try to replicate the reading experience, and therefore market appeal, of the original work. But this proved impossible to sustain, as “Before

32 Dorothy Mermin, “Women Becoming Poets: Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Anne Finch,” *English Literary History* 57.2 (July 1990), 335–55 (pp. 344-45).

long, though, her poems were too old-fashioned to be worth extensive alteration.”  

However, the example of *Land of Love* shows that there are limits to the extent to which abridgments are able to rescue older literature from the literary graveyard. In the case of Behn, her erotic poetry and verse translations continued to attract reading audiences until the end of the seventeenth century when, following the Collier controversy, her libertine philosophy fell out of fashion.  

Editorial abridgments ultimately retain much more than was cut. As such, they are first and foremost representations of the concept of selective preservation. As representations of selective preservation, editorial abridgments emphasize some textual and expressive content at the expense of other, less immediately relevant content. The goal was to produce a work that was both aesthetically appealing and a viable product in the print marketplace. Any changes made to the original will necessarily enact some degree of interpretive alteration, and significant changes may reflect what Whitmarsh terms a “reorientation of literary objectives” on the part of the abridger.  

There is no shortage of studies on abridgment that attend to this point.  

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34 Spencer, *Aphra Behn’s Afterlife*, 54.

35 See Dolors Altaba-Artal, *Aphra Behn’s English Feminism: Wit and Satire* (Cranbury, NJ, 1999). According to Altaba-Artal, “The attacks on Behn’s work correspond to the changing ideology’ prompted by Collier and the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM). “By the end of the seventeenth century the audience demanded moral action” (124). Likewise, Spencer claims that “when Behn’s poetry was mentioned by the new Augustan writers, it was as an example of what to avoid.” See Spencer, *Aphra Behn’s Afterlife*, 50–1.

1.2.2 Summary Abridgment

Like editorial abridgments, summary abridgments exhibit significant subtraction of textual content from the source work. Both of these methods, then, share a similar result: the abridgment is noticeably shorter than the original. However, unlike editorial abridgments, the textual content that constitutes a summary abridgment is neither a verbatim nor a near-verbatim copy of the original. The act of summarization necessitates a reduction of textual content beyond what the mere subtraction of textual content is capable of achieving while still retaining some semblance of formal continuity. To achieve both compression and formal continuity, abridgers turned to summary, or paraphrase, as a way compressing the source that does not result in logical or narrative gaps.

Although summary abridgment is different in kind from editorial abridgment, both find their origins in the Early Modern tradition of commonplacing. Whereas pupils and scholars alike practiced extraction as a method of note taking, they were just as likely to compress longer works through paraphrase. Ann Moss has shown that students were expected to employ a mixture of transcription and summary while commonplacing. Petrarch, she argues, preferred to paraphrase or imitate the ancients in his own note taking, a method that “gathers from the ancients but does not reproduce them word for word.”37 Heidi Brayman Hackel observed in one commonplace book an annotator who alternated between verbatim transcription and summary of Spencer’s Arcadia: “The

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summaries track the action of the narrative,” which demonstrate that readers “need these
distillations of narrative to get their bearings, refresh their memories, or skip ahead
without getting lost.”38 Far from offering a short-cut to learning, Hackel states that the
“humanist commonplace book offered a system for making reading more profitable,
especially for inexperienced readers” just learning how to use books or other printed
information as resources to build “sounder judgment, wittier conversation, and more
abundant style.”39 Similarly, David Allan notes that literal transcription, although
standard in commonplace books, was eschewed in some instances in favor of paraphrase:
“Thus the commonplacer might end up re-engineering the author’s phraseology,
endeavouring to make better and more useful sense of the original words.”40 By
paraphrasing, the student is able to offer a helpful interpretation of a text very similar to
what we would today call a close reading. The end product would be “an encyclopaedia-
type entry that combined direct quotation with astute summary of content, careful
elucidation of meaning and oblique reflections on wider relevance.”41 Just as the
organization of compendiary abridgments can be traced to the organization of
commonplace books, the methods of compression within editorial and summary
abridgment can be traced to similar methods evidenced in commonplace books.

38 Heidi Brayman Hackel, Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender,
and Literacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 166.
39 Hackel, Reading Material in Early Modern England, 145.
40 David Allan, Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84.
41 Allan, Commonplace Books, 86.
However, whereas the purpose of the editorial abridgment was to extract the most salient passages, the summary abridgment functions as a new representation of the original work wherein the act of preservation is directed toward concepts and ideas rather than expression.

If one imagines the three methods of abridgment as existing on a spectrum, the most faithful method of abridgment is the editorial, whereas the most heavily altered is transformative abridgment, or abridgment that occurs in the act of translation, which I will discuss in the next section. Summary abridgment, then, acts as a kind of intermediary between these two extremes. An abridgment of this kind will include some of the same language as the source but interspersed with alterations in wording, phrasing, syntax, and organization. The revision and compression inherent in paraphrase can be found in Bishop Gilbert Burnet’s self-abridged *History of the Reformation* (1682), which was published only three years after the original. In the original, Burnet provides extensive documentation, including correspondence and various public documents, so as to portray in vivid detail the political climate of England during the Tudor dynasty. In this excerpt, Burnet relates the final moments of Queen Anne’s life, when she reflects on her relationship with her stepdaughter, Mary:

The day before she suffered, upon a strict search of her past Life, she called to mind that she had played the Step-Mother too severely to Lady Mary, and had done her many injuries. Upon which, she made the Lieutenant of the Tower’s Lady sit down in the Chair of State; which the other, after some Ceremony, doing, she fell down on her knees, and with many tears charged the Lady, as she would answer it to God, to go in her name, and do, as she had done, to the Lady Mary, and ask her forgiveness for the wrongs she had done her. And she said, she had no quiet in her Conscience, till she had done that. But thought she did in this what
became a Christian: The Lady Mary could not so easily pardon these injuries; but retained the resentments of them her whole life.  

When Burnet revised this passage for the abridgment, certain details regarding the ceremony of the apology were cut while those passages redeeming the integrity of her character were retained:

When she had Intimations given her to prepare for Death; among other things she reflected on her Carriage to Lady Mary, to whom she had been too severe a Stepmother: So she made one of her Women sit down, and she fell on her Knees before her and charged her to go to Lady Mary, and in that Posture, and in her Name, to ask her Forgiveness for all she had done against her. This Tenderness of Conscience seemed to give much Credit to the continual Protestations of her Innocence, which she made to the last.

A more detailed reading of Burnet’s abridgment, for which there is not space here, would show that his treatment of Queen Anne throughout this section has been refined to capture the reader’s sympathy. The cast of characters and documentary evidence is so greatly reduced that this becomes primarily a story about Anne, as opposed to a historical analysis regarding the legality of King Henry VIII’s request for an annulment of their marriage. Like many other abridged histories from the late seventeenth century, Burnet’s method of paraphrase preserved the sections of the history that were narrative by design. The resulting contrast between the two histories recalls D.R. Woolf’s distinction between


“elite and popular” forms of historiography. Burnet abridgment reflects his own understanding of the social stratification of the print marketplace, and that in order to appeal to a broader reading public, the abridgment emphasized aspects of narrative such as plot, character, and action.

An example of a summary abridgment that still tracks closely to the wording of the original, like the example of Burnet above, might reproduce many of the same words and ideas found in the original. However, summary abridgments of prose fiction later in the eighteenth century tended to take greater liberties in adapting the text in a way that significantly altered the meaning of the original. Compare, for example, the ways in which two very different abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* condense and adapt didactic elements of the narrative. In the first, published in 1722 by Arthur Bettesworth, Edward Midwinter, and several others, Defoe’s didacticism is left largely intact, especially during the episode of Crusoe’s fit of ague and his revelatory dream:

I fell asleep a second time, and fell into this strange and terrible sort of Dream. Methought I was sitting on the same Spot of Ground, at the Outside of the Wall, where I sat when the Storm blew after the

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44 Daniel Woolf, “Disciplinary History and Historical Discourse. A Critique of the History of History: the Case of Early Modern England,” *Cromohs*, 2 (1997), 3. Woolf refers to this contrast as “a matrix that includes elite and popular, narrative and non-narrative modes of representing the past…and that, even more importantly, is subject to social and commercial forces that, as much as the traditionally-studied intellectual influences, conditioned the way in which the early modern mind thought, read, and wrote about the past.”

45 See Wheatley. “In the early modern period, epitomes simply promised to work with special brevity to make history widely available to a broadly defined readership. In the process they made accessible not only key matters of English and sacred history but also a crystallized sense of the challenges involved in the very act of creating historical narrative” (26).
Earthquake; and that I saw a Man descending from the great black Cloud, and light upon the Ground. He was all over as bright as a Flame of Fire that a little before surrounded him...No sooner I thought him landed upon the Earth, but with a long Spear or other Weapon he made towards me; but first ascending a rising Ground, his Voice added to my Amazement when I thought I heard him pronounce these Dreadful Words, *Unhappy Wretch! Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, thou shalt immediately die.* In pronouncing this dreadful Sentence, I thought he went to kill me with the Spear that was in his Hand. Any Body may think it impossible for me to express the Horrors of my Mind at this Vision; and even when I awak’d, this very Dream made a deep Impression upon my Mind. The little Divine Knowledge I had, I received from my Father’s Instructions; and that was worn out by an uninterrupted Series of Sea-Faring Impiety for Eight Years Space. Except what Sickness for’d from me, I don’t remember I had one Thought of lifting up my Heart towards God. 46

Alongside this vivid, albeit abridged, description is a woodcut depicting the moment in the dream when Crusoe is in imminent danger, only moments away from being impaled by the Angel’s spear. The combination of the linguistic and bibliographic codes at this moment in the narrative sustains Defoe’s original intentions, only in a more concise manner. Comparatively, in the identical scene in a much shorter abridgment wherein the immediacy of the godly revelation, and the imagery of the dream, are entirely excised:

From the 19th to the 27th of June, I was very sick, and had got a terrible Ague, which often held me for 9 or 10 Hours with extream Violence. Upon the 28th, I began to recover a little, but was very Restless in the Night, and was worse; as often as I laid my Eyes together, I was tormented with hideous Dreams, and dreadful Apparitions: It is impossible for me to express the Agonies I was under by these repeated Admonitions, as I took them to be; my Father’s Advice and Reproof, came in my Mind whether I would or not, and shocked me exceedingly, and would often make me

46 Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Most Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe...The whole three volumes faithfully abridged*, abridged ed. (London: Printed by E. Midwinter, and sold by A. Bettesworth; J. Brotherton; W. Meadows; and M. Hotham, 1722), 44-45.
reflect that the Justice of God followed me, and that severe Punishment was justly owing to my Disobedience and wicked life.47

In the latter example, the importance of the dream is whitewashed. Whereas the longer abridgment relates the dream in detail and depicts for readers Crusoe’s frightful apparition with vivid language and imagery, the latter simply states what happened before and after the dream, but the dream itself has been cut. The former demonstrates Crusoe’s cognitive processes concerning divine communication within the dream, whereas the latter merely relates Crusoe’s immediate conclusions without emphasis. The readers know that the dream was frightful, but the role that the dream plays in the original as the basis of his definitive conversion is simply not there.

Among summary abridgments, then, one objective is to capture the “essence” of a source text, to borrow from Wheatley, though not the letter. The second objective is to reproduce a particular kind of reading experience, be it insightful, pleasurable, or what have you. However, these objectives may work in contradiction to one another, and one abridgment may capture a markedly different “essence” than another abridgment. In the latter examples of abridgments of Robinson Crusoe, we find that each abridgment captures a different “essence,” with one abridgment capturing Defoe’s didacticism and the other capturing the desperate state of Crusoe’s isolation. Meanwhile, each reproduces a distinct reading experience, with the former focusing on the religious insight gained from Crusoe’s contemplative isolation, and the latter focusing on the adventure aspects of

that same isolation. Both reproduce the story of *Robinson Crusoe*, but they could hardly be more different.

1.2.3 Transformative Abridgment

In the two previous sections, I have defined abridgments broadly as consisting of two methods, editorial and summary, which function so as to compress the textual content of a source work. Both of these methods, however, are unique to abridgment that occurs between two works of the same language. When compression occurs in the process of translating a work (or corpus) from one language to another, I refer to this as transformative abridgment. On the one hand, an entire work might be compressed in the act of translation (see Bruni’s abridgment of *Aristotle’s Ethics* in the Introduction). On the other hand, abridgment may also occur sporadically, at the level of a particular expression, wherein content and ideas are compressed in response to aesthetic or political impulses. Rather than speaking of compressing textual content, as I did with the two previous methods, here I will speak of compressing expression. In translating any work, the quantifiable amount of text may vary depending on any number of factors, not the least of which being the choice of languages between which a work is transferred. In other words, transformative abridgment may not result in a work that is quantifiably shorter than the original, although instances of abridgment occur throughout.

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Gauging the extent of abridgment within translation is a monumental task. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, abridged translations were increasingly available in
the print marketplace. Many of these works were not advertised as abridgments, so it is impossible to provide reliable statistical evidence from the ESTC regarding publication trends; however, an ESTC search for “abridged translation” across all fields returns 98 results. Here are a few examples. Thomas Langley abridged the works of *Polydore Vergil* in 1546 and proved popular enough for a second printing in 1551 and a third in 1560. Writing under the pseudonym “I.A.”, or John Alday translated and abridged Pierre de Changy’s French abstract of *Pliny’s Naturalis Historia* (1566), which was reprinted in 1585. And Arthur Golding translated and abridged Justin’s *Historiae Philippicae* (1564), and it proved popular enough for a second printing in 1570 and a third in 1578.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the pace of translation increased significantly, and with it instances of abridgment within translation. Edward Chilmead notably said in 1654, “We are fallen into an Age of *Translations*, that swarm more now than ever” (312). This spectacular proliferation of translations was, in the words of Stuart Gillespie, instrumental in eighteenth-century canon formation. “Translations and imitations of a work do not merely *reflect*” that work’s status as a canonical piece of literature, but translations and imitations “often establish it, or consolidate it, or contribute to the process.” The works of Homer and Virgil were widely known, but many ancient authors were relatively obscure or invisible to English readers until these

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translations appeared. Gillespie counts “at least 2,000 separately published editions of works by classical Greek and Latin writers in English translation” during the period 1660 to 1790.  

During this “Age of Translation,” authors frequently spoke of cutting material from their translations, even if those translations were not advertised as abridgments. Braden notes that as early as 1591 Sir John Harrington admitted to “omitting and abbreviating some things” in his translation of Orlando Furioso. In virtually every one of his translations, Dryden admits to adding and omitting material as he saw fit, though he did not refer to his omissions as abridgment. In his Preface to Sylvae (1684), Dryden notes, “I have many times exceeded my Commission; for I have both added and omitted, and even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my Authors.” Likewise, in his Dedication to Virgil’s Aeneid (1697), Dryden claims it was sometimes necessary for him to cut certain passages because “the omissions I hope, are but of Circumstances, and such as would have no grace in English.” It is more difficult still to gauge the extent of abridgment in translation during this period, because most translators left virtually no


indication identifying material that had been abridged from the original. Like Dryden, many only admit to such changes in prefatory material.

Abridgment in translation derived out of the growing sentiment that translators were beholden to the public to make their works intelligible to modern readers. Howard Weinbrot notes that, prior to the English Civil Wars, poets demonstrated their talent through their ability to recreate the original text word-for-word in a new language, and ancient texts were “ideals toward which one strives,” a maxim that fostered an environment in which “Deviation from authority thus [was] pernicious, rebellious or, in Jonson’s term, a plague in need of cure.” ⁵⁴ Early Modern poets’ relationship to the past was based largely on reverence for an original, a position that discouraged emulation as “worthless,” “fractious,” or even “envious”. ⁵⁵ However, this sentiment began to change as emulation through derivation became the primary vehicle for canon formation and would prove pivotal to the rise of the modern notion of the author. ⁵⁶ In his Preface to *Ovid’s Epistles* (1680), Dryden judges that literal translation had largely fallen out of style by the middle of the seventeenth century: “Tis almost impossible to Translate verbally, and well, at the same time.” ⁵⁷ Dryden continued:

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⁵⁵ Weinbrot, *Britannia’s Issue*, 94.


In short…the Verbal Copier is incumber’d with so many difficulties at once, that he can never disentangle himself from all. He is to consider, at the same time, the thought of his Author, and his words, and to find out the Counterpart to each in another Language; And besides this he is to confine himself to the compass of Numbers, and the Slavery of Rhime. ‘Tis much like dancing on Ropes with fetter’d Legs: A man can shun a fall by using Caution, but the gracefulness of Motion is not to be expected.  

Simply put, a translation that tracks too closely to the words and phrasing of the original may result in an unreadable book. Even Ben Jonson, whom Dryden highly respected, “could not avoid obscurity in his literal Translation” of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, for “Either perspicuity or gracefulness will frequently be wanting.” The variable nature of Latin word order and penchant for lines of unequal feet makes a literal translation quite difficult, and reading that literal translation even more difficult. Dryden’s criticism of literal translation is that it results in a work that not only lacks aesthetic grace, but that such a work will also deviate from the meaning of the original because idioms and figures of speech do not translate literally from one language to another. Lawrence Venuti notes that Dryden and his contemporaries saw literal translation as “vulgar,” “servile,” and “slavish” while the use of paraphrase allowed the translator to endow their subject with more noble, aristocratic virtues. Regarding “grace,” there can be no

58 Dryden, “Preface” to *Ovid’s Epistles*, 115-16.

59 Dryden, “Preface” to *Ovid’s Epistles*, 116.


“harmony of numbers,” as Dryden puts it, when the translator is wedded to a strict translation of the original. Dryden’s goal as the translator is not to produce a faithful image of the original but rather one that is “as charming as possible.” In refining English into a poetic equivalent of Latin, Dryden was forced to abandon some expressions that would mar the translation. “Where I have taken away some of their Expressions, and cut them shorter,” writes Dryden, “it may possibly be on this consideration, that what was beautiful in the Greek or Latin, would not appear so shining in the English.”

Rather than treat the ancient authors as “ideals toward which one strives,” the relationship between the present and the past was fundamentally reshaped in competitive terms. “We ought not to regard a good imitation as a theft,” Dryden concludes in the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679), “but as a beautiful Idea of him who undertakes to imitate, by forming himself on the invention and the work of another man; for he enters into the lists like a new wrestler, to dispute the prize with the former Champion. This sort of emulation says Hesiod, is honourable.” The new ideal toward which English poets and translators strived can be characterized as “fluency,” or creating the “illusionistic effect” that the language, meaning, and aesthetic appeal equals or

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63 Dryden, “Preface” to *Sylvae*, 4.

supersedes the original. In other words, the translation should reflect the literary tastes of English readers, even if doing so alters it from the original.

The translator not only strived to demonstrate fluency in language and style, thus producing a text of superior literary quality, but the translator also became a judge of values and tastes, freely omitting content that would be interpreted as rude, coarse, or even barbaric. Venuti claims that free or non-literal translation rose in popularity precisely because it constituted a “domestication” of the foreign text that concealed “the cultural and social conditions” inherent in the original while presenting the “cultural other as the recognizable, the familiar, even the same.” In this way, many English authors and historians were, by the end of the seventeenth century, confident to claim the inheritance of the classical tradition while simultaneously disparaging that tradition for a lack of moral and political refinement. English authors, then, re-inscribed the classical tradition according to what they perceived to be quintessential English tastes and values, at once laying claim to that tradition while also superseding it.

Many translators active during the second half of the century embraced free translation as the marker of a professional poet. David Hopkins points out that an entire generation of translators, from Waller to Rochester, advocated for a style of translation that emphasized Venuti’s concept of “fluency.” John Denham pioneered a new English style of translation in The Destruction of Troy: an Essay upon the Second Book of Virgils

65 Venuti, Translator’s Invisibility, 47.
66 Venuti, Translator’s Invisibility, 14.
Aeneis, in which Denham warns against “verbal translation” and advocates instead for a loose style of translation: “for it is not [the translator’s] business alone to translate Language into Language, but Poesie into Poesie.”68 Abraham Cowley offered a similar argument against literal translation in his Preface to Pindarique Odes (1656). “If a man should undertake to translate Pindar word for word,” he writes, “it would be thought that one Mad-man had translated another.”69 Cowley, like Denham, seeks to reconstruct the translator as a poet first and scholar second. His advocacy for free translation arises from a sentiment that literal translations are inherently poor translations, a problem which is only compounded when a poet like Pindar has composed highly irregular verses. Likewise, the Earl of Roscommon suggests in his Essay on Translated Verse (1684) that “Too faithfully is indeed pedantically,” when it comes to translation. However, Roscommon was hesitant to admit to taking the liberty that Cowley exercised: “Excursions are inexplicably Bad, / For ‘tis much safer to leave out, than Add.”70 In general, attitudes toward free translation tend to favor invention on the part of the translator, but within limits. By contrast, few, it would appear, were in any way dismayed by abridgment.


69 Abraham Cowley, Pindarique Odes (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, at the Prince’s Arms in St Pauls Church-yard, 1656), A2r.

70 Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, Essay on Translated Verse (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson at the Judges Head in Chancery Lane, 1684), 14.
The progress of abridgment in the late seventeenth century seems hard to imagine had English society remained wedded to a tradition of literal translation. In general, attitudes toward source texts shifted from reverent, wherein ancient learning and language were preserved, to critical as authors found new reasons to contest the ancients. Pierre Huet suggests that “Epitome,” which he identifies as a sub-practice of translation, is useful for “when the translator (interpres) is concerned not merely with the author and the idea behind the author’s words, but either is concerned for the reader’s pleasure or his preoccupations or is indulging his own personality.”71 “Epitome,” says Huet, is “when a translator encloses a somewhat free-wheeling author in certain limits.”72 Although Huet does not elaborate on the reasons why a translator might impose limits on a certain author, he suggests that there is something either morally or aesthetically unpleasant about the “free-wheeling author” that the translator can rectify in the epitome. One example of what Huet might have meant by enclosing “free-wheeling author in certain limits” can be found in Roger L’Estrange’s Seneca’s Morals by Way of Abstract (1688). L’Estrange characterizes abstracts in terms very similar to Huet’s discussion of epitomes. “It has been a long time in my Thought to turn Seneca into English,” L’Estrange says in the preface. “But, whether as a Translation, or an Abstract, was the Question.”73 One reason for his decision not to render a faithful translation is the presence of an earlier


72 Huet, Concerning the Best Kind of Translation, 166.

translation. However, L’Estrange gives us a sense that this earlier translation was executed “with as little Credit perhaps to the Author, as Satisfaction to the Reader.”  

L’Estrange makes allowance for translations that deviate from the original when the pleasure of the reader is concerned, especially when “frequent Repetitions” and digressions abound to such an extent that they become a distraction. “There are a thousand things in [Seneca], that are wholly foreign to my Business,” L’Estrange writes. “As his Philosophical Treatises of Meteors, Earthquakes, the Original of Rivers, several frivolous Disputes betwixt the Epicureans, and the Stoicks.”  

In place of the original, L’Estrange brings “Order, and Brevity” to the source text, likening his Abstract to a commonplace book.  

Ten years later, upon the publication of the fourth edition, L’Estrange adds an “After-Thought” wherein he extrapolates on the nature of abstracting and paraphrasing within translation. L’Estrange laments the limitations that a summary imposes upon the author, but he also recognizes that many readers may benefit from a difficult work being pre-digested by a learned authority. L’Estrange begins the “After-Thought” by reflecting on his Abstract as a “Just, and Genuine Representation of his Sense and Meaning” marked by a “plainness and simplicity of the Stile” which is better suited to the “Benefit, the Ease, and the Satisfaction of the English Reader” than would be a more faithful

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74 L’Estrange, Seneca’s Morals (1678), i-ii. Julie Candler Hayes cites Thomas Lodge’s 1614 translation as the most likely referent. See Hayes, Translation, Subjectivity, and Culture in France and England, 1600-1800 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 83.

75 L’Estrange, Seneca’s Morals (1678), ii.

76 L’Estrange, Seneca’s Morals (1678), iii.
L’Estrange admits that the Abstract is but a “bare” representation of the original, but the Abstract, through its summary of inconsistent thoughts and philosophy, can convey the subtleties of Seneca in a way “no Translator can lay hold of.” L’Estrange suggests that his reasons for choosing an abstract, designed expressly for the benefit and edification of the reader, was driven by Seneca’s “Innuendo’s” which he says “are infinitely more Instructive than his words at length.” L’Estrange uses the abstract as an occasion to direct the reader’s attention to a series of moments in the original that contribute to the value of the whole and, ideally, offers a product that is more representative of Seneca’s true meaning than a strict translation could achieve.

L’Estrange goes so far as to consider Seneca’s fragmentary philosophy naturally prone to paraphrasing as logical gaps and incomplete thoughts “were manifestly design’d for other people to Meditate, Read, and Speculate upon…so that the very manner of his Writing calls for a Paraphrase; a Paraphrase he expected; and a Paraphrase is due to him.”

Dryden, likewise, was a prolific abridger in his translations. William Frost notes that Dryden’s translation methods can be broken down into three methods: “compression, expansion, and substitution,” with compression being the most analogous to


abridgment.\textsuperscript{81} Dryden did not employ these three methods in any particular order or combination, nor did he use any single method at a time. Rather, Frost notes that nearly every passage in Dryden’s translations bears the mark of all three. Dryden frequently condensed one line of a couplet into a single word or short phrase while expanding words into phrases, all the while substituting antiquated passages with something more legible to an English audience. For example, Dryden compressed ten words from Chaucer on the statue of Diana (“undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone, Wexynge it was”) to only five (“She trod a waxing moon”) (Frost 33). But Dryden expanded the final four words of Chaucer’s couplet (“and sholde wanye soon”) into eleven:

\begin{quote}
She trod a waxing moon, that soon would wane,  
And, drinking borrow’d light, be fill’d again. (Frost 33)
\end{quote}

This mixture of compression and expansion modernizes the syntax by placing the subject and verb at the beginning of the sentence and makes use of the restrictive pronoun “that” to attribute the rest of the couplet to the moon itself. More importantly, Dryden alters Chaucer’s sense by minimizing the opposition inherent in the original couplet. In Chaucer, the opposition is between Diana in the first line with the moon “undernethe hir feet” and the moon in the second line going through its phases, an opposition that associates the symbol of Diana as virginal purity with the moon.\textsuperscript{82} Dryden’s couplet minimizes Diana by both expanding the moon’s phase onto the first line (effectively

\textsuperscript{81} Frost, \textit{Dryden and the Art of Translation}, 33. Unless otherwise noted, additional translations from Latin to illustrate Dryden’s method are Frost’s. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

confining Chaucer’s original sense to the first line) and personifying the moon as “drinking” and capable of being “fill’d”. In effect, Chaucer draws the reader’s attention to Diana and Dryden to the moon.

Frost notes several other passages wherein Dryden employed compression in conjunction with expansion and substitution, often for practical aesthetic reasons. In his translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Dryden translates the widely quoted phrase “*Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangent*” (“There are tears for things, and mortal matters touch the heart”) into “Trojan griefs” (Frost 35). The compression of this passage not only confined the sense and allowed Dryden to fill out the couplet, but such a move also amplified the sense of the passage by cutting supposedly unnecessary words. Likewise this passage from Chaucer’s “Knight’s Tale”:

> But how the fyr was maked upon highte,  
> Ne eek the names that the trees highte,  
> As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler,  
> Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,  
> Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree,--  
> How they weren feld, shal not be toold for me (Frost 36)

In a separate article, Frost notes that the magnitude of Arcite’s death for his beloved Emelye, coupled with her intense grief, is not reflected in this unsympathetic list of trees: “the species of trees that make up Arcite’s funeral pyre are listed with no more ceremony of adjective than it is now customary to give the names in a telephone directory.”83 The Knight’s aside at the end, that he is unsure as to the origin of these trees, suggests that the Knight purposefully inflated the passage as an indirect manner of boasting, showing off

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his cosmopolitanism. In other words, the description of the trees seems more like an aside rather than vital to the sense of the passage, which quickly turns to Emelye’s grief. By comparison, Dryden compresses the passage by eliminating many of the tree species while adding, in the words of Frost, “attributes to its constituent parts” (36):

- the trees were unctuous fir,  
- And mountain-ash, the mother of the spear;  
- The mourner yew and builder oak were there;  
- The beech, the swimming alder, and the plane,  
- Hard box, and linden of a softer grain,  
- And laurels, which the gods for conqu’ring  
- chiefs ordain. (Frost 36)

In contrast to Chaucer’s original, wherein the sense is clearly hyperbolic and self-serving on the part of the Knight, Dryden pares down the passage and adds to it adjectives that amplify the majesty of the funeral pyre so as to mirror Arcite’s bravery against Palamon. Considering the gravity of the situation, Chaucer’s decision to shift the Knight’s language from grandiose to swaggering and egotistical was likely seen by Dryden as a breach of decorum unbecoming of the Knight’s rank.

In addition to abridging parts of the text that were aesthetically unpleasant, Dryden also cut material of questionable attribution. In these cases, abridgment serves a corrective function. Dryden admits to cutting lines from the *Aeneid* because he did not think the lines were composed by Virgil, but rather by some later author:

- I have omitted the four preliminary lines of the First Aeneid, because I think them inferior to any four others in the whole poem, and consequently believe they are not Virgil’s. There is too great a gap betwixt the adjective *vicina* in the second line, and the substantive *arva* in the
latter end of the third, which keeps his meaning in obscurity too long, and is contrary to the clearness of his style. \(^{84}\)

For Dryden, such moments of obscurity point to a corruption of the text, and it is incumbent upon him, as the translator, to use abridgment as a tool to correct the text. Dryden says that the line “Ut quamvis avidis” is “too ambitious an ornament to be his” while the second line “Gratum opus agricolis” is both “unnecessary” and completely “independent of what he said before.” Like three, “Horrentia Martis arma” is “a mere filler” included to “stop a vacancy in the hexameter” and “is worse than any of the rest.” Lastly, the fourth line, “Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris—” is nothing more than a series of “notorious botches” marked by inconsistent grammar. “For my own part,” continues Dryden, “I am rather of the opinion that they were added by Tucca and Varius, than retrench’d.” Dryden concludes, “I will not reply otherwise to this than by desiring them to compare these four lines with the four others, which we know are his, because no poet but he alone could write them.” \(^{85}\) In other words, in assessing Virgil’s style, Dryden cut what he saw as over-ornamentation, tangents, filler, and nonsense.

There were many reasons why Dryden would abridge Virgil’s text, but perhaps the most relevant reasons are his attempt to make English more closely resemble Latin and his own poetry more resemble Virgil’s. Dryden admired Latin for its efficiency of expression, and used that as a marker against which he would judge his own native English, noting that “We,” or the English, “have more articles and pronouns, besides

\(^{84}\) John Dryden, “Dedication of the Aeneis,” 337.

signs of tenses and cases, and other barbarities on which our speech is built by the faults of our forefathers.”86 In the “Preface” to Sylvae, Dryden says that he “looked on Virgil as a succinct and grave majestic writer; one who weighed not only every thought, but every word and syllable; who was still aiming to crowd his sense into as narrow a compass as possibly he could.”87 Virgil’s poetic strength is not in digressions or amplifications, but in his brevitas. Likewise, in the Dedication to the Aeneid, Dryden says that Virgil, “studies brevity more than any other poet; but he had the advantage of a language wherein much may be comprehended in a little space.” Although Virgil marked the highest refinement of Latin brevity, the concept itself was emblematic of Latin in general. Roman authors “rejected all those signs, and cut off as many articles as they could spare; comprehending in one word what we are constrain’d to express in two; which is one reason why we cannot write so concisely as they have done.”88 Speaking of Chaucer in the Preface to Fables, Dryden says, “there are more great wits besides Chaucer, whose fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill sorted. An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observed this redundancy in Chaucer…I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judged unnecessary.”89 In other words, by practicing brevity and employing abridgment within his translation, Dryden Latinize the English language into an idealized, pre-medieval poetics. But

87 John Dryden, “Preface” to Sylvae, 8.
Dryden knew that he would be unable to duplicate Virgil’s brevity and concludes, “But having before observ’d that Virgil endeavors to be short, and at the same time elegant, I pursue the excellence and forsake the brevity. For there he is like ambergris, a rich perfume, but of so close and gluttonous a body that it must be open’d with inferior scents of musk or civet, or the sweetness will not be drawn out into another language.” Brevity in translation signals a return to pre-medieval perfection, before the language was corrupted, a lofty though unattainable goal. Although Weinbrot suggests that, following the English Civil War, classical texts were no longer “ideals toward which one strives,” there is at least one aspect of the classical tradition which appears to have been highly admired: brevity. In trying to replicate this, translators turned to abridgment.

1.3 Abridgments in the Print Marketplace

Having established that there were various methods of abridgment that are readily identifiable to the modern scholar, in this section I will show that abridgments were quite common in the English print marketplace, and that the reason for the popularity of abridgments rested largely on the ability of those books to reach a segment of consumers that would otherwise be unable to afford the original works. The print marketplace is now, as it has always been, stratified according to class and income. And the emergence of a stratified print marketplace can be traced to the popularization of abridgments.

The increase in abridgments is gradual, more-or-less representing one percent of total print output every year. According to data derived from the English Short Title
Catalogue, some variation of abridged or abridgment appears in the records of approximately 4,300 items published between 1476 and 1800, with 3,700 records containing some variation of abridged or abridgment in the item’s title (see figure 1 and figure 2 at the end of the chapter). In the earliest days of print in England, abridgments were relatively rare. It was not until the latter half of the sixteenth century that abridgments were published in more significant numbers, averaging about two abridgments per month. While abridgments may have never constituted a considerable percentage of published editions, nevertheless they must have been widely accessible. According to the printing accounts of William Bowyer, abridgments were typically published in print runs of 1,000 or more, with a few exceptions. Throughout much of the long eighteenth century, a larger book would have enjoyed an initial print run of about 500 copies unless it was extremely popular. Ephemeral publications, on the other hand, would have been printed in greater quantities to meet broader demand. Almanacs were regularly printed by the tens of thousands. Many abridgments, then, seem to have occupied a space in the print market somewhere in between large books and ephemera:


91 Philip Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 160-63. Robinson Crusoe was one of the exceptions to this rule, being so popular that it was printed in successive runs of 1,000 copies. See Henry Clinton Hutchins, Robinson Crusoe and Its Printing: A Bibliographical Study (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 40-1.

they were printed in greater quantities than most other books, but not to the same extent as almanacs and broadsides.

Moreover, abridgments were much more popular among some genres of literature than others. One notable example is legal literature. Despite the relatively scarcity of abridgments during the earliest years of print, the abridgments that were published were critically important to the development of England’s legal institutions. Cowley notes that the first abridgment of the statutes to be printed in England, the *Vetus Abbreviamentum* (1481) was published by John Lettou and William Machlinia.93 Four subsequent editions were published over the next half century (1499, 1521, 1527/28, 1528), with the title *Vetus Abbreviamentum* only appearing on the 1499 edition.94 In addition to this series of abridgments by Lettou and Machlinia, Cowley identifies three other distinct series of abridgments of laws and statutes published prior to 1551, amounting to 46 abridgments of the law in exactly 70 years.95 Cowley notes that, in early abridgments of the law, “compilers went no further than to group all titles beginning with the same letter together,” but by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the “statutes were as a rule abbreviated; but the amount of the abbreviation varied.”96 By the mid-seventeenth century, abridgments of the law had become a fixture of English culture, with one printed


94 Cowley, “The Abridgements of the Statutes,” 133-34. The only copy of the 1481 edition is imperfect, lacking several initial leaves.


on average every single year until 1800.\textsuperscript{97} Perhaps more important than the number of
abridgments of laws and statutes is the fact that these abridgments made the law
accessible to a broader cross-section of England’s learned population. According to legal
historian J.H. Baker, the popularization of the “grand” abridgments of the sixteenth
century “had a considerable influence on the techniques of research and citation,”
especially Anthony Fitzherbert’s \textit{Graunde Abridgement} (1514-16), which systematized
13,845 cases.\textsuperscript{98} “Although the abridgments were not of the same intellectual order as
reports or textbooks,” claims Baker, “they began to bridge the gap between the two by
systematizing the confused mass of ideas in the reports and bringing together for
comparison the authorities on particular areas of the law.”\textsuperscript{99} By the eighteenth century,
inexpensive pocketbook abridgments expanded knowledge of the laws and statutes to the
growing merchant classes in and around England’s urban centers. Famed legal writer and
critic Giles Jacob redesigned his legal abridgments to specifically engage with this
audience. In his \textit{City Liberties: or, the Rights and Privileges of Freemen} (1732), Jacob
castigates other writers of the law who include “only a short Sketch of Customs,” or limit
the scope of the abridgment to only a “few Cases and Ordinances,” or filling the
abridgment with “a great deal of pedantic and affected Stuff, tending rather to confound

\textsuperscript{97} Cowley, \textit{A Bibliography of Abridgments}, xix-xx.

\textsuperscript{98} J.H. Baker, \textit{An Introduction to English Legal History} (London: Butterworths, 1990),
212.

\textsuperscript{99} Baker, \textit{An Introduction to English Legal History}, 213-214.
than instruct an ordinary Reader.”

In order to bring the law into vogue and make it accessible to “the most common Readers,” Jacob not only abridged the work but, drawing from the commonplace tradition, designed the abridgment “in a new Alphabetical Method.”

Abridgments were also quite popular among historical literature. In his study of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, D.R. Woolf notes that history writing underwent significant changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as historians and publishers alike gravitated away from mammoth, folio-size volumes. The chronicle genre dissolved into what Woolf calls “parasite genres” of historical writing that appealed to a wider audience, the most popular of which were abridged histories designed for lower-income consumers. Although this trend toward abridging histories was sporadic during the final decades of the seventeenth century, it picked up steam by the eighteenth century, when “the direction in general was towards smaller, shorter, and cheaper, not longer and heavier” historical works. Printers, seeing a market for historical works in the working and merchant classes, would publish both longer works and “at the lower end of the price range, a vast and growing assortment of epitomes, abridgments, digests, and even extracted sections of longer books, printed on cheaper paper, without bindings and often


101 Jacob, *City-Liberties*, viii.


though not always in small format.” Historical knowledge was the mark of a learned man, and abridgments were one vehicle to help people attain that knowledge. But, perhaps more importantly, abridgments provided access to historical knowledge in a manner that was not pedantic or tedious. Beginning in the early seventeenth century, a variety of abridgments marketed as “the key of history” or “a short survey” began to appear that offered readers a shorter path to learning about history, as this one abridgment punned in its title, An abridgement, or rather, A bridge of Roman histories, to passe the neerest way from Titvs Livivs to Cornelivs Tactivs (1608). When John Savage abridged Richard Knolles’ Generall Historie of the Turkes (1603) in 1701, he argued in the preface that abridgments are no different than any other convenient shortcut that helps us make more efficient use of our resources: “To Obviate the Objection against contracting large Volumes into Lesser Compendiums; it may be Answered, That there is no more pretence for it, than is for a Man that has a long Journey to Travel, to quarrel with his Friend that shews him a better and nearer way than Circuiting the common Road, and saves him


106 An abridgement, or rather, A bridge of Roman histories, to passe the neerest way from Titvs Livivs to Cornelivs Tactivs (London: Printed for Mathevv Lovvnes, 1608).
more than half his Expence, by shortening the time of his lying out, if he had rode the usual Stages.”

There are many instances catalogued in the ESTC of a historical abridgment being printed into more editions than the original. One of the most notable is the publication of Cook’s *Voyages* in the 1780s. The authorized and unabridged accounts of Cook’s voyages were among the most popular histories of the late eighteenth century. According to Maurice Holmes, the third installment of Cook’s voyages, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...performed under the direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore* (1784) “was so eagerly awaited by the public that it was sold out on the third day after publication, and though the published price was £4 14s. 6d. as much as 10 guineas was offered by disappointed would-be purchasers.” Furthermore, J.C. Beaglehole claims that once the first installment, *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty* (1773) eventually sold out in June 1784, a second “much better” edition appeared in 1785, “followed in the same year by a third” edition. However, sales dropped off considerably for the third edition, and the publisher George Nicol is recorded

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saying that as late as 1801 “there are still a great Number of the 3d Edn remaining.”¹¹⁰ In contrast, by 1794, C. and G. Kearsley’s abridgment of Captain Cook’s final voyage, _An Abridgment of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage_ had just entered its seventh edition, and by 1798 Kearsley’s abridgment of Captain Cook’s first and second voyages, _A Compendious History of Captain Cook’s First and Second Voyages_, would also enter its seventh edition. According to the ESTC, between 1784 and 1800, 32 abridgments of Cook’s voyages were published compared to only 18 unabridged editions. The difference in price alone would have allowed a far greater number of consumers to purchase the abridgments. Whereas the unabridged editions, as noted above, cost nearly £5, Kearsley’s abridgments cost only 4 shillings.¹¹¹ The data suggests that, whereas the unabridged editions generated initial public interest in the voyages, that interest was sustained into the nineteenth century through abridgments. The final unabridged edition of the voyages was published in 1790, whereas half of the abridgments were published between 1790 and 1801.

During the early eighteenth century, as England witnessed a steady rise in the number of abridgments published annually, part of that increase came from abridgments of popular prose fiction. _Robinson Crusoe_, for example, became the most frequently published novel during the eighteenth century because of the popularity of three abridgments. Following the smashing success of _Robinson Crusoe_ in 1719, Edward Midwinter, his apprentice Thomas Gent, and a business partner Arthur Bettesworth


published two abridgments in 1722: a longer abridgment of about 360 pages and a shorter “epitome” of about 160 pages. These two abridgments are the base texts for over 100 further abridgments published prior to 1801, 74 of which were published in Great Britain, primarily during the last quarter of the century, thereby accounting for over half of the total number of abridgments published in between 1719 and 1800 and over one-third of the total number of all editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, abridged and unabridged, published prior to 1800. In addition, the Newbery family abridged *Robinson Crusoe* into a young adult novel and printed several editions over the final quarter of the eighteenth century. Subsequently, publishers in both England and North America copied the Newbery abridgment and printed dozens of more editions, for a grand total of 17 abridgments published between 1775 and 1800. The Newbery family was also responsible for abridging *Sir Charles Grandison*, *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, and *Don Quixote* into young adult novels between 1768 and 1800. And as with *Robinson Crusoe*, these other Newbery abridgments were reprinted into hundreds of editions by publishers across England and North America. Although none were abridged into as many editions as *Robinson Crusoe*, abridgments ensured that all were regularly in print across much of the English-speaking western hemisphere.

While abridgments may have never constituted a considerable portion of unique editions published yearly, evidence suggests that they were nevertheless quite popular within certain genres and among certain classes of readers. Abridgments were also very likely to go through numerous editions when derived from an original work that had

112 See Howell, “Eighteenth-Century Abridgements of *Robinson Crusoe*.”
already achieved some level of popularity. Nevertheless, abridgments made information and narratives affordable to a greater number of readers, which in turn would have encouraged wider dissemination.

1.4 Legality of Abridgments

Contrary to popular belief, abridgment never existed entirely outside of the law. While some abridgments were certainly deemed piracies, abridgment was both widely practiced by authors and publishers and popularly embraced by the general public. William St. Claire has argued that the Stationers’ Company restricted the publication of abridgments around 1600, a ban that effectively stayed in place until Donaldson v. Beckett (1774) ruled that “fair abridgment” fell within the meaning of the Copyright Act of 1710 and was therefore granted the same protection as an original work.\footnote{William St. Clair, \textit{The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72-73. The Copyright Act of 1710 is also referred to as the Statute of Anne. Unless referred to as the Statute of Anne within quotation, the legislation will be referred to throughout as The Copyright Act of 1710.} Isabella Alexander has added some credibility to St. Claire’s claim of a supposed ban on abridgments from 1600 to 1774 out of fear that cheap abridgments posed a financial danger to professional authors.\footnote{Isabella Alexander, “All Change for the Digital Economy: Copyright and Business Models in the Early Eighteenth Century,” \textit{Berkeley Technology Law Journal} 25.3 (2010), 1351–80 (p. 1364).} Alexander goes on to note that Robert Young was denied permission to print an abridgment of John Foxe’s \textit{Book of Martyrs} in 1631, which was eventually followed by a number of official bans:
Abridgements and other kinds of partial taking were forbidden by a 1678 Company ordinance, which forbade the printing of any book “or any part of any Book” without the consent of the owner. In 1681, a second ordinance was passed which strengthened this prohibition.\footnote{Alexander, “All Change for the Digital Economy,” 1364.}

And Mark Rose has shown that in both \textit{The Stationers v. The Patentees} (1666) and \textit{Streater v. Roper} (1668), the “royal prerogative” to sole publishing rights granted by the Company prevailed against defendants seeking to use abridgment to circumvent literary property laws.\footnote{Mark Rose, \textit{Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 23-25.} However, none of this suggests an across-the-board ban on abridgments. In fact, between 1601 and 1695, over 600 abridgments were published in England, many of which were likely sanctioned by the proprietor of the source text.

It was only following the lapses of the Print Licensing Act from 1679 to 1685, and again from 1695 to 1709, that authors and publishers alike grew more concerned that abridgment was beginning to infringe on their business. In response to the sudden vacuum of legal authority following the lapses, authors and publishers resorted to a number of tactics to protect their literary property. Bishop Gilbert Burnet published his mammoth multi-volume folio \textit{History of the Reformation of the Church of England} in 1679 only to find himself writing the abridgment a few years later upon discovering “that Another was about this, which made me resolve on doing it my self.”\footnote{Burnet, \textit{The Abridgment of the History of the Reformation}, A4'.} Burnet was not necessarily hostile to abridgments, but he found the prospect of a third party abridging another’s work to be preposterous, “for no one can so truly comprehend, and by
consequence abridge any Book as the Author himself.”118 Unlike Burnet, John Locke was unable to devote the time and energy to an abridgment of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, but he found a kindred spirit in Jesus College Fellow John Wynne (see chapter 2). By working with the abridger, Locke not only proofed the abridgment before publication, thereby ensuring its accuracy, but he was also able to ensure that the publication of the abridgment did not hinder sales of the unabridged third edition, which was released the same year. Publishers also combated unauthorized reprinting by forming printing cartels known as Congers, in which they shared ownership of works and organized printing and distribution so as to discourage piracies and unauthorized abridgments.119

In some instances, publishers bypassed the Stationers’ Company altogether by applying for a royal license. Clarendon’s best-selling *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* was abridged by printer John Nutt in 1703, prompting Oxford University to apply for a royal patent for sole publishing rights, which it duly received. A prefatory note in the authorized 1703 edition declares “Our Royal License and Privilege, for the sole Printing and Publishing the said Three Volumes of the late Ear of Clarendon’s History, for and during the Term of Fourteen Years…strictly Charging, Prohibiting, and Forbidding all Our Subjects to Reprint or Abridge the said History, or

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any Part of it.” Similar language can be found in the Royal License issued by King George I to Bernard Lintott to print Alexander Pope’s translation of Homer, “strictly charging and prohibiting all Our Subjects within Our Kingdoms and Dominions to reprint or abridge the same either in the like or any other Volume or Volumes whatsoever.” These examples notwithstanding, following the lapse of the Licensing Act, the Stationers’ Company’s power to regulate print was greatly diminished.

By the early eighteenth century, abridgments had become a scapegoat of sorts for everything that was wrong with an unregulated publishing industry. Daniel Defoe famously labeled abridgments “the first sort of press piracy” in his Essay on the Regulation of the Press (1704). At a time when the debate over licensing centered primarily on the question of press censorship, Defoe was an outspoken proponent for

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authorial rights to copy. Defoe argues that learning is stymied when authors are afforded little or no protection over their right to copy. It is not only in the public interest to protect the labor of authors so as to further encourage the publication of learned discourse, but it is also in the public interest that literature accurately transmit the author’s learned discourse, something that piracies and abridgments rarely do.123 “An Author prints a Book,” writes Defoe, “if it be a large Volume, it shall be immediately abridg’d by some mercenary Book-seller, employing a Hackney-writer, who shall give such a contrary Turn to the Sense, such a false Idea of the Design…that no greater Wrong can be done to the Subject” (Essay, 20). Defoe then refers his readers “to the several Abridgments of the Turkish History, Josephus, Baxter’s Life, and the like” (Essay, 20). Defoe was an outspoken proponent of, what at the time would have seemed, a strict and conservative interpretation of the right to copy. The proprietor not only held a right to copy, but that this right was included the expression of both language and ideas. Thus, derivative works like abridgments and translations that express the same ideas using different language would fall within the proprietor’s right to copy. “I think in Justice,” continues Defoe, “no Man has a Right to make any Abridgment of a Book, but the Proprietor of the Book; and I am sure no Man can be so well qualified for the doing it, as the Author” (Essay, 20). The following year, John Dunton, publisher of the Athenian Mercury, wrote of the ubiquity of abridgments in his memoirs, warning his readers of “a whole Army of Hackney-Authors” who would take “the very Life out of a Copy so soon as ever it Appears; for as the Times go, Original and Abridgment are almost reckon’d as

123 See Rose, Authors and Owners, 34-37.
necessary as Man and Wife.”

124 Just prior to the passage of England’s first copyright law, the Copyright Act of 1710, in 1709, the editor to *The General History of the World, Being an Abridgment of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1708) felt obliged to defend the publication, noting that “this cannot well lie under the scandal of that Name [abridgment]; for here is no Author maim’d, no Design spoil’d, no horrible Chasms left in the Story, nor any of those Deformities that render Abridgments so despicable in the learned World.”

125 Even Alexander Pope waded into the fray, suggesting in Book 1 of *The Dunciad*, that abridgments, and the related practice of “index-learning,” are not only corruptions of genre but also stifle intellectual potential:

Here to her chosen all her works she shows,
Prose swell’d to verse, verse loit’ring into prose:
How random thoughts now meaning chance to find,
Now leave all memory of sense behind:
How Prologues into Prefaces decay,
And these to Notes are fritter’d quite away:
How index-learning turns no student pale,
Yet holds the eel of science by the tail:
How, with less reading than makes felons scape,
Less human genius than God gives an ape.

126 These criticisms represent but a sampling of critics and their condemnation of the practice. Indeed, instances of publishers and authors lambasting abridgments in prefaces,


essays, and other venues are not difficult to come by if you know where to look. And in court case after court case, authors and publisher attest to the “injury” or “damage” caused by an abridgment.

The passage of England’s first law that codified the right to copy, known informally as the Copyright Act of 1710, did little to stem the rise of abridgments. The abridgment loophole resulted in language within the act that specifically prohibits reproduction of entire works, not to reproductions of parts of works, or to translations or adaptations. In effect, this lack of foresight concerning altered texts allowed the law governing abridgments to be written in the courtroom rather than in the halls of Parliament. The first copyright infringement case to come before the Court of Chancery under the Copyright Act of 1710, Burnet v. Chetwood (1720), conferred upon translators the same rights as authors.127 However, other forms of derivative literature, such as abridgment, would be litigated throughout the century.

With little legal precedent under the new copyright law, many of the earliest copyright infringement cases involving abridgment were handled outside of government courts. Rather, the Stationers’ Company, a trade organization, handled disputes within their own internal court, as it had done for centuries. The Court of the Stationers was not a court of law. Rather, it was a committee that enforced the ethics and standards of the book trade, which have been preserved in the Court Book of the Stationers’ Company.128

127 Rose, Authors and Owners, 49-51.

128 The Court Book of the Stationers’ Company that I reference below are microfilm copies published by Chadwyck Healey. Court Books G and H cover complaints from
The Court Books themselves are only summaries of the daily activity of the court. For example, when the Court Books refer to a “complaint” or an “answer” to the complaint, the secretary rarely took the time to transcribe the full text of either. Even so, they provide a snapshot of what may have happened to printers and booksellers who printed abridgments, especially abridgments of texts that were protected under the Copyright Act of 1710.

Considering the sheer number of abridgments that entered the print marketplace after the lapse of the Print Licensing Act in 1695, Shell and Emblow demonstrate that there were surprisingly few complaints regarding abridgments throughout the eighteenth century. While Adrian Johns has claimed, “As early as the mid-1720s, the Stationers’ court had virtually forgotten how to handle piracy cases at all,” including those involving abridgments, the Court Book of the Stationers’ Company tell a very different story. As far as abridgments were concerned, contentious litigation was openly discouraged in favor of a royalty system known as “acknowledgement fees.” Seeking to protect the rights of all its members, the Stationers’ Company instituted acknowledgement fees as a way to compensate copyright holders while at the same time recognizing the legitimacy of abridgment. Unless abridgments were directly sanctioned by copyright holders, then

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1697-1717 and 1717-24, respectively. To some extent, the Court Books capture the tumult and confusion surrounding the lapse of the Print Licensing Act in 1695 and the institution of the Copyright Act of 1710. In addition to the Chadwyck Healey microfilm copies of the court books, Alison Shell’s and Alison Emblow’s Index to the Court Book of the Stationers’ Company, 1679-1717 was instrumental in tracking down disputes concerning abridgments.

complaints were likely settled in this manner until the 1740s. For example, in 1722
Robert Knaplock brought a complaint against Arthur Bettesworth and some of his
business partners, including John Darby, John Pemberton, and Charles Rivington, among
others. Knaplock accused them of causing “to be printed an abstract or abridgement in 2
vols of Mr. Bingham’s Antiquities of the Christian Church called Ecclesiastical
Antiquities…to the great prejudice and Injury of the said Mr. Knaplock.”130 Joseph
Bingham’s mammoth ten-volume history of the church was written and published over an
11-year period, from 1711-22. Preceding the publication of the ninth and tenth volumes,
Bettesworth and company published the abridgment of the first eight volumes in 1722.
Bingham, no doubt surprised to see an abridgment of his work on the market, wrote a 58-
page preface to the tenth volume in which he delineates the shortcomings of
Bettesworth’s and Darby’s abridgment. Ironically, however, Bingham’s primary
complaint is that the abridgment was not short enough. The length of the abridgment,
claims Bingham, is too long to be useful yet too short to be inclusive. Yet Bingham
claims that this all could have been avoided:

I know not what Authority he or his Booksellers had to reprint my Books
in Effect, which are my Property by Law. But I argue not with him at
present upon that Point. If he had done it in a genteel Way, by asking
Leave, and under Direction, he should have had my Leave and
Encouragement also. Or, if he had done it Usefully, so as truly to answer
the End he pretends, even without Leave, he should have had my
Pardon.131

130 Records of the Worshipful Company of Stationers (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey,

131 Joseph Bingham, Origins Ecclesiasticae: or, the Antiquities of the Christian Church
(London: Printed for R. Knaplock, 1722), A5v.
Bingham’s remarks point to an important, and currently forgotten, distinction between authorized and unauthorized right to copy. Publishers and authors were aware of the benefits of abridgment and, even in this case, would have encouraged an abridgment had it met a certain standard. In this case, the proprietors appear more concerned with maintaining the accurate representation of the original than they are with maintaining their profits. As was stated earlier, abridgments were often designed to serve a different purpose than the original. Darby was called upon to answer the complaint and agreed that the abridgment was an “injury to the said Mr. Knaplock” (Court Book H 116). Darby suggested that the court summon Rivington for counsel, and Rivington agreed with Darby that the abridgement was an injury. The defendants were ultimately asked to pay Knaplock an acknowledgement fee of 3 guineas, and they were not allowed to reprint the abridgment of Bingham’s work (Court Book H 135). However, there is no indication that Bettesworth, Darby, or Rivington were restricted from selling those copies that were already printed.

The Stationers’ Court Books demonstrate that the punishment for printing an unauthorized abridgment amounted to little more than a slap on the wrist. In none of the above instances did the Court of the Stationers attempt to force the publishers of the unauthorized abridgments to turn over the printed copies, nor were they ordered to cease selling the abridgments. In the case of Daniel Browne’s and John Walthoe’s abridgment of The Book of Martyrs in 1702, the two were ordered to pay an acknowledgement fee of one guinea to the proprietor. Similar to the Bettesworth case noted above, neither Browne nor Walthoe was ordered to stop selling or distributing the abridgment (Shell and
Emblow 103). Further, Darby, Bettesworth and their associates were in the Stationers’ Court again November 1722 for abridging Laurence Echard’s History of England (1707), to which Jacob Tonson held the rights (Court Book H 124-25). Tonson, like Knaplock, pressed his case and received a more substantial acknowledgment fee of seven guineas; however, like Knaplock and Walthoe before him, Tonson did not ask for or receive an injunction to stop the sale and distribution of the title (Court Book H 134-36).

In fact, by the 1720s, the Stationers’ Court decided that cases of this sort were so insignificant that they did not even warrant attention in the court. The process of bringing the parties before the court was slow and ineffective. In order to make the system more beneficial to all involved, the Stationers’ Court ordered that:

[W]hen any Difference or Differences shall hereafter arise between any Member or Members of this Company for any Copy Right or any thing relating to printing, Bookselling or Bookbinding That then before any Action or Suite be Comenced, They shall first make their Application to the Master Wardons and Assistants in a Court of Assistants and give them Information of the ground and Occasion of such Difference or Controversy; which said Master Wardens and Assistants in a Court of Assistants, are hereby Authorized to hear all parties concerned and to use their utmost Endeavors to Compose such Difference and Differences without the trouble and Charge of going to Law. (Court Book H 126-27)

In effect, this established a new precedent of only hearing the most serious cases involving copyright infringement. This may account for the other instances of unauthorized abridgments for which there are no records. The court did not intend to establish rules to prevent, prohibit, or to otherwise discourage the printing, selling and distribution of abridgments.

The Copyright Act of 1710 simply did not explicitly mention derivative texts like abridgments and translations. The question, then, was ultimately left open to
interpretation by the courts. The decisions *Gyles v. Wilcox* (1741), *Dodsley v. Kinnersley* (1761), and *Strahan v. Newbery* (1774) all ruled in favor of the abridgers. Lord Chancellor Hardwicke’s decision in *Gyles v. Wilcox* went so far as to grant full authorial rights to abridgers, as “abridgments may with great propriety be called a new book, because … the invention, learning and judgment of the author is shewn in them.” 132 Hardwicke’s ruling set judicial precedent for the rest of the century and was not subject to the types of frequent counter-rulings that marked eighteenth-century litigation concerning perpetual common law copyright. 133 The decision was upheld in *Dodsley v. Kinnersley* (1761), wherein Robert Dodsley sought an injunction against Thomas Kinnersley for reprinting sections of Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas* in the *Grand Magazine of Magazines*. The injunction was denied on the basis that the abridgment comprised only one-tenth of the original text. 134 The rights of abridgers was upheld once again in *Strahan v. Newbery* (1774), wherein Francis Newbery was not only granted the right to continue selling his abridgment of John Hawkesworth’s *An Account of the Voyages … in the Southern Hemisphere* (1773), but the court based it on an aesthetic judgment that Newbery’s version “conveyed in language as good or better than in the original, and in a


more agreeable and useful manner.”135 After the ruling in *Strahan v. Newbery*, abridgments flooded the market unchecked, and those who published abridgments faced no real legal challenge until the Copyright Act of 1842.

In all of these decisions, the ruling hinged on establishing a distinction between “fair abridgment” and unlawful plagiarism. According to copyright historian William F. Patry, this notion of “fair abridgment” would by the nineteenth century transform into the modern fair use doctrine.136 The legacy of book abridgment in eighteenth-century England, then, extends well beyond the notion of the literary canon. The very notion that information serves a public good, that copyright protects expression not ideas, is one of the most significant legal underpinnings of open, democratic societies.

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*Figure 1: Abridgments in the English Short Title Catalogue*

*Figure 2: Abridgments in the English Short Title Catalogue*
Chapter 2

ABRIDGMENT AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

2.1 Abridgment and Early Modern Learning

Sometime around late 1599 or early 1600, author and courtier Fulke Greville began preparations for a research trip to Cambridge University where, upon arrival, he intended to hire as many as four “research assistants” to help gather and transcribe items from the library.¹ It was only a few years earlier that Greville had disparaged the value of book learning in his poem Caelica, in which he characterized knowledge gained from dusty volumes as in some way subservient to knowledge gained through nature and human experience:

I have for books, above my head the skies.
Under me earth, about me air and sea.
The truth for light, and reason for mine eyes.
Honour for guide, and nature for my way […] ²

However, according to Vernon Snow, by the turn of the century, “Greville decided to make a comprehensive inquiry into the humanities.”³ Unsure about the process of

¹ Vernon F. Snow, “Francis Bacon’s Advice to Fulke Greville on Research Techniques,” Huntington Library Quarterly 23.4 (Aug. 1960), 369–78. All subsequent quotations from Bacon’s letter to Greville are taken from Snow’s transcript.


³ Snow, “Francis Bacon’s Advice to Fulke Greville,” 378.
gathering and organizing copious amounts of information, the amateur scholar penned a letter to his friend, Francis Bacon, in search of some advice on research methods. In his reply, Bacon observed that most professional scholars organize their materials in one of two ways: “by Epitome or Abridgment, or under Heads and Commonplaces.” Either method was subject to various challenges. Epitomes and abridgments, for one, compress details, thereby providing ready access to basic information. “The Epitome of any special Book,” writes Bacon, “is but a short Narration of that which the Book itself doth discourse at large,” and are best utilized as a kind of detailed historical outline that function to “make us know the Places, where great Battles have been fought, and the Names of the Conquerors and Conquered, and will minister Arguments of discourse.” As defined by Bacon, an epitome is essentially a summary of a longer work that, in the words of Chloe Wheatley, “reduces a source to its most essential matter.” However, Bacon notes that among the drawbacks of this mode of knowledge transmission is that context and nuance fall victim to brevity. The rote memorization of facts that epitomes encourage, says Bacon, “cannot breed soundness of Judgement, which is the true use of all Learning.” Thus, Bacon concludes, “I think Epitomes, of the one, or other kind, of themselves of little profit.”

Rather than pursue epitomes, Bacon advises his friend to compile and organize research notes “under heads and commonplaces,” essentially a kind of reference book wherein information is categorized according to themes, which are then organized in

alphabetical order similar to an encyclopedia. Bacon finds this method to be “of far more profit and use; because they have in them a kind of observation, without the which neither long life breeds experience, nor great reading great knowledge.” Rather than abridge entire books for Greville, as would be the case with writing epitomes, the research assistants need only to identify and extract the most important passages from the most renowned works of literature, thus retaining, to some extent, the original expression and intellectual context.

Despite Bacon’s stated preference for heads and commonplaces over epitomes and abridgments, he warns that both are subject to the same limitation: information that has been gathered, synthesized, and compressed for use by one person is rarely of equal value to another. “Therefore to speak plainly of the gathering of Heads, or Common Places,” writes Bacon, “in general one Man’s Notes will little profit another, because one man’s Conceit doth so much differ from another’s.” Bacon does not take issue with the use of research assistants. He finds that they are quite valuable as menial laborers whose sole purpose is to “bring Stone, Timber, Mortar and other Necessaries to your Building,” but it is Greville’s responsibility to “be the Master-workman.” Ultimately, Bacon’s advice reflected a growing uneasiness over the practice and uses of abridgment during the latter half of the sixteenth century. As abridgments became more widely available in the print marketplace, the practice itself became subject to greater scrutiny.

Despite the growing availability of published abridgments by the early seventeenth century, the practice of abridgment was still widely considered to be an academic notetaking exercise for students and scholars. Queen Elizabeth’s tutor, Roger
Ascham, was an outspoken proponent of writing epitomes, as he called them, noting that the practice not only aids in the comprehension of difficult writers but is equally helpful “in a mans owne writing.” Citing Virgil’s composition of the *Georgics* as a salient example, Ascham suggests that Virgil “vsed [epitome] dailie, when he had written 40. or 50. Verses, not to cease cutting, paring, and polishing of them, till he had brought them to the number of [10] or [12].” For students who received a classical education, compressing literature into an epitome would have functioned “as a means of modeling one’s rhetorical skills on an authoritative Latin stylist.” The author, while creating a shortened work, was in fact realizing the rhetorical principle of brevity, or *brevitas*. Amiel D. Vardi notes that, in ancient Rome, *brevitas* was a marker of a “polished” or “refined” prose style. The purposeful use of concision not only made texts easier to read but also focused attention on moments of heightened importance. Mary Helen McMurran notes that *brevitas* was “aimed at vivifying the texts” and as a rhetorical principle it worked in conjunction with *amplificatio*, or amplification: “Lively characters were fabricated by adding speeches and lengthening scenarios, while lively scenes were shaped

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by reducing digressions.” ⁹ In other words, maintaining a singular focus on the action at hand enhances aesthetic appeal. Furthermore, brevity was considered a reflection of sound judgment, and a lack of brevity in one’s own writing reflects a lack of discipline. ¹⁰ Ascham reminds his readers that “weightie affaires” require sound judgment and choice words, not scholars who “do not tarry to weye and iudge all things, as they should, but hauing their heads ouer full of matter, be like pennes ouer full of incke, which will soner blotte, than make any faire letter at all.” ¹¹

From the perspective of intellectuals like Ascham and Bacon, the cultural function of abridgment was to benefit scholars by providing a practical method of organizing and remembering important information. Abridgment in this sense is a generative process: a large sample of information is screened for correlations to a specific project that are then transferred from one physical medium to another, thereby creating a new representation of the information and ideas in the original. The practice of abridgment, then, was a reflection of one scholar’s understanding and interpretation of a topic or body of work. However, Ascham and Bacon grew skeptical of abridgments that were printed to meet consumer demand in the print marketplace. When used “priuatelie for himself that doth worke it,” Ascham writes, epitomes are capable of facilitating understanding and improving memory; like a commonplace book, the writing of epitomes “induce a man, into an orderlie generall knowledge, how to referre orderlie all that he readeth…and not

⁹ McMurran, *The Spread of Novels*, 79.

¹⁰ Cue a totally predictable joke about this dissertation.

wander in studie.” However, scholars who eschew primary sources and “dwell in Epitomes and books of common places” never achieve deep knowledge; they are like the “so many seeming, and sonburnt ministers” across England “whose learning is gotten in a sommer heat, and washed away, with a Christmas snow againe.” By and large, Bacon agrees. Epitomes, he suggests, are useful as “calendars to direct a man to Stories,” in other words as a kind of reference work; however, Bacon continues “he, that hath such Abridgements of all Arts, shall have a general Notion of all kinds of knowledge. But he shall be like a Man of many Trades, that thrives less, than he that seriously follows one.” Bacon goes on to compare those who read abridgments to travelers who “pass through every place in such post, as they have no time to observe as they go, or make profit of their travel.” Moreover, the average reader would not be in a position to verify the accuracy of the abridgment, and so the problem is compounded. Because the printed abridgment has been designed for a broad range of users, Ascham and Bacon would argue that the abridgment serves no single legitimate purpose other than acting as a shortcut to knowledge.

As a leading intellectual living between the late medieval period and the Enlightenment, Bacon had seen firsthand the increase in knowledge of history and the natural sciences, and likewise was witness to early attempts to collect, methodize, and contract this knowledge into tidy volumes. “It may be objected,” he wrote to Greville,

12 Ascham, The Scholemaster, 111.
13 Ascham, The Scholemaster, 111.
“that Knowledge is so infinite, and the Writers of every sort of it so tedious, as it is reason to allow a Man all Helps to go the shortest and newest way.” But the reduction of learning into small, tidy volumes exposed the risk that both the quantity and quality of the knowledge therein would also be reduced, especially so when the abridger acted primarily as a textual editor who was unfamiliar with the subject matter. The popularization of printed abridgments would, from the point of view of Ascham and Bacon, only compound this problem. The relentless spread of print created market conditions favorable to abridgments, as they made available derivative versions of well-known titles that sold for a reduced price. John Stow’s Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles, first published in 1565, had by the time of Bacon’s letter to Greville been published in no fewer than ten editions. Wheatley claims that by “the 1580s, Stow dominated the market for small-format English chronicles.”14 Printed as octavos and sextodecimos, Stow’s abridgments were representative of a mean, one might even say vulgar, popularization of English history. In the words of D.R. Woolf: “the direction in general was towards smaller, shorter, and cheaper, not longer and heavier.”15 Once publishers realized the growing merchant class was a potentially valuable and largely untapped market for historical literature, bookstalls were soon flooded with “a vast and growing assortment of

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14 Wheatley, Epic, Epitome, and the Early Modern Historical Imagination, 40.

epitomes, abridgments, digests, and even extracted sections of longer books, printed on cheaper paper, without bindings and often though not always in small format.”

Despite the growing prevalence of abridgments, especially among legal and historical literature, many notable scholars would not recommend their use to either their students or to their colleagues, and some worried that students were using these works as replacements for primary sources. Ascham notes that this is but “a silie poore kinde of studie, not vnlike to the doing of those poore folke, which neyther till, nor sowe, nor reape themselues, but gleane by stelth, vpon other mens growndes.” In other words, the true knowledge is like the long and difficult process of sowing and reaping grain from the fields whereas abridgment is more similar to the farm worker combing the fields after the harvest, gathering bits of leftover grain that have fallen to the ground. The extent of Ascham’s influence on this matter may be lost to history, but we know that a young Thomas Nashe invoked Ascham’s example in his own criticism of the use of epitomes at the universities. Nashe looked to the literary forefathers as models for students to emulate: “Sir John Mason, Doctor Watson, Redman, Aschame, Grindall, Leuer, Pilkington,” he writes, “all which, haue either by their priuate readings, or publique works, repurged the errors of Arts, expelled from their puritie, and set before our eyes, a more perfect Methode of Studie” (11). Yet Nashe worried that the caution Ascham

17 Ascham, The Scholemaster, 110.
expressed on the use of epitomes had fallen on deaf ears. “[T]hose yeares, which shoulde
been employed in Aristotle,” writes Nashe, “are expired in Epitomes.”19 In his letter to
Greville, Bacon can name but only a few epitomes worthy of study. Decades later, John
Milton expressed a similar sentiment in Areopagitica (1644), noting that the clergy dwell
too heavily on “interlinearies, breviaries, synopses, and other loitering gear.”20

Reading abridgments was not only characterized by some as a sign of academic
laziness but also corrosive to the advancement of knowledge. Abridgment, commenting,
interpreting, compiling, and so forth, serve only as methods to better understand existing
knowledge but fundamentally lack the inquisitive determination of rigorous scholarship.

“[W]hereas the more constant and devote kind of professors of any science ought to
propound to themselves to make some additions to their science,” writes Bacon in The
Advancement of Learning (1605), “they convert their labours to aspire to certain second
prizes: as to be a profound interpreter or commentor, to be a sharp champion or defender,
to be a methodical compounder or abridger, and so the patrimony of knowledge cometh
to be sometimes improved, but seldom augmented.”21 Bacon acknowledges that
abridgment may contribute to learning and is sometimes capable of improving a work,
though it is not as highly esteemed as the production of original or new knowledge.
Abridging merely revises the past whereas true knowledge builds upon it.

19 Nashe, “To the Gentlemen Students of Both Vniuersities,” 11.
21 Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning (London: Printed for Henrie Tomes, and
are to be sould at his shop at Graies Inne gate in Holborne, 1605), 1.5.10.
2.2 Abridgment and the Empirical Sciences

Following the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660, England’s intellectual elite were faced with a predicament similar to what Bacon described in *Advancement of Learning*: there was no standardized style of scientific discourse. The conventions of scientific discourse remained mired in the mysticism of alchemy. As scientific knowledge transitioned from the mystical to the empirical, England’s intellectual elite began to place greater emphasis on clarity and simplicity in an attempt to better facilitate the transmission of knowledge. Royal Society historian Thomas Sprat sought to address this problem of communication in *The History of the Royal Society* (1667). Much has been written on Sprat’s call for a prose style of “Mathematical plainness” that ostensibly rejected the use of rhetorical figures and inflated prose. Most notable is Brian Vickers’ claim that Sprat’s “rejection of rhetoric” was politically motivated by the institutional rejection of alchemical sciences.\(^{22}\) However, Vickers has also notes that few members of the Royal Society adhered to Sprat’s call for “plainness” in their prose style. Rather than look to original works of scientific discourse published by the society as models of “plainness,” as touted by Sprat, I will first show that Sprat’s assessment of language was, if not practiced by society members, at least embraced in theory. Second, I will suggest that we might look to abridgments as attempts to realize this call for plainness.

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Although Bacon was highly critical of the use of epitome, it was not antithetical to the empirical philosophy he pioneered and which would lay the groundwork for the modern scientific method. “It is the duty and virtue of all knowledge,” says Bacon, “to abridge the infinity of individual experience, as much as the conception of truth will permit, and to remedy the complaint of vita brevis, ars longa” (“life is short, art is long”). The nature of knowledge, Bacon suggests, is inherently inductive. It is not only possible, but also necessary to reduce “individual experience” to universal laws. In the words of Ann Blair, “Bacon called for generalizations from particulars to manage the excess data accumulated through experience…For Bacon, sheer bulk of accumulation was a valuable step on the path toward mastery and knowledge of nature.”

For example, the popular formulation of Newton’s third law of motion as “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction,” is in essence the abridgment of experience to which Bacon refers. Ornamental and inflated prose only served to perplex, rather than advance, scientific discourse and, according to Bacon, allows ideas to devolve into obscure and contradictory usage:

> Let us consider the false appearances that are imposed on us by words, which are framed and applied according to the conceit and capacities of the vulgar sort: and although we think we govern our words, and prescribe it well…yet certain it is that words, as a Tartar’s bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment; so as it is almost necessary in all controversies and disputation to imitate the wisdom of the Mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definitions of our words and terms, that others may know

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how we accept and understand them, and whether they concur with us or no.\textsuperscript{25}

Bacon encouraged the use of a plain and descriptive, one might say empirical or mathematical, prose style in order to avoid confusion. This is not to be interpreted as a hostility toward rhetoric. Bacon viewed the pursuits of logic and rhetoric not as contrary, but as complementary, wherein the former “handleth reason exact and in truth” and the latter “handleth it as it is planted in popular opinions and manners.”\textsuperscript{26} Since the days of Aristotle, the “proofs and demonstrations of logic” are of little use unless those proofs can be clearly and persuasively communicated to a popular audience.

While Bacon’s call to “abridge the infinity of individual experience” does not refer to the publication of shortened literary works, his emphasis on empirical description and definition would exercise significant influence on the prose style of later seventeenth-century scientists and would, in turn, provide a justification for the publication of abridged texts.\textsuperscript{27} When Thomas Sprat addressed this issue sixty years later, his rejection of rhetoric was more critical and less nuanced than Bacon’s call for a methodical and scientific style of prose. Whereas Bacon saw rhetoric as complementary to logic, Sprat suggests that the very design, purpose, and function of the Royal Society may have been

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Bacon, \textit{Advancement of Learning}, 2.14.11.
\item[26] Bacon, \textit{Advancement of Learning}, 2.18.5.
\end{footnotes}
in danger “by the luxury and redundance of speech.” Sprat observes that, in his modern age, rhetoric had been corrupted into a “Weapon, which may be as easily procur’d by bad men, as good” and thus ought to be “banish’d out of all civil Societies.” Sprat’s conception of rhetoric is similar to Plato’s representation of the Sophists, who employed rhetoric not to instruct but to deceive. In contrast to true knowledge, which is only attained through undaunted labor, the “Tropes and Figures” of highly ornamental rhetorical speech, what Spratt calls “this vicious abundance of Phrase, this trick of Metaphors, this volubility of Tongue,” can be easily obtained by those who are “in open defiance against Reason.”

By first describing what the members of the Royal Society hope to avoid, Sprat is contrasting the qualities of experience and empirical philosophy of the new science against the speculative philosophy of the ancients as well as those who accepted the authority of ancient works without criticism. In contrast to speculative philosophy, the experiments of the Royal Society reflected an emerging scientific method that was, at

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32 Dear, “Totius in Verba,” 150. “In rejecting ancient authority, therefore, the ‘moderns’ were not rejecting the ancients themselves, but the role their writings played in intellectual inquiry.”
least in words if not actions, grounded on verifiability and reproducible results. In order to communicate the particulars of these experiments, Sprat advised that members:

Reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver’d so many things, almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness… (113)

While Sprat’s call for “plainness” was directed at scientific discourse in particular, he was an early voice in what would become a general, social reaction to swelling prose. There can be little doubt that Sprat understood fully that he was not advocating for an end to rhetoric, but merely a reorientation toward rhetorical brevitas. We need only keep in mind that, as Vickers pointed out, Hooke, Boyle, and Locke were all highly rhetorical writers who exhibited little if any inclination to follow Sprat’s advice. However, in theory, if not in practice, it was this re-orientation toward restraint that not only contributed to the advancement of learning, but also distinguished the accomplishments of modern learning over that of the ancients.

The clearest connection between Sprat’s emphasis on brevity and plainness and book abridgment is William Wotton’s Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1697). Elected to the Royal Society in 1687, Wotton was widely regarded as a genius by his contemporaries. Written in response to William Temple’s treatise Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1690), which derided modern advances in the arts and sciences and thus sparked the English battle between the Ancients and Moderns, Wotton’s Reflections describes in excruciating detail how modern advances in medicine, chemistry,
physics, and philosophy represent a zenith of human achievement. In a little-discussed passage in Chapter 29, “Of the Theological Learning of the Moderns,” Wotton concludes that not only is the knowledge acquired by the moderns superior to that of the ancients, but these achievements are due in no small part to the simplified nature of modern discourse. Speaking of the highly rhetorical sermons of the early Christians, Wotton writes that “The great Handle by which an Hearer is enabled to carry along with him a Preacher’s Arguments, is, Method and Order. Herein the Ancient Homilists are exceedingly defective.” Harkening back not only to Sprat but perhaps also Bacon, Wotton’s representation of the ideal sermon is one that is tightly structured and thus facilitates comprehension among the congregation. This stands in contrast to ancient sermons that degenerate into “Loose, Paraphrastical Explication of a large Portion of Scripture, ending, at last, in a general Ethical Harangue” (370). Ultimately, the “Want of Method” in ancient sermons leads to a “great Multiplicity of Words, and frequent Repetitions,” all of which ultimately “tire out most Readers: They know not how far they are got, but by the Number of Leaves; and so having no Rest for their Minds to lean upon, when once they begin to be weary, they are soon disgusted” (371). It is here that Wotton begins to develop a theory in his argument that we can attribute advances in learning only in part to the genius and method of modern intellectuals; equally important is the dissemination of that knowledge in a clear, concise manner. On the one hand, long explications are interpreted by Wotton as a sign of weak understanding. “For,” writes

33 William Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (London: Printed by J. Leake, for Peter Buck, at the sign of the Temple, near the Inner-Temple-Gate, in Fleet-street, 1694), 369. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
Wotton, “he that makes another understand a thing in few Words, has a more clear and comprehensive Knowledge of that thing, than another Man who uses a great many” (375). On the other hand, Wotton is highly perceptive to the physical demands that reading long treatises exerts upon a reader. The advancement of learning, therefore, is best served when the audience can progress through an argument without fatigue.

The notion of reader fatigue has been largely overlooked by modern scholars, but this is essential to understanding the emphasis on brevity and the popularization of abridgments at the end of the seventeenth century. Swelling language resulted in swelling volumes. Scientific knowledge threatened to become impenetrable not because of the complexity of the science, but rather because of the inaccessibility of the language which conveyed that knowledge. Bishop Gilbert Burnet may have acknowledged in his own abridgment that “Abridgments are generally hurtful,” but the same goes for books that are “too Voluminous,” so as to “[oppress] the Patience of those who are resolved to acquire Knowledge in the most labourious Methods.”34 Wotton claims that “Abridgments save a great deal of Labour, and make Knowledge pleasant” and “may be thoroughly comprehended, by a Man of ordinary Parts, in Two Hours time” (378). Writing several decades later, Samuel Johnson in his Dictionary uses Wotton as an authority on the value of abridgments, noting that “Epitomes are helpful to the memory, and of good private use; but set forth for publick monuments, accuse the industrious writers of delivering much impertinency.” Johnson provides a similar example from Isaac Watt’s Improvement

of the Mind in that same definition: “After we are grown well acquainted with a short system or compendium of science, which is written in the plainest and most simple manner, it is then proper to read a larger regular treatise on that subject.”35 Johnson would echo Wotton’s sentiments once again while defending the publication of abridgments in magazines. “The design of an abridgement,” he suggests, “is, to benefit mankind by facilitating the attainment of knowledge, and by contracting arguments, relations, or descriptions into a narrow compass; to convey instruction in the easiest method, without fatiguing the attention, burdening the memory, or impairing the health of the student.”36 We are wise to take this criticism of long-winded prose seriously.

For Wotton, who was as well-versed as any in both ancient and modern literature, there are no shortage of examples that validate his case. “I cannot but take notice,” he writes, “that the Moderns have drawn up clearer and shorter Institutions of all manner of Arts and Sciences, than any which the Ancients have left us” (376). After his discussion of brevity in modern sermons, Wotton attests to the value of compressing knowledge in the sciences. For starters, he contends that the ancient works on anatomy are practically useless. “How confused, many times, and always lax, are Galen’s Anatomical Discourses, in comparison of Bartholin’s, Diemerbroek’s, and Gibson’s” he asks.


36 Johnson’s remarks were initially published in The Gentleman’s Magazine 57.2 (July 1787), 556-557. For a modern treatment of Johnson’s remarks, see William J. Howard, “Dr. Johnson on Abridgment: A Re-examination,” The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 60 (1966), 215–19 (p. 218).
“Aristotle expressed himself so obscurely in his Physical Discourses…that his Meaning is almost as variously represented, as there have been Commentators who have written upon him” (377). Obscurity in expression not only makes learning difficult, but it engenders contradictory subsequent scholarship. Science, history, and philosophy are cumulative fields, where the advances in modern scholarship often depend on previous advances. If that previous knowledge cannot be communicated without ambiguity, then ultimately the advancement of learning suffers. Moving on to geometry, Wotton asks, “How long and tedious are Euclid’s Demonstrations,” and points to De Witt’s abridgment as a supplement “that it is readily mastered by any man who has read the First Six Books of Euclid” (378). Indeed, Wotton does not hesitate to attribute “the wonderful Encrease of this part of Knowledge, for these last [70] Years” to “these judicious Abridgments.”

However, this glowing praise of brevity and abridgment does not, as was previously noted, indicate that any members of the Royal Society actually practiced these methods. Stefan Forrester notes that “Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, [and] John Locke” all denounce the use of metaphor “as an illegitimate and possibly deleterious form of philosophical discourse.” But, as Forrester then goes on to show, “at the same time these philosophers were summarily dismissing metaphors, they were also employing them to illustrate some of their most foundational philosophical notions.”


38 Forrester, “Theories of Metaphor,” 612.
look no further than Locke’s famous description of the mind at birth for a salient example: “Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas.” Locke is not here asking his readers to compare the mind to white paper; rather, the image of white paper replaces that of the mind, for the latter is too abstract to visualize. Thus, when Locke frequently discusses ideas that “imprint themselves” or are “imprinted on the minds,” he is sustaining the use of that metaphor and extending it to include the mechanical processes of transforming blank paper into a printed book. Or we might look to Robert Boyle, whose style of writing Robert Markley has referred to as “experimental” and “eccentric,” intermingling the scientific alongside the theological.

Robert Hooke, described by Cynthia Sundberg Wall as a “master of detailed description,” could hardly find words to describe with precision what he witnessed through the microscope and published in *Micrographia* (1665). Hooke aims for precision in his descriptions, but there are signs of struggle:

The Eyes of a Fly in one kind of light appear almost like a Lattice, drillld through with abundance of small holes; which probably may be the Reason, why the Ingenious Dr. Power seems to suppose them such. In the Sunshine they look like a Surface cover’d with golden Nails; in another posture, like a Surface cover’d with Pyramids; in another with Cones; and

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in other postures of quite other shapes; but that which exhibits the best, is
the Light collected on the Object, by those means I have already
describ’d.42

Hooke’s observations are exact, but they are frustratingly tedious. When *Micrographia*
was republished by Robert Dodsley in 1745 as *Micrographia Restaurata*, only the
copper-plate prints that accompanied Hooke’s texts were included, for they were thought
to be “the most valuable Part of the whole Work,” in contrast to his prose, which would
“without the Prints, neither be instructive nor entertaining.”43 Although not advertised as
an abridgment, the *Micrographia Restaurata* very much constitutes a compression of the
original work, reducing the overall length from 255 pages in folio to only 108 also in
folio. The editor notes that “At the Time Dr. Hooke published this Work, a verbose and
diffused Way of Writing was in fashion, which seems to us at present tedious and
distasteful.”44 It is for this reason Dodsley refrained from republishing *Micrographia* in
its entirety, including only “some short and plain Descriptions of its Pictures, without
meddling at all with its Opinions or Hypotheses.”45 Abridgers of Robert Boyle’s works
share a similar sentiment. In his preface to *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle,
Esq. Epitomiz’d*, Richard Boulton writes that “it is as common a Complaint that long
Apologies and too frequent Excursions interspers’d through his Writings make ‘em less

to the Royal Society, 1665), f2v.

43 Robert Hooke, *Micrographia Restaurata* (London: Printed for and sold by John
Bowles, printseller at the Black Horse in Cornhill. Sold also by R. Dodsley, in Pall-mall,
and John Cuff, Optician, in Fleetstreet, 1745), A1v.


serviceable to Vulgar Readers, who are unable to carry his Sense along with them, when interrupted too often with Digressions, which have little or no Relation to the Subject under Consideration." In words reminiscent of Wotton’s *Reflections*, Boulton claims that “what before would have taken up near two Months time in reading, may be read in a Week.” According to Markley, Boulton was concerned about the “rhetorical effect of Boyle’s experimental style on readers” and suggests that his textual compressions are “necessary strategies to advance scientific knowledge and experimental technology.”

Thus, not only is scientific knowledge the cumulative effect of many years of inquiry, experimentation, and verification, the transmission of scientific knowledge is also cumulative, with subsequent authors, in this case abridgers, striving to make their predecessors more understandable.

In the remainder of this chapter I will examine John Wynne’s *Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696). In this case study, I will show the rhetorical operations that Wynne used to abridge Locke’s *Essay* for students at Oxford University.


48 Markley, *Fallen Languages*, 218.
2.3 Wynne’s *Abridgement of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

A few modern scholars may know John Wynne as the young Oxford lecturer who composed *An Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696), which would be published in dozens of English and translated editions throughout the eighteenth century. In his introduction to a modern facsimile of the fourth edition of Wynne’s *Abridgment*, G.A.J. Rogers claims, “There can be little doubt that generations of eighteenth-century students at Oxford and elsewhere were very successfully introduced to Locke’s philosophy through reading Wynne’s *Abridgment* and that the existence of these editions helped to establish Locke’s place not only as one of the greatest of Europe’s philosophers, but also as one of the most widely read.”

However, Wynne’s contribution has not been fully appreciated. There are no article-length examinations of Wynne’s abridgment, and most of Locke’s biographers and bibliographers have glossed over both the *Abridgment* and Wynne’s interesting relationship with Locke. As a brief example, in the most recent biography of Locke, Roger Woolhouse mentions Wynne only once in reference to the publication of the abridgment. Most Lockean scholarship fails to mention Wynne at all. One could say that Wynne’s legacy rests on the shoulders of a giant, though a more applicable metaphor would be that it resides in Locke’s long shadow.

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In what follows, I will address three aspects of Wynne’s *Abridgment*. First I will relate the particulars of the history of his *Abridgment*, from its intellectual conception to eventual publication. Second, I will provide a brief analysis of Wynne’s methodology for abridging Locke’s *Essay*. Lastly, I will postulate that Wynne’s *Abridgment* is not merely a reduction of Locke’s *Essay* but is rather representative of the methodological tension between the empirical sciences and rhetoric in seventeenth-century England.

### 2.3.1 Origins of Wynne’s Abridgment

Early in February 1695, John Locke received a most unusual and unexpected letter. John Wynne, fellow at Jesus College, Oxford, wrote Locke requesting permission to publish an abridgment of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). The two had never met, but the tone of Wynne’s letter expresses admiration bordering on obsequiousness, that of a disciple writing to his teacher. “After the repeated perusal of your Exellent Essay concerning Humane Understanding,” Wynne begins the letter, “I find myself deeply impress’d with motions of the greatest respect and esteem for The Author” (*Correspondence* 1843). Wynne does not immediately divulge the purpose of his letter. Aiming to avoid any sign of disrespect, Wynne represents himself first as a proponent of Locke’s philosophy, one might even say as a kindred spirit allied in a common cause to uproot the “Vulgar Systems” of an ancient and obsolete philosophy. “I have for some Time made It my business,” boasts Wynne, “to recommend It to All

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51 *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 9 vols., ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), Letter 1843. Further references are given after quotations in the text as “*Correspondence*” followed by the letter number.
Those, That I have any influence over: Nor did I ever meet with Any, who after An attentive and diligent peruseal complain’d of being disappointed in their expectation.”

Because of his appointment as a fellow at a major university, Wynne suggests that he is in a unique position to go beyond merely supporting Locke’s philosophy and offers to collaborate on what he calls “the greatest service that could be done for the Studious and Thinking part of the World.” In order to bring Locke’s Essay “into vogue and credit, and thereby into common and general use,” Wynne proposes in this first letter that, “It would be very useful to publish an abridgment of the Book.”

Wynne’s role in writing the abridgment did not come without considerable risk. At the time, Oxford was experiencing something of a schism. Younger scholars like Wynne claimed that institutional support for ancient philosophy had stagnated learning, while the old guard characterized the new philosophy as dangerous, perhaps even atheistic.52 Indeed, Locke’s refutation of innate principles and ideas (i.e., the concept that all humans are endowed by their creator with a benevolent moral compass) struck at the very heart of Christian theological doctrine. Woolhouse observes that “from the outset, Oxford tutors had been recommending the Essay to their pupils.”53 Locke’s friend at Oxford, James Tyrrell, wrote of the reception to his Essay in a letter dated 19 December 1689: “many copyes are sold of it, and I hear it is well approved of by those who have began the reading of it” (Correspondence 1225). However, the “friendly early reception

that Tyrrell had reported was not to last,” Rogers notes in his introduction to Wynne’s *Abridgment*. “We may even doubt that it was ever there.”

When Tyrrell wrote back to Locke in February 1690, he relates that “the divines” were “much scandalized” by the *Essay* (*Correspondence* 1248). In the coming months and years, the official academic culture of Oxford became decidedly anti-Lockean. The first significant response, *Cursory Reflections upon a Book call’d An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), was written by former All Souls fellow John Norris. Although Norris left as fellow in 1689, just prior to publishing his *Cursory Reflections*, his response to Locke very much encapsulates his colleagues’ skepticism of Locke’s refutation of innate principles and ideas:

> This Author impugns the Doctin of *Innate Principles*; and I think neither any nor all of them are sufficient for the Cause wherein they are inganged. And I am so far from being surprized at their Deficiency, that I think it absolutely impossible for him or any man else upon his principles, to prove that there are no Innate Truths.55

Almost immediately after the publication of the third edition of Locke’s *Essay* and the first edition of Wynne’s *Abridgment*, Thomas Beconsall of Brasenose College, Oxford, denounced Locke’s philosophy in an Easter sermon published as *The Doctrine of a General Resurrection* (1697), and he then published a more thorough critique in *The


Grounds and Foundations of Natural Religion (1698). Locke’s Essay, and presumably Wynne’s Abridgment, were eventually banned from the University in 1703 on grounds that it was “too revolutionary,” according to historian William Gibson. When Locke inquired into the banning of his Essay, Tyrrell responded in April 1704 that the “new philosophy” was blamed for a “great decay” in learning at the university. Yet Tyrrell informs Locke that the decision to ban his Essay was far from unanimous, though not for the reasons we might think. Those who opposed banning Locke’s Essay could hardly be counted among his supporters; rather, his opponents worried that such a high profile act of censorship would only draw more attention to Locke’s scandalous philosophy and perpetuate its influence among the younger generations. Thus, a compromise was reached that it was better to quietly discourage the Essay in hopes of it fading into obscurity. Tyrrell explained that “all Heads of Houses should give the tutors private instructions not to read those books to their pupils, and to prevent their doing it by themselves as much as lay in their power,” but Tyrrell goes on to state that some colleges at Oxford, including Jesus College, did not follow the order and “thought it best to let it drop.” The issue remained unresolved, only to re-emerge about a year later when Dr. William Lancaster, formerly Provost of Queen’s College, Oxford, was elected Vice-Chancellor of Oxford


58 Peter King, The Life and Letters of John Locke (London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, 1858) 193-194.

59 King, The Life and Letters of John Locke, 193.
University in October 1706. Lancaster used his inaugural speech to admonish modern philosophy as detrimental to the advancement of learning at the university. Diarist Thomas Hearne recorded the event, noting that the new Vice-Chancellor hop’d the Seniors of ye university, especially those who had ye more immediate Care of Youth, would joyn w’th him in stifling the Mischiefs of ill & pernicious Books, written on purpose to ruin both ye Church & university, & bring a Disgrace upon Learning & Religion, among w’th he nam’d Dr. Tyndale’s Book of y’re Rts of y’r Church, in w’re publish’d new Forms of Ecclesiastical & Civil Governm’t, & Mr. Lock’s Humane understanding, written to advance new Schemes of Philosophy & bring an odium upon Ancient Learning.60

From his seat in the audience, Wynne witnessed the most powerful figure at Oxford use his bully pulpit to criticize and publicly censor the very philosophy that he had been teaching for a decade. Being a follower of Locke was not merely a pedagogical preference; it defined Wynne’s professional character. Hearne can hardly mention Wynne in correspondence or diary entries without adding that he “epitomiz’d Lock’s Hum. understanding” (1.130), or attributing Wynne’s eventual election as Principal of Jesus College and subsequent election as a Bishop to a combination of Whig sympathies and adherence Lockean philosophy (4.107, 4.430).

On the day of Lancaster’s inaugural speech, Hearne records that it was “Doubtful how Dr. Wynne, who abridged [Locke’s Essay], relished it” (1.294). Although Hearne was at times suspicious of Wynne’s whiggish tendencies, even he found Lancaster’s remarks hypocritical. Lancaster “was pleas’d to mention Dr. Wynn’s Lectures of Jesus

College as being learned and instructive,” Hearne recalls, but “whereas he spoke now well of Dr. Wynne he spoke very scurvily of him sometime agoe, and was pleas’d to run down Mr. Lock in the Convocation-House, whom nevertheless Dr. Wynne always greatly Admir’d, & was at the Pains of abridging his Essay of Humane Understanding” (2.282). In a letter dated 8 October 1709, Hearne remarks to his friend Dr. T. Smith that Lancaster “commended the Lectures of Dr. Wynne of Jesus, which he said were elegant and learned…Yet formerly he decry’d this Gentleman as being a Lockist” (2.283). And Edward Vallance suspects that opposition to Wynne’s appointment as the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Jesus College stemmed from his close association with Locke and his work on the *Abridgment*.\(^6^1\)

Both Locke’s and Wynne’s opposition to Oxford’s curriculum stems from a mutually held belief. Notions such as innate principles and ideas have no empirical basis yet were nevertheless perpetuated by a stubborn adherence to tradition. They felt that the advancement of learning is inherent to the establishment of a democratic and civil society. It is well known that Locke, although a graduate of and eventual tutor at Christ’s Church, Oxford, was highly critical of the university’s pedagogical principles. Wynne shared this disdain. When Wynne first wrote to Locke, he sets himself apart from his colleagues, noting that the dissemination of Locke’s philosophy at Oxford had to contend with men who “labour under inveterate prejudices, and obstinate prepossessions” (*Correspondence* 1843). Wynne refers to the current curriculum as little more than

“Trifling and Insignificant Books, which serve only to perplex and confound, instead of
enlightening and improving our Reasons” (*Correspondence* 1843). As a follower of
Locke, we can only assume that Wynne found the curriculum stifling.

Despite opposition to Lockean philosophy throughout Oxford, Wynne was
adamant that Locke’s *Essay* represented one of the greatest advancements in human
knowledge, and because of his fellowship at Oxford, few were better positioned than
Wynne to disseminate Locke’s philosophy to younger generations regardless of the
political repercussions. “I need not represent to you the Advantages of A small over A
larger Volume,” writes Wynne, “But shall only tell you that It would be of excellent use
to us in this place, to be put into the hands of our young men” (*Correspondence* 1843).
This aligns very much with Locke’s original intent in publishing his *Essay*, which he
claims in the “Epistle to the Reader” to have written in a “plain and easy style” so as “to
make what I have to say as easy and intelligible to all sorts of readers as I can.” In that
opening chapter to the *Essay*, and throughout much of the work, Locke’s “plain and easy”
style makes frequent use of the first-person plural to emphasize the benefit of his new
philosophy to society: “If we can find out, how far the Understanding can extend its
view, how far it has Faculties to attain Certainty; and in what Cases it can only judge and
guess, we may learn to content our selves with what is attainable by us in this State” (14-
15). Perhaps out of recognition that his philosophy needed an ambassador within an
institution of higher learning, Locke agreed to Wynne’s proposal for an *Abridgment*,
responding a few days later: “I should be very glad any thing in my book could be made
usefull to that purpose,” and the prospect of his *Essay* getting “into the hands of men of
letters and study,” was, Locke wrote, “more than I could expect,” (Correspondence 1846).

Through the exchange of several subsequent letters, Locke and Wynne refined the method and scope of the abridgment. Wynne proposes reducing Locke’s Essay, which consisted of 362 folio pages, “to the compass of a moderate octavo” (Correspondence 1843).62 Perhaps too big to fit in one’s pocket, yet certainly smaller than a folio and about the size of a modern-day mass-market paperback. Folio volumes are heavy, cumbersome, and expensive, none of which would have been suitable to the small student body at Jesus College. By contrast, the octavo that Wynne planned was cheap and portable.

Although Locke had already prepared an abridgment of his Essay for the French periodical Bibliothèque Universelle in 1688, he declined to write a new abridgment, citing his “litle health and lesse leisure” as the primary reasons (Correspondence 1849). He offered to send Wynne the English-language manuscript of that abridgment, but Wynne declined the offer. Only after exchanging letters did Wynne admit to Locke that he had already composed an “abstract” for private use. “Nevertheles,” writes Wynne in a letter dated 20 February 1695, “since you are pleas’d to give me some encouragement to undertake It, I am very ready to contribute my endeavour; the rather, because I do not think any of my Time lost, or mispent that is employ’d in the peruseal of It. I have allready an Abstract of It By me” (Correspondence 1850). However, Wynne admits in his 20 February letter that the “abstract” he had earlier drafted was too slim for

62 A copy of Wynne’s “moderate octavo” abridgment at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library consists of 328 pages (or 164 leaves) measuring 177.5 by 115 mm.
publication and so outlines his plan to “enlarg [it] by inserting some of the most
considerable and necessary explications upon each head, and connecting them together”
(Correspondence 1850). If Wynne began his abridgment using the first edition of
Locke’s Essay, he likely completed it using the second edition (1694). We know this
because, as G.A.J. Rogers noted in his introduction to a fascimile edition of Wynne’s
Abridgment, the work includes section 2.27, which Locke only included in the second
edition.

Wynne worked fervently on the abridgment. Having first contacted Locke at the
day of January 1695, it took Wynne less than three months to prepare a copy for Locke’s
approval. In a letter dated 30 March 1695, Wynne informs Locke that he has “almost
finished It,” and though his Abridgment “will in all respects come far short of the
Perfection of the Essay at large,” he nevertheless believes that “It will, even in this Form,
far exceed, and be of much more real use, then what commonly we learn and teach, under
the Name of Logick (Correspondence 1869). On April 20, Wynne informs Locke that he
has “sent up the Abridgment I have made of your Essay…I submit it to your judgment,
and leave it wholly to your disposal” (Correspondence 1884). Locke approved, and he
put Wynne into contact with his publisher, John Churchill. Churchill informed Wynne on
25 June that “he intended speedily another impression of [Locke’s] Essay, which he
desir’d might come abroad before the Abridgment. I thought it reasonable to leave the
timing of it to Him, that he might order it so as not to hinder the sale of the Essay”
(Correspondence 1915). To this Wynne agreed. Contrary to the prevalent notion that
abridgments are a form of piracy and the publication of them impeded the sale of original
works, we have here an example of quite the opposite: author, abridger, and publisher working together so that the publication of original and abridgment complement each other and work in tandem to promote learning.

2.3.2 Structure of Wynne’s Abridgment

Rather than paraphrase the Locke’s *Essay* in order to reduce the length, a method popularized by Bishop Gilbert Burnet’s *Abridgment of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1682), Wynne reduces the *Essay* almost entirely through the excision of what he calls “larger explications” (*Correspondence* 1850). This includes the methodical deletion of passages, and even entire chapters, that did not suit Wynne’s design. Repetitions, superfluous examples, and explanatory remarks were also cut. But Wynne was hesitant to alter too drastically the prose of the *Essay*. “I shall not pretend to alter either your method or language,” writes Wynne, “being convinc’d that neither can be done for the better” (*Correspondence* 1850). A comparison between Locke’s *Essay* and Wynne’s *Abridgment* shows that Wynne kept his word not to significantly revise the language of the original, although sometimes the act of paring down sentences did require altering the syntax and structure of some sentences.

In order to fit the contents of the second edition of Locke’s *Essay* into a single-volume “moderate octavo,” Wynne cut over half the text from Locke’s original. At 407 folio pages with approximately 53 lines per page, the maximum number of lines capable
of fitting in Locke’s original is 21,571.63 By comparison, at 328 octavo pages with approximately 29 lines per page, the maximum number of lines capable of fitting in Wynne’s abridgment is 9,512.64 However, this simple calculation is subject to a number of clarifications. First, not all pages consist of solid blocks of text. The numbers above do not take into account empty space framing chapter or section heads, or space devoted to table of contents or indices. Second, because Locke’s original is a folio it averages 69 characters per line including spaces.65 By comparison, Wynne’s abridgment averages about 40 characters per line including spaces.66 While a thorough digital analysis is beyond the scope of this study, the evidence above suggests that Wynne shortened Locke’s Essay anywhere from one-half to one-quarter its original length.67

63 See signature D1r for a representative example.
64 See signature E1r for a representative example.
65 See signature D1r, line 5 for a representative example.
66 See signature E1r, line 2 for a representative example.
67 There are two ways to compare the contents of Wynne’s Abridgment to Locke’s Essay. With the first book having (for the most part) been expunged, the work begins with Book II on page 7 and concludes on page 120 (=113pp), comprising about 36.4% of the work. Book III begins on page 121 and concludes on page 179 (=59pp), comprising about 19%. And Book IV begins on page 180 and concludes on page 310 (=130pp), comprising about 41.9%. When compared to Locke’s original, it becomes apparent that Wynne cut more heavily from the first two books. If we include Book I of Locke’s Essay in our comparison, it begins on page 1 and concludes on page 39, comprising about 9.5% of the Essay. Book II begins on page 41 and concludes on page 219 (=179pp), comprising about 43.9%. Book III begins on page 221 and concludes on page 299 (=79), comprising about 19.4%. Book IV begins on page 301 and concludes on page 407 (=107pp), comprising about 26.2%. Clearly, the second book is the longest, followed by the fourth, then the second, then the first. If we exclude the first book from the calculations, then Book II comprises about 48.6% of the Essay, Book III 21.4%, and Book IV 29%. Wynne’s Abridgment cut most heavily from the first two books, especially Book II, reducing it
Locke refutes the principle of innate ideas. Wynne explains in the Dedication that the first book “might be best spared in this Abridgment; especially, since the Reader may be convinced by what he shall find” in the three subsequent books. However, Rogers speculates that Wynne was “well aware that it was the first Book with its radical dismissal of innate speculative, moral and religious ideas, that had drawn most fire from the Oxford dons, and that had detracted most from the reception of the work.” While this may partially explain Wynne’s motives, we should also keep in mind that Wynne was not oblivious to his colleagues’ philosophical and theological beliefs. Simply cutting the first book would not assuage their criticism of Locke, which (as was previously from nearly half (not counting Book I) to just over one-third the length of the whole. The fourth book, with its focus on knowledge and reason remains comparatively intact (Figure 3). Aside from cutting almost entirely from the first book, Wynne cuts whole sections throughout. He admits in his preface to cutting only one other whole section, that “concerning the Freedom and Determination of the Will” (2.21.2). However, a close examination of Wynne’s Abridgment shows that there were many sections of Locke’s text that he found unnecessary.


noted) it did not. Furthermore, Wynne did include extracts from Book I Chapter 1 in the Introduction to the *Abridgment*. Snippets from the first book of the *Essay* can also be found in Book II Chapter 1 of Wynne’s *Abridgment*, particularly in the first four paragraphs, which are devoted to defining the concept of Ideas. In the third paragraph, Wynne extracts from section 1.2.1 of Locke’s *Essay*, which includes Locke’s discussion of Innate Principles:

> It is an establish’d Opinion amongst some Men, that there are in the understanding certain *Innate Principles*, some primary Notions…Characters, as it were stamp’d upon the Mind of Man, which the Soul receives in its very first Being, and brings into the World with it. This Opinion is accurately discuss’d, and refuted in the *First* Book of this *Essay*, to which I shall refer the Reader, that desires Satisfaction in this particular. (Wynne 7-8)

Since the whole of Locke’s *Essay* is essentially a refutation of the notion of Innate Ideas and Principles, it would have made very little sense to cut entirely something so critical to the argument.

One of the most frequent reasons for abridgment was to reduce examples or superfluous explanations. Although Wynne would often include at least one illustrative example, he rarely found it necessary to include two, three, or four, as is common throughout Locke’s *Essay*. For example, in Book II Chapter 11, “Of Discerning, and other Operations of the Mind,” Wynne retains the example of a dog recognizing its master through a multitude of simple ideas such as “Shape, Smell and Voice” (but the dog is nevertheless unable to combine those ideas into a complex idea) (Wynne 39). This one example seems to have satisfied Wynne, who cut subsequent examples, including a similar example of a mother dog that, nurturing a litter of pups, is unable to “have any
knowledge of their number” (Locke 2.11.7). Wynne extracts from 2.11.9, on the abstraction of ideas from the particular to the general and includes as an elaboration: “Thus the Colour which I receive from Chalk, Snow, and Milk, is made a representative of all of that kind; and has a name given it (Whiteness) which signifies the same quality, wherever to be found or imagin’d” (40). Yet Locke’s subsequent examples and clarifications on how animals appear unable to think abstractly (2.11.11), on the difference between a normal functioning mind and that of “Idiots” (2.11.12), and on the same difference only this time pertaining to the mentally insane (2.11.13) are all cut, presumably because they illustrate the same concept in different words. Furthermore, Wynne cuts sections 2.11.14-17, which act as a summary to Chapter 11 and serves to further refute the concept of innate principles and ideas. When Locke suggests in 2.19.3 that “it may not be an unpardonable Digression, nor wholly impertinent to our present Design, if we reflect here upon the different State of the Mind in thinking,” we can only assume that Wynne, in fact, found this digression unpardonable, for it is not to be found in his Abridgment. The number of excisions are too numerous to treat exhaustively, but many of the larger excisions Wynne made to Locke’s Essay follow the pattern outlined above of cutting superfluous examples, as well as summary material at the ends of chapters.

Despite numerous abridgments, the only chapters Wynne cut in full are the four chapters of Book I. Wynne not only preserved at least a portion of every chapter, but he also adhered to Locke’s chapter numbers and chapter titles. Thus, Book II Chapter 1 is still titled “Of Ideas in General, and their Original,” Book II Chapter 2 “Of Simple
Ideas,” Book II Chapter 3 “Of Solidity,” and so on. Starting a work with an introduction followed by Book II hardly makes any sense unless one takes Wynne at his word that the Abridgment be used “as a previous Instrument, and preparatory Help,” in understanding Lockean philosophy (A3r). Thus, retaining the chapters and titles allows for easy cross-referencing between the original and abridgment, especially for those scholars graduating from Wynne’s introductory Abridgement to Locke’s original.

Further reductions were achieved on the sentence level, cutting individual words so as to shorten sentences and therefore emphasize explanation and definition of key concepts. Locke was well aware that his Essay abounded with repetition. In the preface to the first edition of the Essay, Locke apologizes for “some repetitions” in the content, a byproduct of it having been written intermittently for a number of years, and consequently admits that the Essay “might be contracted...But to confess the Truth, I am now too lazie, or too busie to make it shorter” (a1r). Take, for example, the extract of section 1.1.8, Locke’s apology for the frequent use of and definition of the word “idea,” which Wynne included at the beginning of Book II:

Thus much I thought necessary to say concerning the Occasion of this Enquiry into humane Understanding. But, before I proceed on to what I have thought on this Subject, I must here in the Entrance beg Pardon of my Reader, for the frequent use of the Word Idea, which he will find in the following Treatise. It being that Term, which, I think, serves best to stand for [By the Term Idea, I mean] whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a Man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by Phantasm, Notion, Species, or whatever it is, which the Mind can be employ’d about in thinking; and I could not avoid frequently using it.

(Locke, 2.1.1 with Wynne’s abridgments indicated by a strikethrough)
In Locke’s *Essay*, the definition of “idea” is couched within an extended apology for the repetitious use of that term. Locke touches on this again in his correspondence with Wynne, noting that “those repetitions which for reasons then I let it goe with, may be omitted.”\(^{70}\) Locke was fond of what he called the “plain and popular style” in which he wrote the *Essay*, but even he agreed that his longer explanations and clarifications “may be looked on as incidental to what you design” and therefore “wholly passed by.”\(^{71}\)

Locke’s candor regarding the literary flaws of his *Essay* largely anticipate the changes that Wynne would eventually make. Wynne apparently had no use for Locke’s apology in the passage quoted above, not only because it was incidental to his design but perhaps also because his design involved the excision of frequent repetitions, including those repetitions of the word “idea”.

The ultimate result of Wynne’s decision to cut Locke’s supposedly superfluous examples and clarifications is a book that might at first seem antithetical to a schoolbook. With fewer clarifications and illustrative examples (some sections in Wynne’s *Abridgment* are entirely lacking in such illustrative examples), Locke’s philosophy becomes much more abstract. Locke uses frequent examples to ground the philosophical inquiry in reality. The empirical philosophy that Locke espoused, and that came to form the basis of modern scientific inquiry (to observe and base hypothesis on measurable observations) has been degraded in Wynne’s *Abridgment*. On the one hand, we might

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\(^{70}\) John Locke, *Some Familiar Letters Between Mr. Locke, and Several of His Friends* (London, 1708), 267.

\(^{71}\) Locke, *Some Familiar Letters*, 266-67.
conclude that, having designed this book for use in the university, these examples were provided during lecture, or perhaps students were encouraged to think of their own examples. On the other hand, without these examples the abridgment sacrifices some of Locke’s nuance. The numerous examples, clarifications, and explanations not only make the principles discussed in the Essay more lucid, but are also Locke’s way of anticipating challenges to his new philosophy. When this work is translated from the marketplace of ideas into a more controlled environment, the need is less necessary. Furthermore, Wynne had no reason to include such material. If questioned, he would likely advise someone to go read the original.

2.3.3 Style and Rhetoric in Wynne’s Abridgment

The single most noticeable effect of Wynne’s method is that Locke’s language is largely preserved. Wynne aimed to retain the most salient points of the Essay, and one could conclude that, after having reduced the work by as much as three-quarters, he achieved this goal. However, the relationship between their respective prose styles and use of rhetoric is more complicated. Locke’s style of writing was highly rhetorical, filled with amplifications, digressions, and rhetorical figures. At times Wynne retains Locke’s rhetoric, but only insofar as it contributes to the design of the Abridgment as a book for young scholars. However, Wynne largely flattens Locke’s style into something far more plain than even Locke had envisioned. Although there is no evidence that Wynne had read Sprat’s History of the Royal Society, his changes to the Essay do to some extent
reflect the style of plainness and simplicity that Sprat advocated for modern scientific discourse.

That being said, Wynne did retain some of Locke’s style and rhetoric. The most immediate and noticeable stylistic holdover from the Essay is Locke’s informal use of the first person pronouns “I” and “We”. Although Wynne makes no secret that the abridgment is derived from Locke (indeed, the proper title of the work is *An Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*), he does not alternate between narrative perspectives as, say, Michel de la Roche does in *An Abridgment of Gerard Brandt’s History of the Reformation in the Low-Countries* (1727). In that work, de la Roche interjects from time to time, either qualifying or praising the original in such a way that clearly distinguishes his labor as the abridger from Brandt’s labor as the original author. “The Christian Religion, says the Author, was at first venerable for its Simplicity.”72 In this, the very first sentence of the abridgment, de la Roche refers to Brandt as “the Author” and does so several other times throughout the work, typically within areas of the history that were drastically condensed. Although de la Roche commends Brandt’s *History* in the Preface as “certainly a most valuable work…because the Author has consulted the Archives, and many Original Papers,” he nevertheless highlights the importance of his role as the abridger in making the work more accessible to common readers by cutting through the density of Brandt’s historical research, for “I

72 Michel de la Roche, ed. *An abridgment of Gerard Brandt’s History of the Reformation in the Low-Countries*, by Geeraert Brandt, abridged ed. (London: Sold by R. Knaplock; and W. and J. Innys, 1725, 1. Further references to this edition follow quotations within the text.
think I may very well say, there never was any Performance of this kind, that did so much require an Abridgment; and I believe I shall not be contradicted by those, who have read it” (a4v). In one such moment, de la Roche interjects to describe the scope of Brandt’s research. “I think”, writes de la Roche, “I ought to observe in this place, that our Author does frequently quote several Dutch Historians of great merit, who are hardly known out of the United-Provinces; and that he takes from them a great many things, not to be found any where else. He quotes also several Manuscripts. This Observation may be of use to show the importance of Gerard Brandt’s History.”

By calling attention to the abridgment as an abridgment, to summary as summary, and to himself as the abridger, de la Roche interjects himself into the narrative, breaking the fourth wall if you will, to vouch for Brandt and stress the importance of the History.

Wynne does not call attention to himself as the abridger. Throughout his Abridgment, Wynne retains Locke’s use of first person pronouns, which ultimately helps to preserve the “plain and popular style,” that Locke boasted of in his letters (Wynne 266-67). From the very beginning of the Essay, Locke uses the first person in a conversational manner, appropriate for an inquiry into the nature of the mind.

This, therefore, being my Purpose to enquire into the Original, Certainty, and Extent of humane Knowledge; together, with the Grounds and Degrees of Belief, Opinion, and Assent. (Locke 1.1.1)


See de la Roche’s summary of Brandt’s Introduction (1) wherein he specifies using the attributive tag “says the Author” so as to specify that the ideas contained therein are in fact Brandt’s and not his own. See also de la Roche’s interjection on page 191 (O4v).
Wynne restructures that expression into something equally conversational and informal:

My purpose therefore is to enquire into the Original, Certainty, and Extent of Human Knowledge; together with the Grounds and Degrees of Belief, Opinion, and Assent.” (Wynne 1)

While this preserves Locke’s informal style, retaining the first person pronouns also maintains Locke’s rhetorical effect. The frequent use of the first person was a stylistic choice preferred by many of the new scientists. “When a Fellow of the Royal Society made a contribution to knowledge, he did so by reporting an experience” in the form of an observation, notes Dear, “not only by his careful recounting of the facts, but also by his use of the first person.” The use of the first person emphasizes the role that the observer plays in collecting and interpreting evidence for validation by his peers. As a rhetorical gesture, the use of the first person opens the experiment to scrutiny, thereby establishing the author’s place within a community of scientists, but it also underscores the fact that these are but the observations of a single man and are therefore subject to the conditions under which the observations took place. This mitigates the tendency to arrive at conclusions prematurely.

The use of the first person also allows Locke to more directly challenge his opponents. Thus, when he is discussing the nature of the thinking man, and asserts that the mind does indeed rest and that man is not an always-thinking-being, he writes:

I would be glad also to learn from these Men, who so confidently pronounce, that the humane Soul, or, which is all one, that a Man always thinks, how they come to know it; nay, how they come to know that they

74 Dear, “Totius in Verba,” 152.
Locke expresses his incredulity in such a way that is both challenging and demeaning, phrased in so as to undercut the very assumptions he finds to ridiculous. Wynne maintains this rhetorical effect:

“I would be glad to learn from those Men, who so confidently pronounce that the Human Soul always Thinks, how they come to know it; Nay, how they come to know that they themselves Think, when they themselves do not perceive it.” (Wynne 11)

If anything, Wynne’s brevity makes for an even more forceful and direct challenge to the Essay’s detractors. Without Locke’s digression on “Soul” and “Man”, a subject he touched on earlier, Wynne is able to retain emphasis on the challenge inherent in the statement and not the tangential philosophical debate regarding the synthesis of the soul and the body. And Wynne’s revision of “these Men” to “those Men” paints the detractors as literally separate and occupying a different space.

In addition to rhetorical effect, Locke also uses the first person to acknowledge the limits of his own knowledge regarding a particular subject. Such is the case in sections 2.9.11 and 2.9.13 when Locke discusses the role of perception in intelligent beings:

“This faculty of Perception, seems to me to be that, which puts the distinction betwixt the animal Kingdom, and the inferior parts of Nature...We may, I think, from the Make of an Oyster, or Cockle, reasonably conclude, that is has not so many, nor so quick Senses, as a Man, or several other Animals. (Locke 2.9.11 and 2.9.13, italics original)

But Locke quickly goes on to qualify that his own knowledge of the matter is limited, stating that “But yet, I cannot but think, there is some small dull Perception, whereby
they are distinguished from perfect Insensibility” (2.9.14). Wynne maintains this use of first person, which acknowledges to the reader the limits of his own understanding, but without the overt emphasis that Locke places on his own limited understanding:

The faculty of Perception seems to be that which puts the distinction between the animal Kingdom, and the inferior parts of Nature...But Perception, I believe, is in some degree in all sorts of Animals: thô I think we may from the make of an Oister or Cockle, reasonably conclude that it has not so many, nor so quick Senses as a Man, or several other Animals. (Wynne 33)

The above examples are notable for another reason besides Wynne’s preservation of Locke’s use of the first person. I retained Locke’s use of italics in the above quotation because his Essay uses italics so as to distinguish either key words or, more importantly here, key phrases from the rest of the surrounding text. In effect, italics act as manicules to mark salient passages in anticipation of commonplacing. These passages are not only of intellectual value but, keeping with the commonplace tradition, also of literary value. Throughout Locke’s Essay, these italicized passages are difficult to miss. Although such passages would in and of themselves comprise a volume at least as thick as Wynne’s abridgment, in those sections that Wynne does include, these italicized words and phrases are transferred directly, with little or no revision, from the original to the abridgment. While examples of this are too numerous to list in full here, some examples are more notable than others. When Locke discusses the mechanisms by which the mind comes to understand the idea of pain, he writes:

*Pain* has the same efficacy and use to set us on work, that Pleasure has, we being as ready to employ our Faculties to avoid that, as to pursue this: Only this is worth our consideration, That *Pain is often produced by the same Objects and Ideas, that produce Pleasure* in us. (Locke 2.7.4, italics original)
The italics signal to the reader Locke’s quasi-definition of pain, which is then followed by several lines of examples. The passage is notable not only for the intellectual proposition that pleasure and pain are both reactions to external stimuli. Locke establishes as much in the first sentence quoted above. By rephrasing that intellectual proposition only a few words later, Locke adds a literary quality to the concept that sounds more aphoristic than scientific, expressing something closer to a commonly held belief than a scientific hypothesis. In the italicized rephrasing, pain and pleasure are both structurally and rhetorically connected by “the same Objects and Ideas,” though placed at opposite ends of the sentence just as they tend to elicit opposing reactions in humans. The same line in Wynne’s *Abridgment* is as follows:

> Pain has the same Efficacy to set us on work that Pleasure has; since we are as ready to avoid that, as to pursue this. This is worth our Consideration, that *Pain is often produc’d by the same Objects and Ideas that produce Pleasure* in us” (Wynne 21, italics original).

It is not uncommon for Wynne to reproduce an italicized passage verbatim in his abridgment; however, those passages are not always marked as such in the abridgment, though they are here and elsewhere. Although Wynne largely adhered to the phrasing, he was just as likely to alter and condense these statements as he was larger explications.

Thus, Locke writes:

> This shews us how it comes to pass, that there are in every Language *many particular words which cannot be rendred by any one single word of another*. (Locke 2.22.6, italics original)

But Wynne condenses into:

> This gives the reason, why there are words in every Language, which cannot be rendred by any one single word of another. (Wynne 74)
In a sense, Wynne not only designed the abridgment to contain nearly identical contents as the original, but he wanted the book itself to function as the original functions, with multiple layers of meaning, both practical and abstract, literary and scientific.

Whereas Wynne was apt to preserve much of Locke’s original prose, there was one idiosyncrasy of Locke’s style that appears to have been counter to Wynne’s design. Throughout the *Essay*, Locke introduces new concepts and vocabulary in an indirect manner and launches into lengthy descriptions only to eventually arrive at the key term. This rhetorical operation is known as transposition, or departing from a seemingly normal arrangement of words. Thus, a reader might find himself halfway through a paragraph and still not know what exactly Locke is talking about. Take for example this paragraph out of the second book:

To conclude, beside those before mentioned primary Qualities in Bodies, *viz.* Bulk, Figure, Extension, Number, and Motion of their solid Parts; all the rest, whereby we take notice of Bodies, and distinguish them one from another, are nothing else, but several Powers in them, depending on those primary Qualities; whereby they are fitted, either by immediately operating on our Bodies, to produce several different Ideas in us; or else by operating on other Bodies, so to change their primary Qualities, as to render them capable of producing Ideas in us, different from what before they did. The former of these, I think, may be called Secondary Qualities, *immediately perceivable*. The latter, Secondary Qualities, *mediately perceivable*. (Locke 2.8.26, italics original)

In instances where Locke utilizes transposition, Wynne takes greater liberties in paraphrasing Locke’s original to meet the design of the abridgment as a work fit for students.

These Secondary Qualities are of Two sorts, first *immediately perceivable*, which by immediately operating on our Bodies, produce several different Ideas in us. Secondly, *mediately perceivable*, which by
operating on other Bodies, change their primary Qualities, so as to render
them capable of producing Ideas in us different from what they did before.
(Wynne 29, italics original)

As in Locke’s original, the italicization maintains the emphasis on the key concepts.
However, Wynne’s paraphrasing and restructuring of Locke’s original follows a more
rigid method for organization that can be seen throughout the abridgment. Wynne, we
might say, pays closer attention to his topic sentences than does Locke, and uses topic
sentences as signposts to inform the readers of new terms or concepts. These types of
revisions are prevalent throughout the abridgment. Locke utilizes transposition in 2.11.9,
delaying reference to the key concept “Abstraction” until after he defines the concept,
about eight lines into the paragraph. Conversely, Wynne begins the corresponding
paragraph, “Abstraction is another Operation of the Mind, whereby the Mind forms
general Ideas from such as it receiv’d from particular Objects” (40, italics original).
When Locke elaborates on two kinds of Modes, he utilizes transposition twice in the
same paragraph by first defining each mode and ending the definition with “…these I call
simple Modes” and “…these I call mixed Modes” (2.12.5, italics original). As was the
case before, Locke gives the reader the definition before the terminology. Wynne alters
both: “These Modes are of Two sorts, First Simple, which are…Secondly, Mix’d, which
are…” (42, italics original). While some instances of transposition can be found in
Wynne’s Abridgment, by and large this is one authorial idiosyncrasy that Wynne revised
consistently.

In other instances, Locke writes in an ornamental rhetorical style. In the second
book, Locke expresses in vivid, somber language the course of memory decay: “The
Memory in some Men, ‘tis true, is very tenacious, even to a Miracle: But yet there seems to be a constant decay of all our Ideas, even of those which are struck deepest, and in Minds the most retentive” (2.10.5, italics original). Wynne preserved Locke’s sentiment, and this sentence can be found in the Abridgment nearly unaltered (36). But the remainder of the passage that further draws on the readers’ sympathies by ruminating on the inevitability of death was, perhaps, ill-suited for class discussion:

Thus the Ideas, as well as Children, of our Youth, often die before us: And our Minds represent to us those Tombs, to which we are approaching; where though the Brass and Marble remain, yet the Inscriptions are effaced by time, and the Imagery moulders away. The Pictures drawn in our Minds, are laid in fading Colours; and if not sometimes refreshed, vanish and disappear. (Locke 2.10.5)

Indeed, Wynne had little reason to include this digression. Wynne transitions almost immediately into the next section of Locke’s argument (2.10.6) which includes a more elaborate and scientific description of which types of memories are most likely to be refreshed, namely “the Original qualities of Bodies, viz. Solidity, Extension, Figure, Motion, &c. and those that almost constantly affect us” (Wynne 36).

It would be an overstatement to say that Wynne fully realized, in his abridgment of Locke’s Essay, Sprat’s call for a “Mathematical plainness”. I do not suggest that Wynne was even aware of Sprat. What I do suggest is that scholars like Wynne saw it as their scientific duty to improve their predecessors and to take nothing for granted. Although Sprat’s call for plainness was not realized by many members of the Royal Society, abridgment becomes emblematic of a shift in some practitioners of British literary and scientific discourse toward brevity.
2.3.4 Legacy of Wynne’s Abridgment

When Wynne’s *Abridgment* was finally printed in late 1695, there was little indication that it would achieve such astounding success. The book arrived with little fanfare, and what records we have are anything but laudatory. When Locke wrote to his friend William Molyneux on 30 March 1696, he was pleased to announce that “Mr. Wynne’s Abstract of my Essay is now publish’d, and I have sent order to Mr. Churchill to send you one of them.”

When Molyneux responded on 6 June 1696, he writes: “I have read over Mr. Wynne’s Abridgment of your Essay.” Although Molyneux says that “To one already vers’d in the Essay, the Abridgment serves as a good Remembrancer,” he is not altogether pleased with the language:

> I must confess to you, I was never more satisfied with the Length of your Essay, than since I have seen this Abridgment; which, though done justly enough, yet falls so short of that Spirit which every where shews it self in the Original, that nothing can be more different…but, I believe, let a Man wholly unacquainted with the [Essay], begin to read the [Abridgment], and he will not so well relish it. So that how desirous soever I might have formerly been of seeing your Essay put into the Form of a Logick for the Schools, I am now fully satisfied I was in an Error; and must freely confess to you, that I wish Mr. Wynne’s Abridgment had been yet undone. That Strength of Thought and Expression, that every where reigns throughout your Works, makes me sometimes wish them twice as long.

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76 Locke, *Some Familiar Letters*, 117.

Molyneux’s sentiment certainly calls into question the value that public intellectuals placed on brevity and concision. Literary ornaments, far from making Locke’s work more difficult to comprehend, are among its greatest assets.

We should not take Molyneux’s criticism as representative of the wider reception to Wynne’s *Abridgment.* Prior to 1800, Locke’s unabridged *Essay* was reprinted in 54 editions, including 30 English-language editions, 16 French, 5 Latin, 2 German, and 1 Polish. 78 During that same period, Wynne’s *Abridgment* was reprinted in 33 editions, including 19 English-language editions, 9 French, 3 Italian, 1 German, and 1 Greek. Despite the fact that Locke’s *Essay* was printed in a greater number of editions than Wynne’s *Abridgment*, few non-ephemeral books printed during the eighteenth century would match the dissemination Wynne’s *Abridgment.* New editions of Wynne’s *Abridgment* were published regularly in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin, allowing readers across Great Britain access to the work. Moreover, evidence suggests the two editions were published in a manner that would avoid competition in the bookstalls. The only known printing record for Wynne’s *Abridgment* can be found in The Bowyer Ledgers, where the 1721 third edition (corrected) with the imprint “London: printed for A. Churchill, and sold by W. Taylor” is recorded to have been printed between 13 May and 20 October 1720 in a print run of 1000 copies, for which Bowyer charged Churchill £14.8. A print run of 1000 copies was, if not standard, slightly above

average; only a few years earlier, Bowyer printed only 800 copies of the 1710 sixth edition of Locke’s *Essay* for Churchill.\(^7^9\)

Wynne would go on become Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, in 1712 before being elected Bishop of St. Asaph, Wales, in 1715. He held the two positions jointly until his election to Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1727, a position he would hold until his death in 1743. Prior to his election to Bishop, Wynne wrote to Locke asking for a letter of reference, which Locke provided. There can be little doubt that Wynne’s career was greatly affected by his close association with Locke, and that his success was in no small part attributable to the *Abridgment*.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, Wynne’s *Abridgment* had reached a height of popularity that few works of literature would ever achieve. When the first volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published in 1771, the editors chose to mention Wynne in the entry for “Abridgement,” claiming few good abridgments exist because of the “difficulty of the task,” excepting only “Wynne’s abridgement of Locke’s *Essay on the Human Understanding*.”\(^8^0\) Indeed, G.A.J. Rogers was hardly exaggerating when he claimed that Wynne’s *Abridgment* “helped to establish Locke’s place not only as one of the greatest of Europe’s philosophers, but also as one of the most widely read.”\(^8^1\) But, in closing, perhaps fewer expressions better encapsulate the eighteenth-century


\(^8^0\) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol 1, ed. William Smellie (Edinburgh: printed for A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar; and sold by Colin Macfarquhar, 1771), 6

reception of Wynne’s *Abridgment* than Bryan Waller’s “Lines Written in Wynne’s Abridgment of Locke”—

LOCKE’s mighty Soul  
From Pole to Pole  
Metes the expanse of Heaven;  
Wynne is a Reservoir below  
Whose face collects th’ ethereal glow,  
Each object stronger given.82

Chapter 3

ABRIDGMENTS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

In this chapter, my aim is to answer a single question: to what extent do abridgments figure into the origins of the English novel? By “origins of the English novel,” I do not mean to imply that the present inquiry is concerned with the novels of Richardson and Fielding. It is not. Despite both Richardson’s and Fielding’s claims to have invented a “new species” of prose fiction in contrast to the “pomp and parade of romance-writing,” the premise of this chapter aligns the novel origin story put forth by William Warner, who claimed that the new novels of the 1740s did not supplant “romance-writing” so much as appropriate certain generic attributes while at the same time disavowing the genre as low and scandalous.¹ The novel genre developed, at least to some extent, out of and/or in contrast to the generic conventions of “romance-writing” that dominated the market for prose fiction in England and France.²


² John J. Richetti, Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739 (Clarendon Press, 1969); Lennard J. Davis, Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English
My interest in the relationship between abridgments and the origins of the English novel, then, are primarily concerned with the half-century or more of literary history that spanned the end of the seventeenth century and start of the eighteenth century. And in referring to “English novel,” I mean the various materializations of both formulaic and experimental prose fiction which modern scholars point to as precursors to the novel—as being similar to novels while lacking certain formal attributes that later generations of scholars would come to define as “novelistic.”

On the one hand, this is the age of novels that were, in style and substance, similar to French *nouvelles* or *petits romans*: short romance novels with formulaic plots oriented around the private lives or secret memoirs of persons of quality, what John Richetti has referred to as “the early eighteenth-century scandal novel,” and William Warner as the “novels of amorous intrigue.” Warner defines this genre as a variety of formula fiction that contains “tightly wrought narratives which present sexualized bodies and amoral egos plotting to secure their own pleasures at the expense of others.” Warner continues,

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3 Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson*, 121; William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment*. Over-lapping terminology continues to be a challenge in defining this genre of prose fiction. Ioan Williams (1979) cautions that the “tendency to oppose [novel and romance] as representing conflicting approaches to fiction and to life is a distinctively modern development,” and goes on to suggest that the *nouvelle*, “though distinguished from romance in general by its smaller scope and simpler structure,” over the course of time, “came to be thought of as a type of romance itself.” See Ioan Williams, *The Idea of the Novel in Europe, 1600-1800* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 69-70. For the sake of consistency, I will refer to genres of scandal fiction broadly conceived using Warner’s term, “novels of amorous intrigue.”
“The formal traits of these novels (their brevity, their subordination of all narrative interest to intricate plotting, and the shell-like emptiness of their protagonists) support their ideological content: a licentious ethical nihilism and a sustained preoccupation with sex, explicitly rendered.”

English writers not only borrowed these generic conventions, but by the turn of the century increasing numbers of French nouvelles were being translated and adapted by English authors, including Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, and Penelope Aubin.

On the other hand, the final decades of this era were also defined by a different sort of novel, those by Defoe and Swift, particularly Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Gulliver’s Travels. These novels, so the story goes, represent a turning point in the novel origin story, a formal transition from the short nouvelles of the early eighteenth century to the “elevated” novels of the 1740s and beyond. All this despite the fact that Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Gulliver’s Travels fit uncomfortably into established novel taxonomies. In Robinson Crusoe, Defoe depicts a depth of psychological interiority that surpasses Haywood yet pales in comparison to Richardson. The surprising reversals of fortune in Moll Flanders are similar to Fantomina yet more episodic when compared to Tom Jones. Because of the transitional nature of these works, I will broadly refer to them throughout this chapter as experimental proto-novels. This

4 Warner, Licensing Entertainment, 92. As this dissertation is working within the theoretical framework established by Richetti and Warner, for the sake of consistency I will broadly refer to “romance-writing” as “formula fiction.”

5 Warner coined the term “elevated novel” to describe the novels of Richardson and Fielding, which were ostensibly designed to “elevate and improve culture” (xvi).
period of transition toward novelistic discourse that is supposed to have occurred during the 1720s is the primary concern of this chapter.

In this chapter, I intend to show that abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Gulliver’s Travels* are reactions to emergent novelistic discourse. Within these abridgments, the style, content, and structure were adapted in what was essentially an act of generic conformity: to refashion experimental narratives and align certain literary qualities with the generic expectations of popular romance novels that continued to dominate the print market. For English reading publics accustomed to formula fiction, and for whom novel reading was, at its core, never anything more than popular entertainment, abridgments attempted to transform the experimental proto-novels by Defoe and Swift into something really quite ordinary: generic 1720s formula fiction.

### 3.1 A Hypothesis for Generic Conformity

Before turning to abridgments of experimental proto-novels, I would like to briefly examine the broader history of prose fiction abridgments and begin to unravel the concept of generic conformity. I touched on the idea of generic conformity in Chapter 2 in discussing how Wynne’s *Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696) dispensed with Locke’s rhetorical flourishes in order to align the prose style with the rhetoric of plainness espoused by Thomas Sprat and other members of the Royal Society. In that instance, the act of conformity was primarily structural and rhetorical. Yet in retaining much of Locke’s original language, Wynne’s *Abridgment* reflected reluctance to deviate too radically from its highly respected source. Reading
through Wynne’s *Abridgment*, there is never any doubt that Wynne’s aim was to complement the original, not replace it. The same cannot be said for prose fiction abridgments published around the same time. Rarely was there any indication or acknowledgement within prose fiction abridgments that the rationale for compressing the original was to prepare novice readers for the more substantive or difficult original. Rather, prose fiction abridgments were designed to supplant the original, to take its place not only on the bookshelf but also within the popular imagination.

Because abridgments of prose fiction were designed to supplant rather than complement original works, they end up embodying many of the characteristics common to other “disruptive innovations.” I use the term disruptive here in a positive sense—not unruly, but groundbreaking. In contrast to sustaining innovations, which contribute to an existing market economy by making minor improvements to technologies that are already in use, disruptive innovations create a new market that is in competition with the old by adapting “performance attributes.” Bower’s and Christensen’s most salient example is of “Sony’s early transistor radios,” which “sacrificed sound fidelity but created a market for portable radios by offering a new and different package of attributes—small size, light weight, and portability.”7 Essentially, disruptive innovations of this sort facilitate a user experience that is similar yet positively distinct from existing technologies.

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7 Bower and Christensen, “Disruptive Technologies,” 45.
Certainly, some attributes are sacrificed in any abridgment, but the package of attributes that the abridgment offers gives it a competitive advantage in the print marketplace by appealing to a broadly defined readership. The altered materiality of the abridgment was one such competitive advantage. In addition to “small size, light weight, and portability” when compared to the original, it is not uncommon to find abridgments printed on cheaper paper, with thinner margins and smaller typeface, thus resulting in products that sold for one-half to one-fifth the price of the originals from which the narratives were adapted for new audiences. This explains the panic expressed by Defoe’s publisher, William Taylor, when a competing publisher, Thomas Cox, printed an abridgment of *Robinson Crusoe* and sold it for just one shilling, significantly less than Taylor’s asking price of five shillings. “To further so good a Design,” writes Cox in the preface to his abridgment, “and make it Circulate thro’ all Hands, we have Abridg’d it, and not only made the Book more portable, but lower’d its Price to the Circumstances of

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8 See Warner’s examination of the “general reader,” which he defines as “not being limited in scope or narrowly restricted. Having only their engagement with the novel in common, a diverse plurality of readers” (89).

9 One shilling was still a significant amount of money. See Robert D. Hume, “The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England: Incomes, Prices, Buying Power—and Some Problems in Cultural Economics,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 77.4 (2014), 373-416. “Novels are now thought of as a bourgeois phenomenon, but they cost 3s. per volume. A family with a £200 annual income,” which would place that family in the 3 percent of English society, “would have to spend nearly a full day’s income to buy a four-volume novel” totaling 12 shillings. Hume concludes: “most of the culture we now study is inarguably elite: it was mostly consumed by the top 1 percent or 0.5 percent of the English population” (373). By contrast, one shilling would have made the abridgment available (but still expensive) for a well-paid member of England’s growing merchant class.
most People.” Yet in appealing to a broadly defined readership, prose fiction abridgments were unlikely to become avenues for radical literary experimentation. To the contrary, prose fiction abridgments were often sites of generic conformity, or the alteration of generic attributes that were decidedly old-fashioned and no longer reflected the literary tastes and values of modern reading publics. The purpose was not to make literature exemplary or unique, but rather to make it resemble more closely other works of popular fiction by aligning generic attributes according to predictable formulas. Within abridgments of older literature, generic conformity dispensed with whatever was obsolete or old-fashioned while retaining, expanding, or adapting sections of narrative with the greatest likelihood of appealing to modern reading publics. Generic conformity revives out-of-print literature, alters it substantially, and reintroduces it to a new audience. In this way, abridgments can be used as a kind of metric to gauge the evolution of literary tastes.

3.2 Prose Fiction Abridgments before the Novel

Prior to the emergence of experimental proto-novels in the 1720s, most prose fiction abridgments were derived from voluminous romances and picaresques.

According to Ronald Salmon Crane, “during the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first few years of the seventeenth many of the old chivalric romances were reprinted,

10 Daniel Defoe, The Life And Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe... Written originally by himself, and now faithfully abridg’d, in which not one remarkable circumstance is omitted, abridged ed. (London: Printed for T. Cox, at the Amsterdam Coffee-House near the Royal Exchange, 1719), A2v.

new ones of the same general character were translated, and both old and new enjoyed a vogue” among English reading publics.\(^{12}\) The episodic nature of the romance allowed authors and booksellers to procure new volumes to meet consumer demand, with some romances extending to a dozen or more volumes. Although later generations would decry the older romances for continuing narratives through numerous installments, it was precisely this feature that endeared these narratives to readers and booksellers alike. “In general, the longer a chivalric prose narrative, the better and more influential it was,” claims John J. O’Connor. “This kind of tale was written in such a way that, if popular response warranted, succeeding books could easily be added. Hence the number of volumes a romance finally attained is an approximate gauge of its popularity.”\(^{13}\) For a little while at least, the generic conventions of prose fiction tended toward extensive, episodic narratives that supported accumulation, continuations, sequels, and spin-offs. Yet the ideal audience for these works must have been quite small, as few would have had the time or resources to procure several thick volumes of prose fiction strictly for the purposes of pleasure reading.

Among the most popular and voluminous tales were those related to the Spanish romance *Amadís de Gaula* (1508), or *Amadis of Gaul*\(^{14}\). Initially published in four volumes by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, by 1546 the series had expanded to 12

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Spanish-language volumes under the care of several subsequent translators. By the end of the sixteenth century, Italian sequels expanded the series to 18 volumes and German sequels further expanded it to 21 volumes. The *Amadís* series arrived in England via a French translation by Nicolas de Herberay des Essarts and several others, who translated and expanded 19 of the 21 Spanish, Italian, and German volumes into 24 French volumes between 1540 and 1615. Although English translations would begin to appear by the early seventeenth century, Herberay’s French translation was probably the most popular representation of the *Amadís* series in England. The *Amadís* series continued to swell via a number of spin-offs, including *Palmerin d’Oliva* (1511), its sequel *Primaleon of Greece* (1512) in four parts, *Palmerin d’Angleterre* (1540-6), or *Palmerin of England*, in two parts by Francisco de Moraes Cabral and four subsequent parts by various other authors, and Jerónimo Fernández’s *Belianis de Grecia* (1546), or *Bellianis of Greece*. Many other romances enjoyed a popular reception across Europe, but the *Amadís* series represents the extent to which early modern romances were prone to swell far beyond the scope of most other literary productions.

Continental romances were not immediately abridged by English publishers, yet neither were they translated and published in complete sets that spanned dozens of volumes as Herberay had done for *Amadís* in France. English translations of continental

17 O’Connor (1970), 18.
romances were largely available only as selections extracted from the more extensive and voluminous source works. The *Amadís* series, for example, was translated sporadically and out of order, with only a handful of the 24 French volumes finding their way into English. One of the earliest English translations of the *Amadís* series, *The Treasurie of Amadis of Fraunce* (1572), was not a narrative at all but rather a commonplace book that featured selections of morals, proverbs, and aphorisms that had been sporadically extracted and translated from Herberay’s French translation. Like other early modern romances, *Amadís* was more than just a collection of adventure narratives. It was also a kind of conduct guide for polite behavior and a commentary on court life. It was read by nobility and courtiers, who extracted aphorisms and speeches into their own literary productions, and this practice continued into the English print marketplace. Subsequent English translations of the *Amadís* series tend to draw material from only a single book. Anthony Munday’s first English translation of *Palmerin d’Oliva* (1588) contained only the first part of the narrative, and his translation the following year of the Spanish romance *Primaleon* (1589) contained only a selection of chapters from the first part of

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19 See Crane’s “Medieval Chivalric Romance Bibliography” in *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance During the English Renaissance*, 30-48.


22 O’Connor (1970), 18-23.
that narrative with the subsequent parts published as separate volumes. Although the
ESTC demonstrates that the publication of romances were clustered around the turn of
the sixteenth century, it is important to recognize that, in most instances, English readers
only had access to bits and pieces of these voluminous narratives and, in all likelihood,
were probably unaware that the work had been abridged.

By the latter half of the seventeenth century, in both England and back on the
continent, the vogue for romances went into decline. Looking back on that decline many
decades later, Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière remarks:

Eventually people tired of these long Romances; various authors, like
Desmarets in his Ariane, Gombaud in his Endimion, etc. had already
composed shorter Romances which did not make the Readers’ impatience
languish so much; at last…other shorter works appeared which succeeded
in disgusting the public with these eternal intrigues which were not
unraveled until the tenth volume.

The custom of continuing romances on to incomprehensible lengths was appropriated by
seventeenth-century French authors like Madeleine de Scudéry, whose heroic romance
Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus, published in 10 volumes between 1654 and 1661, amounts
to over 2 million words. By the end of the seventeenth century, a cultural and artistic shift
occurred. The fall of the romance was triggered in part by the emergence of a different

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23 Hayes (1925), 57. See Palmerin D’Oliua (London: Printed by I. Charlewoode, for
William VVright, and are to bee solde at his shoppe adioyning to S. Mildreds Church in
the Poultrie, the middle shoppe in the rowe, 1588). See also The honorable, pleasant and
rare conceited historie of Palmendos (London: Printed by I[ohn]. C[harlewood]. for
Simon Watersonne, & are to be sold in Church-yarde at the signe of the Crowne, Anno.
Domini. 1589).

24 Quoted and translated from the original French in Ioan M. Williams, The Idea of the
kind of romance, the French *nouvelle*. According to Ioan Williams, the *nouvelle* “is to a certain extent anti-romantic and seems to bear witness to a distinctive shift in sensibility in favour of the realistic modes of writing which were to develop during the following century.” Williams continues, “Though the *nouvelle* replaced the romance in seventeenth-century France it came to be thought of as a type of romance itself, though distinguished from the romance in general by its smaller scope and simpler structure.”²⁵ That final point, that the new romances were smaller in scope and simpler in structure, provides an entry point for examining how abridgments altered older romances so as to embed them within emergent print markets. English publishers and the reading public abandoned exhaustive translations in favor of abridgments, ballads, and chapbook adaptations that even further compressed these bulky romances into small, tidy volumes.

At the same time publishers and readers were beginning to embrace this new genre of romance (or anti-romance, depending on whom you ask), publishers also started abridging the older romances into forms of more limited scope that more closely resembled the emerging *nouvelle*. “The process [of abridgment] began shortly before 1640 with *Valentine and Orson,*” Crane observes. “It continued through the period of the Civil War with Martin Parker’s prose abridgment of *Guy [Earl of Warwick]*, and culminated after the Restoration with five new chapbook redactions of *Guy*, two prose renderings of *Bevis*, at least four new abridgments of *Valentine and Orson*, and

abridgments of *Amadis*, *Bellianis*, *King Arthur*, and *Palmerin of England*. By the early eighteenth century, nearly all of the older romances had been published as abridgments or short chapbook adaptations. The very first English translation of *Valentine and Orson* by Henry Watson (ca. 1510) numbered over 500 pages in quarto. It was initially successful but fell out of print by the late sixteenth century. When the first abridgment of *Valentine and Orson* was published in 1637, the narrative was compressed by half to around 250 pages in quarto. The popularity of this abridgment must have been considerable, as it was republished in 1649, 1671, 1675, 1682, 1688, 1694, 1697, 1700, and 1712. Small format chapbook adaptations also appear to have been popular by the turn of the century. Emanuel Ford’s *Parismus* was initially published in two parts (1598-1599), and after 1609 the two parts were regularly published together within a single volume. A typical printing of the two parts of the narrative contains approximately 500 pages in quarto. In this form, *Parismus* was immensely popular for several decades, reprinted in 15 editions with a new edition appearing every few years. Through the 1680s and 1690s, however,

26 Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance*, 29.

27 The ca. 1510 copy is imperfect, but the ca. 1555 copy is intact. See Henry Watson, *trans*, *The Hystory of the two valyaunte brethren Valentyne and Orson, sonnes vnto the Emperour of Grece* (London: In Fletestrete at the sygne of the Rose Garland by me Wylyam Copland for Iohn Walley, ca. 1555).


29 For the first part, see Emanuel Ford, *Parismus, the renoumed prince of Bohemia* (London: Thomas Creede, for Richard Oliue, 1598). For the second part see Emanuel Ford, *Parismenos: the second part of the most famous, delectable, and pleasant historie of Parismus, the renowned prince of Bohemia* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, and are to be sold by Richard Oliue and William Holmes, 1599).
the frequency of new editions began to wane, with the final edition appearing in 1704; at
the same time, abridgments were becoming more numerous. An early abridgment of
Ford’s Parismus was published under the title The Pleasant History of Parismus (ca.
1660), although this edition failed to gain traction.30 An abridgment published under the
title Of the Famous and Pleasant History of Parismus was the first to show real staying
power in the print marketplace, with impressions appearing in 1680, 1690, 1699, 1701,
1713, and several others later in the century.31 This family of abridgments compressed
the original two parts into a single octavo volume of about 180 pages. Like Valentine and
Orson, Ford’s Parismus was also widely published in small format chapbook adaptations.
By the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, virtually every new edition of
Parismus was in some manner an abridgment of the original. The first English translation
of Jerónimo Fernández’s The Honour of Chivalrie; or, the Famous and Delectable
History of Don Bellianis of Greece (1598) was published in a single quarto volume
containing about 270 pages; reprints in 1650 and 1663, however, failed to sustain the
narrative within the print marketplace and it soon fell out of print.32 A new translation by
Francis Kirkman (1672) shortened the narrative to 188 pages in quarto, which was then

30 Emanuel Ford, The Pleasant History of Parismus, Prince of Bohemia, abridged ed.
(London: Printed by J.B. for Charles Tyus, at the sign of the three bibles on London
Bridge, ca. 1660).

31 Emanuel Ford, Of the Famous and Pleasant History of Parismus, the valiant and
renowned Prince of Bohemia, abridged ed. (London: Printed by W. Onley, for Josiah
Blaire, at the Looking-glass, on London-bridge; and for George Conyers, at the Ring in
Little Britain, 1680?). Further references will be given after quotations in the text.

32 Jerónimo Fernández, The Honour of Chiualrie: Set downe in the most famous historie
of the magnanimious and heroike Prince Don Bellianis, trans. Laurence Ashwell
(London: Printed by Thomas Creede, 1598).
further abridged by John Shirley as *The Honour of Chivalry* (1683) and reprinted twice by Thomas Norris (1715, 1717). Alonso de Castillo Solórzano’s *La Garduña de Sevilla* was translated into English by John Davies around 1700 and subsequently abridged by Edward Waldron as *The Life of Donna Rosina, a Novel* sometime around 1705, and was subsequently reprinted in 1709 and 1715. The first English translation of *Don Quixote* by Thomas Shelton (1612) was abridged as *The Famous History of Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1686). Another abridgment, *The Delightful History of Don Quixote* (1689), was followed by abridgments published in 1699, 1700, 1716, 1721, and 1729. Lope de Vega’s *Peregrino en su Patria* (1604) was abridged as *The Pilgrime of Casteele* (1621, 1623). An English translation of *The Life and Adventures of Buscon the witty Spaniard* (1657) was abridged as *The Famous History of Auristella* (1683). Thomas Malory’s *Le Mort D’Arthur* was abridged as *Brittains Glory* (1684). And Sir Phillip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* was abridged as *The Famous History of Heroick Acts* (1701).

For the average English reader living during the Restoration and early eighteenth century, these abridgments were often the only representations of these once-famous

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narratives available in the popular print marketplace. Most were printed in duodecimo and available for about a shilling, and the frequency of new editions suggests that these narratives were quite popular. Indeed, for many English readers, the act of reading prose fiction, and of reading abridgments, would have been synonymous.

3.3 Old Narratives for New Readers

The sheer number of surviving prose fiction abridgments points to an often-overlooked fact: far from feeding off the popularity of previously-published literature, abridgments reinvigorated consumer demand by embedding older narratives within new print markets. To put it another way, abridgments performed the valuable work of preserving cultural heritage through an attentive and adaptive model of publishing premised on the recognition that reading practices not only change but also vary among different reading publics. Abridgments will typically retain certain elements from the original, including title and main characters, so as to project some manner of resemblance. It gestures back to the original, tacitly acknowledging that the derivative is only made possible because of the source. In a way, the effect of this gesturing is similar in kind to Foucault’s author-function, except that it is the paratexts that perform a kind of “classificatory function” that groups the abridgment together with a shared idea of what that narrative contains or represents.37 This shared idea is, on the one hand, topical: by invoking the reputation of the original, an abridgment might take advantage of the

cultural capital the original still held within the public imagination, as well as among various reading publics, by establishing a literary lineage that emphasized influence and resemblance.\textsuperscript{38} Seventeenth-century prose fiction abridgments appeared many years or decades after the original had fallen out of print. As such, it was necessary to remind readers of the reputation and esteem that the original once held. On the other hand, alterations to the paratexts refashioned the abridgment according to the reading practices of emerging reading publics. For example, consider Sir Edwin Sadleir’s \textit{The Delightful History of Don Quixote} (1689), an abridgment of John Phillips’ unabridged translation, \textit{History of the Most Renowned Don Quixote} (1687).\textsuperscript{39} The title page to Phillips’ unabridged translation states that the narrative is a “History” and conveys a plain yet stately elegance, with ample white space and an announcement that the edition is “Adorned with several Copper Plates.” This was an expensive book for well-read and well-to-do audiences. Sadleir’s abridgment, however, conveys something very different. The title page of Sadleir’s abridgment includes extensive commentary to encourage a certain type of reading experience for a more diverse, and perhaps more “popular” reading public. The title page advertises a narrative that is propelled by the actions of Don Quixote, including his “Noble Achievements [sic], and Surprizing Adventures, his


Daring Enterprises, and Valiant Engagements.” The history of Don Quixote, then, is one of outward action and events that sustain the reading appeal and propel the narrative from adventure to adventure. Unlike Phillips’ unabridged translation, the title page here acknowledges that the story is also comical, containing “The Comical Humours Of his Facetious Squire Sancho Pancha,” with “Sancho Pancha” displayed in a typeface nearly the size of the eponymous Don Quixote. Invoking Sancho encourages readers to empathetically associate with Don Quixote’s foil and squire, essentially the lower class sidekick whose humorous commentary and pithy observations undoubtedly transform Don Quixote into the anti-hero. The sheer volume of descriptions on the title page of Sadleir’s abridgment reveals an intention to market the novel to as broad a readership as possible, to a general audience that is not “limited in scope or narrowly restricted” but rather defined by diversity of culture, gender, class, and interests.40

Beyond the title page, the tension between resemblance and adaptation continues. In Phillips’ unabridged translation of Don Quixote, the ideal audience for the unabridged translation is fairly narrow, ostensibly consisting primarily of persons of quality:

The Story of Don Quixote de la Mancha, no less pleasant than gravely Moral, has been always highly Favour’d and Caress’d by Personages of most Illustrious note in all the Learned Parts of Europe; to which it has been made familiar by frequent Translations. And therefore it is, that your Lordship being equally Eminent, if not Superiour to any of them, for your Ancient Decent, and the Politeness of your Hereditary Learning and Judgment, I humbly presume to lay this Oblation at your Lordships Feet.

(A2r-A2v)

40 Warner, Licensing Entertainment, 89.
In addition to the fact that fewer readers could afford to purchase a folio translation with multiple copper-plate engravings, Phillips’ preface emphasizes the novel’s non-English reception history, and through phrases such as “Ancient Decent” and “Hereditary Learning” connects the idea of *Don Quixote* to the deeper history of English nobility. Not that there is anything particularly wrong with this. Sadleir’s abridgment of *Don Quixote* assures its readers that the abridgment is essentially the equivalent of the original, that in essence readers of the abridgment will experience something similar to the upper-class readers of the unabridged edition.

He is the same Don Quixot still, Affects and Reverences the same Dulcinea, is mounted upon the same Rozinante, takes the same Roads, and is attended by the same Squire, abounds with the same Frolicks, has the same distinguishing Faculty, can take an Inn for a Castle, and be as daring and dreadful to all his Enemies, runs thro’ the same Hazards, fights the same Battels, and obtains the same Victories. (A2v)

In other words, there are certain literary elements common to both the original and the abridgment. But these literary qualities are almost entirely non-aesthetic. The nature of the resemblance is found not in style and form, but in narrative, character, and plot. It is this contrast that Sadleir uses to distinguish the kind of reading experience his consumers are looking for from the readers of the original. The narrative conventions of the original had grown tiresome, and Sadleir’s new *Don Quixote* “has left a great deal of tedious, musty, proverbing behind him, and comprises his Matters in few words; and like an active, and not talkative Hero, does more than he says…In a word, Garulity only, that Vice amongst the Thinking-wise, we have avoided” (A2v). The elite of society have historically been quick to condemn the lower classes for “vice,” so it is interesting that Sadleir turns the tables and condemns the “Thinking-wise” readers of the unabridged *Don
Quixote for the vice of “Garulity,” or what we might read as the superfluous excesses that accompany wealth and high station. I say this not to imply that Sadleir’s ideal readers are restricted to the lower classes, for the lower, merchant, and middle classes have historically been skeptical of privileges of nobility. Rather, I suggest that the ideal reader for the abridgment appears to be various emergent reading publics who, through the spread of print and popularization of abridgments, were able to afford books for the purposes of pleasure reading.

I will briefly note that the tension between resemblance and adaptation can be found in all manner of prose fiction abridgments. In the Epistle to the Reader of a 1637 abridgment of Valentine and Orson, abridger Henry Watson makes note of the work’s “favorable welcome” when it was first translated into English. He then goes on to tout his own role in returning this once-famous work back to print: “Considering all which, I am now incouraged to put this old story into a new livery, & not to suffer that to lie buried, that a little cost may keepe alive” (A3v). But the narrative will also be kept alive through alterations to the prose style. The preface informs the readers that, in contrast to the first edition, “this present Edition” has “bin corrected, and put into a more plyant stile” (A3f) and has been “published it to the eye and eare of such to be seene or heard, as take pleasure in these kind of writings” (A2f). The differentiation between “seene” and “heard” suggests that the literary style into which the abridgment adapted the narrative is more conversational than the original, to be easily comprehended by both readers and listeners, hence both those who can afford to purchase a book as well as those who

41 Watson, trans., Valentine and Orson, A2f.
cannot. A 1680 abridgment of Ford’s *Parismus* advertises the work as “Famous” on the title page and elaborates within the prefatory remarks that the original “has found Acceptance with Persons of all Degrees, whose Pages have been many times drowned with Ladies Tears” (A3'). The preface continues by maintaining that the new abridgment “contains whatever is desirable and pleasing of this nature, and cannot, for any thing I conceive, miss of a kind Entertainment, especially with the younger sort” of readers for whom the primary motivation to read was strictly for pleasure: “here are all the varieties, & passages that may furnish forth a History fit for a Readers pleasure, for no unseemly words or speeches are herein contained, but such as are modestly carried” (A3'). And in the 1702 abridgment of *Amadís* titled *The Famous and Delightful History of the Renowned and Valiant Prince Amadis de Gaul* (1702), the abridger John Shirley begins by championing the reputation of the original: “This Famous History in the Original, has been already accepted with much Applause in several Nations.” Shirley continues, “I have thought fit, that the Memory of so Famous a Work should not be lost.”42 Following Shirley’s claim that his abridgment of *Amadís* is “somewhat briefer in Bulk, but not less in Effect,” he goes on to distinguish between the older version of the romance and his modern abridgment: “I have all along taken Care, to lay aside any Tedious and

Superfluous Discourses, and keep only to that, which is proper to Histories of this Nature."  

To sum up, it was not enough for the abridger to simply shorten a work. Publishers and abridgers surely recognized that literary works fall out of print for a reason, typically the evolution of literary styles, generic formulas, and audience expectations. The success of the abridgments needs to be attributed, at least in part, to the manner in which they advertised a different kind of reading experience that appealed to various reading publics. As I will show in the following section, upon the emergence of experimental proto-novels by Defoe and Swift around the 1720s, however, the function of generic conformity seen in abridgments of those novels operates in a similar manner though toward a different end: rather than modernizing something that is old, these abridgments normalized, or “corrected” what was new. By transforming experimental proto-novels into something more recognizable to early eighteenth-century novel readers, abridgers were revising and altering the novels to appear more similar to the generic conventions of 1720s formula fiction. In defining the difference between the prose fiction of Defoe and Swift and their abridged counterparts, my study is deeply indebted to William Warner’s account of the early novel and formula fiction in *Licensing Entertainment*. Warner differentiates between the formula fiction of Manley, Haywood, and Aubin from later experimental fiction by Defoe and Swift in several respects, namely that action and plotting takes precedent over character and ideas, coherence is achieved not through depth of character or plot but rather through imitation of previously

successful formula fiction, and lastly that formula fiction “accommodates incompleteness, fragmentariness, or last-minute revision.”

3.4 The Novel Form in Abridgments of Robinson Crusoe

In the unabridged Robinson Crusoe, Defoe achieved a heightened sense of verisimilitude through a combination of rhetorical and aesthetic formal elements.

According to David Blewett:

Defoe’s techniques of organization, his interlinked themes and ironic anticipations, his repetitions of events and phrases, and his understated use of images are embedded in the narrative surface of the novel where they may easily be passed over unnoticed. There is no intrusive narrator to exhume them for us […] The references to biblical parallels are casual and diffuse; they lack the consistency and concentration necessary for a sustained authorial comment and point to a habit of mind rather than a structural principle. They serve, rather, to dramatize aspects of Crusoe’s tribulations emblematically.

Although Blewett does not use terms such as realism, truth, or versimilitude, his claim that Defoe’s style operates in a manner that “dramatize[s] aspects of Crusoe’s tribulations” points to a common refrain in literary criticism, that good novels show rather than tell. In dramatizing, Defoe enhances the illusion of realism. But how, exactly, does Defoe achieve this? Blewett suggests that formal elements such as organization, themes, irony, foreshadowing, repetition, imagery, and symbolism combine


45 David Blewett, Defoe’s Art of Fiction: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack & Roxana (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 28-29.

to form a narrative that is both stylistically complex and narratively engaging.

Furthermore, Blewett suggests that the absence of an “intrusive narrator” and of “sustained authorial comment” further contributes to the illusion of realism by removing the author from the work. The narrative intrusions and commentary the reader does receive are by Crusoe himself as he attempts to establish connections between his actions and divine providence.

This is perhaps the most readily apparent contrast between abridgments of Robinson Crusoe and Defoe’s original. As a character, Robinson Crusoe is a very different kind of protagonist in the 1722 abridgment published by Midwinter and Bettesworth. Crusoe is transformed from a playful and engaged narrator into something more objective and detached. Defoe’s Crusoe appears a master of narrative technique; he teases the reader with what Blewett calls “anticipations,” or foreshadowing, so as to heighten speculation, maintain interest, and move the narrative along.

After Crusoe abandons his family and heads out to sea, he is caught in a storm at Yarmouth Roads. Facing disaster, Crusoe witnesses this tragedy only in terms of what it means to his own life and ambitions, which he communicates in obsessively self-referential first person narration. In the unabridged version, Crusoe as narrator says:

I began to see Terror and Amazement in the Faces even of the Seamen themselves. The Master, tho’ vigilant to the Business of preserving the Ship, yet as he went in and out of his Cabbin by me, I could hear him softly to himself say several times, Lord be merciful to us, we shall all be lost, we shall be all undone; and the like.47

The primary action of this passage is not that the Seamen were frightened, but rather that Crusoe saw that they were frightened, he recognized the extent of the danger into which he was suddenly tossed, which contributed to his own heightened state of excitement. Furthermore, there is no indication that the Captain’s lament is heard by anyone other than Crusoe. Compare this to the corresponding passage in the longer Midwinter-Gent abridgment:

It was not long before Horror seized the Seamen themselves, when I heard the Master express this melancholly Ejaculation, *Lord, have Mercy upon us, we shall all be lost and undone!*48

In this passage, there is greater distance between the action and Crusoe’s interiority. Although we can assume that Crusoe is witness to this scene, it does not carry the rhetorical emphasis as in the unabridged edition. The first phrase, rather than focusing on Crusoe seeing the action, focuses instead on “Horror” itself as it captivates the sensibilities of the crew. In the unabridged edition, it is clear that Crusoe is the only one to hear the Captain’s lament, but this is not so clear in the latter example, wherein the addition of an exclamation suggests that the Captain’s statement was audible to the entire crew. In effect, the abridgment minimizes Crusoe’s self-reflection, and the Captain’s edition was the last to appear with what are believed to be Defoe’s revisions. See Michael Shinagel, ed., “A Note on the Text” in *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 221-224. “The textual problems arising when editing a Defoe work are considerable and complex…In the following editions we discern a gradual but limited process of correction, so that the sixth edition offers a relatively cleaner and more finished text than the first” (223).

48 Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Most Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe…The whole three volumes faithfully abridged*, abridged ed. (London: Printed by E. Midwinter, and sold by A. Bettesworth; J. Brotherton; W. Meadows; and M. Hotham, 1722), 4. Further references are given after quotations in the text as (Abridged, 4).
lament and the horror of the crew become a collective experience shared by all. The trend throughout the abridgment is to emphasize outward action. As a result, experience becomes something that is shared by a community, based upon a subjective interpretation of reality.

Throughout the opening pages of the abridgment, Defoe’s attempts to establish Crusoe’s subjectivity are constantly diminished in favor of the appearance of an objective retelling. The first reference to interiority, quite literally to Crusoe’s own thinking mind, are not to be found in the abridgment. In the original, Crusoe informs the reader that, “Being the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade, my Head began to be fill’d very early with rambling Thoughts” (Unabridged, 1-2), thus describing for the reader the development of his intellect, that being the third-born son acted as a kind of catalyst that resulted in a “competent” though ultimately meaningless education. His father had hoped that this education would lead to practicing law, but by the time Crusoe had grown old enough to pursue that profession, the lack of focus had taken its toll. Crusoe’s wandering inclinations appear in this passage to have been unwittingly imposed on him by a society still steeped in the politics of primogeniture. This delineation of events shows Crusoe’s acrimony while at the same time exposing his own fallacies, thereby encouraging multiple rich interpretations of his upbringing. By contrast, the abridgment reduces this passage to: “No Charge nor Pains were wanting in my Education, my Father designing me for the Law; yet nothing would serve me, but I must go to Sea” (Abridged, 1-2). This passage clarifies Crusoe’s motivations for the reader, reducing them to simple disobedience.
When he is called into his father’s chamber for the lecture on following “the middle State” of life (Unabridged, 3), it is the only moment when we really get to see and feel the character of Crusoe’s father through the eyes of the son, and understand how the actions of the son affect the sensibilities of the father. In the original, the audience reads of the father’s tears and understand their significance through the son, who says:

I observed in this last part of his Discourse…I say, I observed the Tears run down his Face very plentifully, especially when he spoke of my Brother who was killed; and that when he spoke of my having Leisure to repent, and none to assist me, he was so mov’d, that he broke off the Discourse, and told me, his Heart was so full, he could say no more to me. (Unabridged, 5)

In the original we are repeatedly told that it was Crusoe who “observed” this, the implication being that Crusoe is keenly perceptive to character and an astute reader of human emotion. His father’s tears are less about Crusoe’s own actions than those of his brother: Crusoe’s tragedy is only the second part of what has been a longer, ongoing family tragedy. By contrast, in the abridgment brevity moves the action along at a faster clip:

He pronounc’d these Words with such a moving and paternal Eloquence, while Floods of Tears fan down his aged Cheeks, that seem’d to stem the Torrent of my Resolutions. (Abridged, 2).

In the abridgment this scene is depicted with less emotional intensity, almost as though we were in the room with Crusoe while it is all happening, looking over his shoulder the whole time. Regardless, the center of consciousness in the abridgment remains Crusoe, but it is nevertheless more detached.

Crusoe is receptive to his father’s pleas, at least for a little while, as he tries to empathize with his father’s anguish. However, after a series of reversions to his
wandering ways, Crusoe ultimately leaves home with the expectation of gaining wealth and glory. When Crusoe finally decides to leave his parents, he divulges his intentions to his mother:

I took my Mother at a time when I thought her a little pleasanter than ordinary, and told her, that my Thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the World, that I should never settle to any thing with Resolution enough to go through with it, and my Father had better give me his Consent, than force me to go without it; that I was now eighteen Years old, which was too late to go Apprentice to a Trade, or Clerk to an Attorney, that I was sure, if I did, I should never serve out my Time, and I should certainly run away from my Master before my Time was out, and go to Sea; and if she would speak to my Father to let me go one Voyage abroad, if I came home again and did not like it, I would go no more, and I would promise by a double Diligence to recover that Time I had lost. (Unabridged, 5)

This excerpt from the unabridged text is a fairly typical example of repetition in Defoe’s narrative style. The repetition not only reinforces Crusoe’s subjectivity, but as indirect discourse it is representative of Crusoe’s intermittent use of repetition as a rhetorical operation to convey the urgency of his ambitions. Repeating “that I” and “that my” successively, Crusoe constructs a hypothetical chain of increasingly confrontational actions and reactions should he not get his way. If Robinson Crusoe is read within the context of Protestant conversion narratives, this heightened rhetoric emphasizes the extent of Crusoe’s transgression, that, in the words of George Starr, “Crusoe thus defies the joint authority of family, society, and Providence,” and this initial act of disobedience “[initiates] a pattern of wrongdoing which has far-reaching consequences.”49 While the action itself could be said to serve the same purpose in the abridgment, the reader is not

provided with the same intensity of emotion represented by the heightened rhetoric. The narration within this scene in the abridgment decidedly alters the subjective intensity of Crusoe’s character by eradicating Crusoe’s psychological complexity:

I inform’d my Mother, That I could not settle to any Business, my Resolutions were so strong to see the World; and begg’d she would gain my Father’s Consent, only to go one Voyage, which, if it did not prove prosperous, I would never attempt a second… (Abridged, 2)

Lacking the heightened rhetoric, Crusoe’s exhibits a state of mind driven more by reason and less by emotion. In the original, Crusoe emphasizes his age and employment prospects to more forcefully convey his predicament, that indeed he was not raised for a specific trade as his older brothers were. By dispensing with Crusoe’s youthful angst, the abridgment depicts the protagonist as less reactionary. In a way, this could almost make Crusoe’s original sin even more evil, as it sounds like calculated reasoning as opposed to spontaneity.

The outward transition of the narrative action within abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* not only affects the intensity of Crusoe’s character but also dispenses with foreshadowing, anticipations, and intrusions which Blewett had found to be so quintessentially Defoe. In Defoe’s original, we find a playful narrative intrusion when Crusoe is building his over-sized canoe, which will ultimately fail to launch: “I went to work upon this Boat, the most like a Fool, that ever Man did, who had any of his Senses awake…I put a stop to my own Enquiries into [launching] it, by this foolish Answer which I gave myself, *Let’s first make it, I’ll warrant I’ll find some Way or other to get it along, when ‘tis done,*” which is followed shortly thereafter by: “This was a most preposterous Method; but the Eagerness of my Fancy prevail’d” (Unabridged, 92). We
cannot help but feel a bit of dramatic irony while reading this passage. At every turn, Crusoe informs the audience that he is foolish, that the whole project will be a failure. *Robinson Crusoe* may be a survival narrative, but Crusoe’s worst enemy is rarely the nature that surrounds him. More often than not Crusoe’s worst enemy is himself. The abridgment, however, gives no such dramatic irony:

> I began to think whether it was not possible for me to make a *Canoe* or *Periagua*, such as the *Indians* make, of the Trunk of a Tree. But here I lay under particular Inconveniences, Want of Tools to make it, and Want of Hands to move it in the Water when it was made. However to work I went upon it, stopping all the Enquiries I could make, with this very simple Answer I made to myself, Let’s first make it, I’ll warrant I’ll find some way or other to get it along when ‘tis done. (Abridged, 68).

In the abridgment, the episode is less descriptive of Crusoe’s imminent failure. The notion of getting the canoe into the water crosses his mind, but it is one of many other concerns that collectively form a single external challenge. The narrative is propelled not by the anticipation of failure but by the representation of labor and Crusoe’s supposed ingenuity when it comes to problem solving. The nature of the struggle is Crusoe versus the elements, not versus himself.

The nature of Crusoe’s personal struggles is externalized in the abridgments, disembodied from his psyche and presented to the reader in a more objective fashion. Indeed, far from preserving Crusoe’s psychological complexity, the abridgment diminishes it. This could have been in response to at least one of Charles Gildon’s criticisms. In the satirical dialogue which makes up the first part of Gildon’s pamphlet, Crusoe and Friday set out to punish Defoe for “making us such Scoundrels in thy Writing” (vii). “Hum, hum,” asks Defoe, “well, and what are your Complaints of me?”
“Why,” replies Crusoe, “you have made me a strange whimsical, inconsistent
Being, in three Weeks losing all the Religion of a Pious Education; and when you bring
me again to a Sense of the Want of Religion, you make me quit that upon every Whimsy”

Gildon sees Crusoe’s “whimsy” as contradictory, as an error of characterization.
Although this is the very quality that we value in Robinson Crusoe, there must have been
a considerable number of readers who sympathized with Gildon’s reading, who thought
that Crusoe’s “whimsy” was antithetical to either a proper mariner or a literary
protagonist. Crusoe is still whimsical in the abridgments, but his consciousness, his
ruminations on his spirituality, everything that is notable about Crusoe’s interiority, is
greatly reduced.

In one last example, after Crusoe has been stranded on his island home for two
years, he reflects on his present state and determines that it is better to live a Godly life in
solitude than a wicked life in the modern world. This, he says, is a recent development
that contrasts sharply with his demeanor when he first landed on the island.

Before, as I walk’d about, either on my Hunting, or for viewing the
Country, the Anguish of my Soul at my Condition would break out upon
me on a sudden, and my very Heart would die within me, to think of the
Woods, the Mountains, the Desarts I was in; and how I was a Prisoner
lock’d up with the Eternal Bars and Bolts of the Ocean, in an uninhabited
Wilderness, without Redemption. In the midst of the greatest Composures
of my Mind, this would break out upon me like a Storm, and make me
wring my Hands, and weep like a Child. (Unabridged, 107)

In the abridgment:

Before I consider’d how happy I was in this State of Life, towards that
accursed Manner of Living I formerly us’d, while either I was a hunting,
or viewing the Country, the Anguish of my Soul would break out upon me
on a sudden, and my very Heart would sink within me, to think of the
Woods, the Mountains, the Deserts, I was in; and how I was a Prisoner
lock’d up with the Eternal Bars and Bolts of the Ocean, in an uninhabited Wilderness, without Hopes, and without Redemption. And in this Condition, I would often wring my Hands, and weep like a Child… (Abridged, 61)

In this instance, the wording of the original and the abridgment is near-verbatim. The description of Crusoe’s despair, and the metaphor of the island as prison, correspond in both editions. However, the original follows this description with the result of those ruminations, that “In the midst of the greatest Composures of my Mind, this would break out upon me like a Storm, and make me wring my Hands, and weep like a Child,” which in the abridgment reads, “And in this Condition, I would often wring my Hands, and weep like a Child.” The change between this and the corresponding phrase in the abridgment is subtle, but it once again directs the reader toward a reading of the novel that pulls our empathy away from Crusoe’s psychological interiority and toward his outward, visible human reaction. In the original, Crusoe not only describes for the reader his state of life, but once again Crusoe-as-narrator depicts for the reader his mental anguish, he invites the reader into the mind of the protagonist to show how such thoughts could take him from a moment of “composure” to acting and fretting like a maniac while a metaphorical “Storm” plays out in his head. In the abridgment, the narration once gain resorts to describing the external action, the wringing of hands and the weeping, leaving the reader as an onlooker to the external action as opposed to a creating a sense of empathy by attempting to show Crusoe’s inner distress.

When the narrative loses Crusoe’s psychological interiority, and when descriptions of narrative action pivot toward a more objective—one could even say generic—perspective, the narrative also loses a very powerful thread that brings a sense
of unity to the plot. The result then, is two-fold. The prose narrative is aesthetically
transformed from a plot that is driven by spiritual growth, as well as narrative action, to
one that is driven almost solely by narrative action. Readers are engaged in a reading
experience that is increasingly defined by Crusoe’s travels and exploits. In turn, the
episodic aesthetic of the narrative is also heightened, and whatever is left of a central plot
gives way to a series of loosely-connected plot lines. The episodic nature of Crusoe’s
travels is further heightened by the manner in which the abridgments were published. If
one were to have read an abridgment of only the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe*, then
there would have been, at the very least, some central plot oriented around Crusoe being
marooned on the island. However, because the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe* was
typically abridged along with abridgments of the second volume, *The Farther Adventures
of Robinson Crusoe*, and sometimes also the third, *Serious Reflections During the Life of
Robinson Crusoe*, the reading experience transforms into one that is only minimally
concerned with Crusoe being marooned on the island.\(^{50}\)

3.5 **Abridgment and the Idea of the Novel**

The generic attributes that modern scholars have come to define as novelistic
were not necessarily appreciated by contemporary readers. Modern definitions of the
early novel form continue to cling to notions like “psychological depth” and “realistic

\(^{50}\) For an in-depth examination of the history of publishing *Robinson Crusoe* alongside
*Farther Adventures*, see Melissa Free, “Un-Erasing ‘Crusoe’: ‘Farther Adventures’ in the
details” to differentiate it from non-novelistic generic predecessors.\textsuperscript{51} Ian Watt’s definition hinges on the concept of “formal realism,” or “the particularization of time, place and person; to a natural and lifelike sequence of action; and to the creation of a literary style which gives the most exact verbal and rhythmical equivalent possible of the object described.”\textsuperscript{52} The novel’s unique characteristic is its mimesis, its attempt to recreate an individual’s experience in a world where meaning in life is relational not universal, where human behavior and physical characteristics are particular not archetypal. Michael Seidel offers no shortage of reasons as to why modern scholars have been unsympathetic to the theories Watt first laid out in \textit{Rise of the Novel}, not the least of which being that elements of formal realism are apparent in works Watt himself did not consider novels. However, Seidel also says, “that no matter what else one says about narrative in the early part of the [eighteenth] century, the works produced are marked by features identified with formal realism.”\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, many of Watt’s successors continue to associate the early novel form with attributes that heightened the sense of verisimilitude as part of the reading experience. Lennard Davis traces the emergence of the novel to what he terms the “news/novel discourse,” or the inter-relationship between fact and


fiction that exhibits “a complex attitude toward ‘lived’ experience.” The rise of journalism and newspapers fostered a new kind of social experience, wherein cheap, ephemeral reading material described recent events to the public with a sense of immediacy and emphasized that a person’s actions one day could have immediate consequences the day following. This recognition of the present as a historical moment distinct from the past is one of the features that distinguish the novel from its predecessors, particularly the romance. Similar claims to realism can be found in Northrop Frye’s division between “romantic” and “realistic” discourses, wherein the former clings to “the formulaic units of myth and metaphor” and the latter toward “greater conformity to ordinary experience,” and in Michael McKeon’s claim that the novel strives for a form that is “history like” yet differentiated from actual history through the use of rhetorical and aesthetic constructs so as to arrive at an objective representation of “truth,” and in Jane Spencer’s observation that “women novelists writing about the lives of young ladies in their own society were, of course, dealing with reality and ordinary experience.” Nancy Armstrong strikes a similar note by claiming that “the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one

54 Davis, *Factual Fictions*, 212.


and the same.” Despite shortcomings, permutations of formal realism loom large in the critical history of the novel. It remains a quite potent and useful criterion for explaining the aesthetic and rhetorical innovations that occurred in prose fiction during the eighteenth century.

That being said, there is little evidence to suggest that these novelistic qualities were accepted by readers during the 1720s, when the novel form is thought to have started coalescing around the experimental proto-novels of Defoe and Swift: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Gulliver’s Travels. These novels are, to be sure, transitional—occupying a space somewhere between romance novel and modern novel. The aesthetics of realism and individual experience featured so prominently in most literary histories of the English novel can be readily found within Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders, and to a lesser extent Gulliver’s Travels, yet not to the same extent as later novels by Richardson and Fielding. The experimental proto-novels of Defoe and Swift are often pointed to as primitive realizations of what would become known as the emergent novel form, striving for an aesthetic that neither Defoe nor Swift could have possibly anticipated. To paraphrase Lennard Davis, the temporality of the novel is recent not ancient, it is ostensibly based upon history not legend, the setting tends to be familiar not exotic, the length tends to be short not long, and the action is driven by deviance and passion rather than heroism and virtue. Reading the various literary histories of the


58 Davis, Factual Fictions, 40.
English novel, it is difficult to not to be struck with a sense of inevitability—that upon the
publication of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, and to a lesser extent *Gulliver’s
Travels*, the emergence of the quintessential English novel was only a matter of time.

However, the tendency to privilege the novels of Defoe and Swift as precursors to
the novel is a distinctly modern phenomenon. Abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll
Flanders*, and to a lesser extent *Gulliver’s Travels*, demonstrate that a considerable
portion of the English reading public, and the publishers to whom they turned for printed
literature, objected to some of the formal elements found within these novels, especially
those formal elements which modern scholarship has defined as “novelistic.” In an early
abridgment (1722) of *Robinson Crusoe* published by Edward Midwinter, Arthur
Bettesworth, and several others, the preface charges that the abridgment is a superior
representation of the Crusoe narrative because the editor has taken great pains to
“correct” where Defoe was thought to have erred. “I am sensible, that as there are some,
who complain against the Design in general as an inconsistent Romance…And I do
assure my Readers, whatever they may alledge against this Abridgment, there are not
only many Errors corrected, but several palpable and gross Contradictions rectified and
amended.” The publishers to the first abridgment (1727) of *Gulliver’s Travels*, although
they do not use the word “correct,” imply a very similar function of abridgment—to
correct defective formal elements. “It is true, that some Passages in the Original, which

59 Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Most Surprizing Adventures of Robinson
Crusoe...Faithfully Abridg’d*, abridged ed. (London: Printed by E. Midwinter, and Sold
by A. Bettesworth, at the Red Lyon in Pater-Noster-Row; J. Brotherton, at the Bible; W.
Meadows at the Angel in Corn-Hill; and M. Hotham, at the Black-Boy on Lon-don
Bridge, 1722), A2v.
the Generality of Mankind have thought immodest and indecent, are entirely omitted, and many trivial Circumstances contracted into a very narrow compass,” they write. “But, at the same Time, we may truly say, that Care hath been taken to make the History as uniform, and the Connexion as just and smooth, as the Nature of the Performance would allow.”60 This approach to “correcting” the style and form of a novel through abridgment was actually quite common. Prefatory remarks within a 1733 abridgment of Bernardo Morando’s Rosalinda (1650) make a similar claim to improvement, noting that “by leaving out, correcting and supplying the Defects of it, which though they are not perhaps reckoned Blemishes in the Italian Taste, wou’d appear monstrous to an English one.” The preface continues:

Such as a Crowd of Descriptions heap’d one upon another, especially of Rome and Genoa, which almost every body knows by Heart…Irregular Dissertations which unnecessarily interrupt the Thread of the Story, and justly disgust the Reader: Repetitions of Sermons upon the Errors of Luther and Calvin, and the Fanaticism of Mahomet: An indecent Jumble every where of Religion and Love: False Quotations, and unfair Comparisons, besides an infinite Number of pretty Concetti’s, which we term Conundrums, wherein the Author (whom his Imitator takes for a Monk in Masquerade) has sacrific’d his Wit to the Pleasure of his Imagination.61

According to this abridger, Morando’s unabridged Rosalinda lacks the structure and narrative focus that is representative of fiction from the early eighteenth century. When


61 Bernardo Morando, Rosalinda, a Novel, abridged ed. (London: Printed for C. Davis, and sold by John Osborn at the Golden Ball in Pater-Noster-Row, 1733), A2v-A2v.
the abridger speaks of “correcting” Morando’s work, he targets for excision excessive
description, tangents, songs, rambling expository remarks on the nature of society,
overtly religious passages, and the list goes on. This impetus to “correct” what were
perceived as aesthetic defects and shortcomings in the original—instances where the
narrative veered into incoherence or impropriety—was actually quite common within
abridgments.

In addition to cutting the “Crowd of Descriptions” of the sort that permeate early
novels, especially Defoe’s, abridgers were keen to cut or correct “errors” in the original.
In his lengthy critique of Robinson Crusoe, Charles Gildon charges that Defoe’s narrative
fails to establish with probable likelihood that the events of the novel could have actually
taken place due in part to its inconsistent treatment of detail.62 The cornerstone of
Gildon’s criticism is that inconsistencies, contradictions, and improbabilities permeate
throughout that are so glaring that they pull the reader away from the willing suspension
of disbelief. For example, after losing everything in the shipwreck at Yarmouth, Crusoe
arrives in London dressed like a gentleman, and just happens to have amassed £40,
possibly from the very same father who told him never to be a sea-farer (11-12). Once on
the island, Crusoe strips naked to swim from the shore to the shipwreck, only to arrive
aboard and put biscuits in his pockets, a mistake that even Taylor and Defoe could not
ignore and had corrected in a later edition (15). When Crusoe delineates what is “Good
and Evil” of his present condition, he laments that he is without clothing or defense,

62 Charles Gildon, The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D---- De F--, of
references are given after quotations in the text.
despite the fact that he returned from the wreckage with clothes and firearms only a few pages earlier (16). After a storm, Crusoe claims the shipwreck floated out to sea only to see it again at low tide some one hundred pages later (17). Crusoe runs out of ink for his pen, only to have it reappear multiple times. Crusoe tries to get Friday to eat salt, but how Crusoe attained the salt is never addressed (26). The contradictions are too numerous to mention in full here, as Gildon’s own critique carries on for some 30 pages. Gildon lambasts Defoe because the literary craft on display in *Robinson Crusoe* did not meet what he considered to be an attribute of exemplary prose fiction: accuracy and consistency. Modern scholars have not been very receptive to Gildon’s harsh critique. Max Novak, for one, castigates Gildon for showing “more than a degree of jealousy at Defoe’s success.”63 But obvious errors and glaring narrative contradictions were in fact corrected in later editions of the unabridged *Robinson Crusoe* as well as in the abridgments.

But when critics and editors speak of correcting “errors,” we need to acknowledge that errors were far more varied than misprints or narrative contradictions. Gildon suggests that *Robinson Crusoe* suffers from “Solecisms, Looseness and Incorrectness of Stile” (B1’). In other words, the very essence of the textual and narrative attributes that modern scholars ascribe to Defoe’s heightened sense of verisimilitude were viewed, at least in some quarters, as not only atypical, but also unwelcome. Abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* trimmed rhetorical excess and repetition. These abridgments

corrected—in a sense regularized—Defoe’s rhetorical style into something more recognizable to early eighteenth-century novel readers, that is, a sequence of loosely-related events that tend to lack a central plot. In other words, the very grounds upon which Defoe’s early novels are valued, namely that the protagonist, typically a first-person narrator, exhibits psychological complexity as he or she attempts to negotiate the intricacies of modern life, were considered mistakes in need of correction.

3.6 Novel Abridgments after Crusoe

Much like earlier abridgments of romances and picaresques, the significance of prose fiction abridgments can be measured in part by the extent to which those works sustained the cultural currency of narratives from which they were derived, especially when those narratives had fallen out of print, and as well by the extent to which the abridgments supplanted or superseded the original in the print marketplace. The widespread appeal of the Robinson Crusoe abridgments, therefore, can hardly be denied. A comprehensive bibliography of the Robinson Crusoe abridgments is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a brief review of that scholarship seems appropriate.64 Abridgments of Robinson Crusoe were published in 1722, 1724, and 1726. Following a brief lull, new editions were once again published in 1733, 1734, and 1735, and from that point on abridgments of Robinson Crusoe would begin to appear more frequently than editions of Defoe’s original, which was already extremely popular and appeared in print more

frequently than any other work of English prose fiction. Printers in Dublin and Glasgow began reprinting the Midwinter and Bettesworth abridgments in the 1740s. A series of separately numbered editions emerged from Edinburgh in the 1760s. All told, the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments account for fully one-third of all editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, abridged and unabridged, published prior to 1801.65 The proclivity for abridgments of *Robinson Crusoe* in the print market suggests that, despite the several thousand unabridged copies printed by the successive proprietors of *Robinson Crusoe*, the market for the Crusoe narrative was far from saturated.66

Moreover, it is telling that both Defoe’s original and the abridgments were able to co-exist in the print marketplace without one driving down demand for the other. By 1801, over 40 editions of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* had been printed in cities across Britain, making it the second most popular work of prose fiction, second only to the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments. But this shouldn’t come as a surprise. Knowing that the print marketplace was stratified so as to both reflect and appeal to England’s hierarchical social classes, we can presume that abridgments, although they may have been complicit in driving down the price and format of originals, were most likely popular among a different reading public.67 This hypothesis is further supported because Defoe’s


67 For an assessment of the ways in which abridgments drove down the price and format of originals, see Michael Suarez’s 2015 Bodleian Library lecture, “Abridging Histories: Capt. James Cook and the Voyages of Reading.” https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/abridging-histories-capt-james-cook-and-voyages-reading-1784
publisher, William Taylor, does not appear to have threatened any legal action against Midwinter and Bettesworth or their abridgments, nor did subsequent copyright owners Woodward, Mears, and Longman. As stated in the first chapter, following the enactment of England’s first copyright law, the Copyright Act of 1710, there were very few recorded copyright complaints by proprietors against abridgers until the 1740s. Throughout the 1720s and 1730s, records indicate that these matters were largely resolved behind closed doors, perhaps over a conversation. And we can conclude from title page imprints that the publishers of both Defoe’s original and the various abridgments collaborated to some extent. On the first recorded advertisement for Defoe’s original, William Taylor’s name appears alongside several booksellers who worked on and off with both Taylor and Defoe throughout their careers, including “J. Graves in St. James street, T. Harbin at the New Exchange, J. Brotherton and W. Meadows at the Black-Bull in Cornhill,” the latter two collectively appear on six abridgments between 1722 and 1750. When Woodward and Mears shared the copyright, no other publishers are noted as interested parties. However, Terry Belanger notes that when Woodward was sole owner of the copyright, his name appears alongside ‘J. Osborn, at the Golden Ball in Pater-Noster Row’, whose name also appears on abridgments in 1733, 1734, and 1735, and is also listed on the bill of sale in 1752. According to the British Book Trade Index, this John Osborn(e) was a relation to John Osborn(e) I of Ludgate Street who was the


executor of William Taylor’s estate. On the unabridged 1753 10th edition, among the names that appear on the title page (T. and T. Longman, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, J. Hodges, J. and J. Rivington), Hitch, Hawes and Hodges published 11 abridgments between 1732 and 1762. In fact, Hitch and Hodges published abridgments in 1752 and 1755, more or less bracketing their own involvement in the publishing of the unabridged 10th edition of *Robinson Crusoe* with Longman. In short, there is little reason to believe that abridgment editions were surreptitiously undermining the success of the unabridged editions. Indeed, publishing abridgments was clearly part of a complex business model, as multiple publishers had a stake in both abridged and unabridged editions.

The success of the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments also appears to have provided some kind of informal precedent within the publishing industry for abridging popular literature. However, the relationship between the proprietor and the abridger was not always as amicable. The publishing partners Stone and King refer to the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments specifically in the preface to their abridgment of *Gulliver's Travels*, which was published in February 1727, only a few months after Benjamin Motte published the first edition.70 In the preface, Stone and King argue for a broad cultural acceptance of abridgment, perhaps in anticipation of Motte’s objections as the proprietor of Swift’s original: “[We] shall briefly enumerate a few of the many Instances, wherein the Practice of Abridgements has been follow’d, and, as it were, establish’d, by Custom and the Example of several considerable Men in the Bookselling Trade” (A2v-A3r). Stone and

King goes on to include a short list of popular abridgments, including “Mr. Locke’s Essay on Human Understanding,” “L’Estrange’s Josephus,” “Bp. Burnet’s History of his own Times,” and “Robinson Crusoe’s Adventures” (A3r, italics original). Stone and King also included in that list “The Philosophical Transactions, for 20 Years, abridg’d by Mr. B. Motte,” perhaps as a not-so-subtle reminder to the public that the Motte was himself complicit in the broader cultural approval of abridged literature, that is, until he found himself at the other end of the barrel. That being said, Stone and King are careful not to assert their legal right to print an abridgment. Rather, by locating their right in an established “Custom” among “considerable Men in the Bookselling Trade,” they convey to the reader that the practice is routine. If anything, Stone and King argue that the most pressing problem is not that works may be abridged without permission, but rather the “Avarice of the Proprietor” who insists on charging ‘extraordinary’ prices for books (A3v). Similar to Thomas Cox’s preface in his 1719 abridgment of Robinson Crusoe, Stone and King position themselves as populists acting in the broader interests of the general public.

Unlike the Robinson Crusoe abridgments, the Stone and King abridgment of Gulliver’s Travels was short-lived, appearing in only that one edition in 1727. Even so, some similar patterns emerge. As with the Robinson Crusoe abridgments, the Stone and King abridgment of Gulliver’s Travels was published in a smaller format than the original with a corresponding drop in price: Benjamin Motte’s two-volume unabridged octavo edition sold for 8 shillings and 6 pence—making it a very expensive book—
whereas Stone’s and King’s single-volume duodecimo abridgment sold for 3 shillings.71

What impact did this have on the publication of the unabridged *Gulliver’s Travels*?

Benjamin Motte published three editions in 1726 (commonly known as A, AA, and B). The Bowyer Ledgers indicate that the first two editions (A and AA) sold out in five weeks, or by early December 1726. The third, however, sold more slowly, with about one-fifth of the printed copies still unsold by January 1727.72 Despite this, Motte commissioned a “Second ‘Corrected’ Edition” which was published on 4 May 1727. According to Wormersley, this edition sold much more slowly than the previous three, with roughly 1500 copies out of 2000 not delivered to the booksellers until early 1728. About this drop in demand Swift wrote: the “world glutted it self with that book at first” and then tired of it.73 This begs the question: with demand for the unabridged edition clearly waning as early as January 1727, why did Motte commission the separate printing of a duodecimo edition which Bowyer completed printing by May 1727? I suggest that the abridgment may have exacerbated the decline in sales that occurred in January 1727. The preface to the abridgment indicates that Motte attempted to stop the publication:

> We think it necessary, to take Notice in this Place, That, since the beginning of this Work, the Proprietor of the Original, having conceiv’d himself injur’d by the Undertaking, has made several indirect Attempts to put a Stop to it, upon a wild Supposition that it was the very Copy, and not an Abridgment, (tho’ he had not seen a Twelfth Part of the Work) even contrary to his own Assurances, that he would refer it to Arbitration, and wish it Success, if it should prove to be an Abridgment. (A3r-A3v)

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72 Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, 637.

73 Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, 642.
As with so many other abridgments, there is no record of the case being taken to Chancery. And it seems remarkable that Motte would actually “wish [the abridgment] Success” under the right circumstances. We may never know what transpired between the two publishers, but what is clear is that there are no further advertisements for the Stone and King abridgment, or at least none that I have been able to discover in either newspapers or within other books they published.

Regardless, the Stone and King abridgment is significant in its own right, and for many of the same reasons the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments are significant within the evolution of the English novel. There is not enough space to offer an in-depth analysis of the Stone and King abridgment, except to say that many of literary qualities within *Gulliver’s Travels* that seem so remarkable to modern scholars, and that have enshrined that narrative within the literary history of the English novel, are not always to be found in the Stone and King abridgment. In fact, the very genre of adventure narrative that Swift had set out to satirize, a genre defined in his own day by Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, was transformed into simply another manifestation of the eighteenth-century mariner adventure narrative. Similar to the *Robinson Crusoe* abridgments, Stone and King characterize the process of abridgment in corrective terms. On the one hand, the abridgment claims to correct some of Gulliver’s more *risqué* exploits, presumably in an attempt to tame the narrative for acceptance by a broader audience. “It must be confessed, that Undertakings of this Nature are liable to Exceptions, and are frequently charg’d with depriving the Original of those Ornaments which recommend it to the Judicious,” they write in the preface (A2r-A2v). “It is true, that some Passages in the Original, which the
Generality of Mankind have thought immodest and indecent, are entirely omitted” (A2v). However, this is hardly the case. As has been noted time and time again, many of the passages that fit this description, such as Gulliver extinguishing the palace fire, remain largely intact in the Stone and King abridgment. On the other hand, the abridgment is also characterized as corrective in literary terms. In much the same way Midwinter and Bettesworth “corrected” the Defoe’s idiosyncratic style in their abridgments, Stone and King corrected Swift’s, with “many trivial Circumstances contracted into a very narrow Compass.” They go on to state that, “at the same Time, we may truly say, that Care hath been taken to make the History as uniform, and the Connexion as just and smooth, as the Nature of the Performance would allow” (A2v). In the Stone and King abridgment, a number of key narrative details have been cut or abbreviated in order to shorten the work into the compass of a single duodecimo volume. In cutting Gulliver down to its most essential parts, what Alice Columbo characterizes as assisting “the reader to process the message of the source text by making sure that the most relevant parts of the plot arrive more promptly,” Swift’s satire on the novel form is lost.

Prose fiction abridgments from the early decades of the eighteenth century set the stage for the much more expansive publication of abridgments that would take place


during the latter half of the century. The frequency with which abridgments appeared in print indicates that there was a marketplace for cheap novels, and that many readers did not seem to care if the cheap novels they were reading were original. In the following chapter, we see a similar dynamic at work on the London stage. Just as many English readers were unfamiliar with the unabridged versions of their favorite literature, many English theatregoers in all likelihood never witnessed an unabridged performance of Southerne’s *Oroonoko* or Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. And as was the case with abridgments of prose fiction, plays abridged for performance often focused the narrative on elements that were palatable to a broader demographic of the English public.
Chapter 4

REFORMING THE LONDON STAGE

4.1 Toward a Definition of Theatrical Abridgment

In this final chapter, I would like to move away from examining abridgment as a form of derivative literary print production—as an adaptive process that alters a source text into a derivative text—and instead look to the ways in which the process of abridgment is complicit in the transformation of existing dramatic literature into new theatrical performances. In other words, I am interested in the ways in which abridgments to dramatic literature go beyond the day-to-day cutting that was commonplace within London’s theatre companies. After all, theatrical cutting and other forms of theatrical adaptation happened all the time. Lines might be cut at random, a role cut due to an illness, scenes cut due to mechanical malfunction, or to appease the censors during times of political unrest. Samuel Foote was notorious for altering his performances from night to night. And when Tate Wilkinson brought London performances to provincial theatres, he would cut lines that might offend rural sensibilities. Indeed, there are so many reasons why untold multitudes of lines may have been cut from any number of performances, that any attempt to account for such abridgments will undoubtedly attract skepticism. Cutting and adaptation, some might say, are a predictable consequence of the ephemerality of
Despite this, we must acknowledge that the sheer quantity of theatrical cuts, and reasons for cutting, begs serious and important questions. What differentiates (if anything) theatrical cuts from theatrical abridgment? Are small, isolated cuts by individual actors reason enough to categorize a performance as an abridgment? Is any reduction of a dramatic text by definition an abridgment? How might the very notion of theatrical abridgment conflict with theoretical approaches that situate the text as the product of performance and not the other way around?

4.1.1 Quantifying Theatrical Abridgment

How frequently were plays abridged for performance? Published playbooks represent something like an ideal performance, but lacking a promptbook for comparison it is unclear to what extent the printed edition reflects the dialogue and stage directions of an actual performance. However, as Diana Solomon has shown, when surviving promptbooks are compared to the published playbook, theatrical abridgment (as it turns out) was quite common. We can arrive at a rough estimation of the extent of theatrical

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1 See Amanda Boetzkes, “The Ephemeral Stage at Lionel Groulx Station,” in Circulation and the City: Essays on Urban Culture, eds. Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw (London: Queen’s University Press, 2010), 138-154. “The ephemerality of the stage, then, cannot be understood simply in terms of its short-lived, transient condition. Ephemeral quality caused by the ebb and flow of the crowd’s concentration on the performance and a reflection of the nostalgic character of specific performances” (148).


3 Diana Solomon, “Determining audience taste in eighteenth-century English theater,” Cultural Compass (Harry Ransom Center: The University of Texas at Austin, 2015).
abridgment through an analysis of Edward A. Langhans’ descriptive bibliography of 383 eighteenth-century British and Irish promptbooks.⁴ Admittedly, Langhans’ bibliography represents but a small sample of the total number of plays performed during this period, and using his bibliography to determine the practice and scope of theatrical abridgment during the long eighteenth century is a decidedly tricky business. Many of the promptbooks are believed to have been in use many decades after the plays were originally performed, making them reflections of the ways in which eighteenth-century theatrical culture reformed its stage tradition through the second half of the century. Moreover, as Langhans notes, many of the promptbooks were revised multiple times over many decades, so any examination of an actual performance needs to take into account the fluidity of the text as a medium that determined the performance.⁵ However, as the most comprehensive bibliographical account of surviving promptbooks, it is useful nonetheless.

A keyword analysis of Langhans’ bibliography will allow us to examine the extent of theatrical adaptation within his sample of 383 eighteenth-century promptbooks. In describing each promptbook, Langhans admits that “it is difficult to be precise” when accounting for the total number of “Cuts, additions, emendations, rearrangement of


scenes, redistribution of speeches,” and other alterations that occur throughout an entire text. However, to account for different degrees of cutting while still acknowledging that his bibliographical descriptions are based on rough estimations, Langhans employed a standardized descriptive terminology that categorized textual alterations using the terms “some,” “many,” or “extensive.” If a promptbook exhibits a single type of alteration, Langhan also used the term “one.” Thus, in his description for Samuel Foote’s *The Lyar* (1762), Langhans notes, “One small cut and some emendations” (65), whereas his description for Foot’s *The Devil upon Two Sticks* (1768) notes, “Extensive cuts, additions, and emendations” (64). What exactly can we determine through Langhans’ terminology? Take, for example, Langhans’ entry for one of the *Hamlet* promptbooks formerly belonging to actor-manager John Ward. The Ward promptbook, as described by Langhans, includes “Extensive cuts, additions, and emendations” (148), which according to Evans amounts to about 1,056 lines abridged from performance, or about one-quarter the total number of lines. Likewise, Langhans notes that a promptbook of Southerne’s *Oroonoko* with deletions and revisions by Drury Lane prompter William Rufus Chetwood, includes “Extensive cuts…and some emendations” (205), which according to Hughes and Scouten amounts to about 500 lines abridged from performance, or about

6 Langhans, *Eighteenth Century British and Irish Promptbooks*, xxvii

one-fifth the total number of lines.\textsuperscript{8} We may therefore tentatively conclude promptbooks designated with “extensive cuts” more than likely constitute some manner of abridgment beyond what is typical of censorship or other similar types of isolated deletions. Langhan’s method may lack precision, but in the absence of a comprehensive database of fully transcribed and encoded promptbooks, systematic estimation is about the best we can hope for.

One of the more considerable limitations of Langhan’s \textit{Bibliography} is that only the abridgments can be reliably tracked using targeted keyword searches for occurrences of “some cuts,” “many cuts,” or “extensive cuts” in the HathiTrust digital edition. As the entry for \textit{The Devil upon Two Sticks} shows, a search for “extensive emendations” or “extensive additions” would fail to return hits for that particular record, whereas a search for “extensive cuts” would. However, searching for variations of “Extensive cuts, additions, and emendations,” or “Many cuts, additions, and emendations” will return more reliable results. Moreover, searching for the total usage of each term individually without being modified by “some,” “many,” or “extensive” will provide a rough estimation; although, the total occurrences of these unique keywords should be averaged out against the number of individual pages upon which these hits occur, thus smoothing out numerous occurrences of a term within a single entry, such as the six occurrences of “cuts” within the second entry to Garrick’s \textit{Lilliput} (80). So how typical were performance alterations within promptbooks examined in Langhan’s \textit{Bibliography}?

Using HathiTrust to calculate the occurrences of each key term, we arrive at the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Extensive</th>
<th>Total (Unique)</th>
<th>Total (Average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emendations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4: Theatrical Adaptation in Langhans’ Promptbooks*

Among the promptbooks described in Langhans’ bibliography, those that include some form of theatrical additions averages out to 104 of 383, or slightly greater than one out of every four plays. The total number of promptbooks exhibiting some form of emendation averages out to 168 of 383, or slightly greater than two out of every five plays. And the total number of promptbooks exhibiting some form of cutting averages out to 260 of 383, or slightly greater than two out of every three plays. Those featuring “many” or “extensive” cuts amount to 163, or about two-fifths of the entries in Langhans’ Bibliography. In other words, it would appear as though altering a play for performance was more likely than not, and theatrical cutting appears to have been the most prominent and regular form of alteration made to a play text. Moreover, it seems probable that substantive abridgments were relatively commonplace.

### 4.1.2 Defining Theatrical Abridgment

But should all plays with performance cuts be considered abridgments? Should promptbooks described by Langhans as containing “some cuts” be treated as more-or-less
faithful representations whereas promptbooks with “extensive cuts” be considered abridgments? Should any of these plays be considered abridgments?

To arrive at such an answer, there must be a distinction between “abridgment” as an ideal construct that denotes the derivative nature of a textual object, and “abridgment” as an editorial and adaptive process that functions in coordination with other adaptive processes such as “additions” and “emendations.” Among the promptbooks Langhans examines in his *Bibliography*, many of those that include alterations were for performances that took place decades after the play was originally written. The surviving promptbook for Southerne’s *Oroonoko* (1696), for example, includes alterations by at least three hands dating from the 1730s through the 1750s. On the one hand, Hughes and Scouten note that the original length of 2,500 lines “would have been about right for an evening’s bill” in 1696.⁹ By the 1730s, however, an *Oroonoko* revival had to contend with *entr’acte* performances such as harlequinades as well as short afterpieces. “Inevitably,” Hughes and Scouten conclude, “Oroonoko had to be cut.”

As the tastes and values of theatrical audiences evolved over the eighteenth century, theatrical performances were altered and adapted to meet new expectations and create a theatrical experience coined by Harley Granville-Barker as an “equivalent effect” which strives to recreate not only the “linguistic codes of the target language but also the conventions governing actors and audiences in the receiving house.”¹⁰ Thus we see in the

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⁹ Hughes and Scouten, “Promptbook of Oroonoko,” 21.

¹⁰ Loren Kruger, “Keywords and Contexts: Translating Theatre Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 59.3 (2007), 355–58. The concept of the “equivalent effect” was coined by Harley
1740s revival of *Oroonoko* a number of adaptations which censored the play to make it more palatable to more refined audiences, which not only includes numerous cuts to the more serious scenes depicting the slave rebellion (see Act 3 Scene 4) but also cuts to comic scenes (see Act 4 Scene 1) which audiences may have found too bawdy for performance.

When striving to create an “equivalent effect,” a common practice within theatrical companies was to update and “improve” language so that plays didn’t come across as too old-fashioned. In particular, these plays strived to achieve an “equivalent effect” by revising language and idioms into late seventeenth century norms. Jean Marsden notes that “[t]he adaptations of the Restoration and early eighteenth century rarely used the original language of Shakespeare’s plays, replacing it instead with a more ‘refined’ and modern English.”¹¹ To achieve an “equivalent effect” in Restoration and eighteenth-century revivals of Shakespeare, playwrights aimed to make the plays sound and look a little less like Shakespeare’s original. For in “the present age,” as Dryden puts it in the Preface to his version of *Troilus and Cressida* (1679), “the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespeare’s time, that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative

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expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.”12 On the printed page, modernization of the English language is most apparent in the excision of the silent “e” in words like “speake” or “soule”.13 These changes, however, would have been invisible during performance. More significant modernizations are in the form of word or phrase replacement. Unidiomatic words like “horrowes” were revised to “startles,” (1.1.43) and unfamiliar expressions such as “my inkie cloke” were revised to “this mourning cloke” (1.2.79). In Q1637 Hamlet, Queen Gertrude questions Hamlet’s sanity when she sees him speaking to “incorporal air,” which is revised in Q1676 to “incorporeal air” (3.4.118). Spencer identifies many of other modernizations, some of which would be retained in performances well into the eighteenth century.14

One barrier to achieving an “equivalent effect,” then, lay in Shakespeare’s language. Because of the natural evolution of human speech, words and phrases that may have been recognizable to the eyes though not necessarily the ears of eighteenth-century audiences were replaced with language that reflected contemporary usage. Dryden

12 John Dryden, “Preface” to Troilus and Cressida in The Works of John Dryden, eds. Maximillian E. Novak and George Robert Guffey, vol. 13 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 225. Dryden goes on to qualify this sentiment, admitting that “as I have often drawn his English nearer to our times, so I have sometimes conform’d my own to his; and consequently, the language is not altogether so pure as it is significant” (226-27).

13 William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. As it is now Acted at his Highness the Duke of York’s Theatre (London: Printed by Andr. Clark, for J. Martyn, and H. Herringman, at the Bell in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, and at the Blue Anchor in the lower Walk of the New Exchange, 1676). Further references will be given after quotations in the text.

expresses a similar sentiment in the preface to *The Enchanted Island* (1669), which he and Davenant adapted from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Dryden notes that Davenant “had particularly a high veneration” for Shakespeare but was “a man of quick and piercing imagination” who “soon found that somewhat might be added to the Design of Shakespear.” Especially among adaptations of older plays, the action was sometimes too erratic for modern tastes or the characters too morally ambiguous. In the case of *The Enchanted Island*, Davenant added character foils and plot developments so as to align the play more closely with the characteristics of early Restoration comedy. In other words, by “improving Shakespeare,” as Spencer once phrased it tongue-in-cheek, Davenant likely thought that he was preserving Shakespeare by making him relevant at a time when England was in search of a national poet.

To “improve” Shakespeare and achieve an “equivalent effect,” Dryden and others often found it necessary to abridge Shakespeare’s notoriously long and inconsistent narratives. Davenant, in his adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, cut the role of the porter, a low-comedy character who, according to Christopher Spencer, was excised “to avoid mixing tragedy and comedy.” The Duke of Buckingham cut the low-comedy scenes from *Julius Caesar*, as did Aaron Hill for *Henry V*. According to Branum, “Pistol,

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Nym, Bardolph are all gone, and so are Captains Fluellen and MacMorris. [Aaron] Hill also omitted the charming bawdy scene in which Katharine rehearses English vocabulary with her nurse Alice.‘\textsuperscript{18}’ Similarly, Colley Cibber cut the first act of \textit{King John} in his adaptation, \textit{Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John} (1745), thereby confining the entire play to France, and he significantly curtailed the comedic aspects of Falconbridge’s character. “Cibber retains Falconbridge but removes all the comic characteristics that make him notable,” writes Branum. “He becomes a colorless follower of the king.”‘\textsuperscript{19}’ In \textit{The Invader of His Country}, and adaptation of \textit{Coriolanus}, John Dennis did not agree with Shakespeare’s portrayal of the Roman Senator Menenius Agrippa as an “errant Buffoon,” noting in his \textit{Essay on the Genius and Works of Shakespeare} that such a portrayal “is a great Absurdity.”‘\textsuperscript{20}’ Ultimately, Dennis cut three scenes, the first two scenes from the first act and part of the first scene of the second act, thereby eliminating the character of Menenius and confining the action to the Roman battlefield.‘\textsuperscript{21}’ It was also common practice in eighteenth-century alterations of \textit{Romeo and Juliet}, including those by Theophilus Cibber (1748) and David Garrick (1750), to omit any reference to Rosaline, Romeo’s professed “love” in the first act. Garrick himself remarked, “the sudden Change of Romeo’s love from Rosaline to Juliet, was thought by many, at the

\textsuperscript{18} George C. Branam, \textit{Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 47.


first Revival of the Play, to be a blemish in his Character.”22 Among these theatrical adaptations, abridgments are but a single attribute of the adaptive process, one which modern scholarship has typically subordinated to other more radical alterations like additions and emendations. However, when we consider abridgment as a complement to adaptation, as one of the initial steps in the adaptive process, then even among those adaptations which bear little resemblance to Shakespeare’s original, such as Nahum Tate’s *The History of King Lear* (1681), we can point to instances of abridgment as evidence of a deliberate adaptive editorial function that fundamentally reshaped plot, character, and the scope of the narrative. Consequently, abridgment not only alters the content of the play but also the manner in which the play is performed and thus experienced by the audience.

I began this section by suggesting that there is a distinction between “abridgment” as an ideal construct and “abridgment” as an adaptive editorial process that functions in coordination with other adaptive processes such as “additions” and “emendations.” We can therefore differentiate other kinds of theatrical cutting from abridgments because abridgments function collectively as a component of a larger editorial project. However, if we were to establish some parameters for what constitutes an “abridgment” as an ideal construct, or a *bona fide* theatrical abridgment, then I think it is necessary to limit

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consideration (until more data becomes available) to only those plays that were revived after some period of time using a printed edition of the play as the promptbook text which was then subsequently abridged and adapted for performance. Of the promptbooks identified in Langhans’ *Bibliography*, a sound majority are printed play texts which were subsequently altered by hand, which strongly implies that, in those instances and for those actors, the printed text functioned as the source of the performance. Therefore, significant adaptive alterations, including abridgments, fundamentally determined the nature of the performance. Of course, plays are further altered from year to year as the actors refine their roles. Nevertheless, the promptbooks provide us with a starting point to estimate the scope of abridgment and adaptation that older plays received upon revival.

To provide a more detailed examination of the ways in which abridgment performed an adaptive function, I will interrogate the implications of theatrical abridgment by examining playbooks and promptbooks of *Hamlet* from the late seventeenth century. As with Davenant’s other adaptations of Shakespeare, the textual basis for the performance was the most recent printed edition of the play.

4.2 Dramatic Abridgment in the Restoration: The Case of *Hamlet*

4.2.1 *Hamlet* in Print and Performance: A Brief Textual History

The very notion of a stable text of *Hamlet* is fraught with uncertainty, as it was published, corrupted, preserved, and restored in over one hundred editions between its
initial publication in 1603 and the end of the eighteenth century. The 1603 “bad” quarto (Q1) has been widely (and perhaps wrongly) derided as unauthorized and may have been transcribed from an early performance. The next edition of Hamlet appeared in 1604. Commonly referred to as the “good” quarto (Q2), this version contains the longest text of Hamlet: at approximately 3,760 lines, Q2 is over one thousand lines longer than Q1 and about 115 lines longer than the text within the first folio (F1). Yet line numbers fail to capture the magnitude of differences among these three texts, with hundreds, if not thousands, of potential variations in spelling, punctuation, and word choice. Subsequent editions based on the text of Q2 were published in 1605, 1611, [1623?] or the same year as F1, and 1637 (Q1637), which was the last edition to be published prior to the English Civil War. When the theatres re-opened in 1661, Duke’s Company manager Sir William Davenant turned to Q1637 as the base text for his company’s performance of Hamlet, which was published in 1676 (Q1676) with abridgments marked along the left margin.

23 The English Short Title Catalog records 101 editions of Shakespeare’s Hamlet published between 1603 and 1800.


25 William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. As it is now Acted at his Highness the Duke of York’s Theatre (London: Printed by Andr. Clark, for J. Martyn, and H. Herringman, at the Bell in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, and at the Blue Anchor in the lower Walk of the New Exchange, 1676). Further references will be given after quotations in the text. For Spencer’s attribution of the abridgment and textual changes to Sir William Davenant, see Spencer, “Hamlet Under Restoration.”
Using Q1637 *Hamlet* as a base text as opposed to an earlier edition (such as Q2) would not have been uncommon, as Spencer argues, “until the publication of the Fourth Folio, and except in the case of plays not printed separately before the Restoration, the source of the adapter is regularly the latest pre-Wars Quarto.” Q1676 was reprinted in new editions with few significant alterations until John Hughes and Robert Wilks (Betterton’s successor in the role of Hamlet) revised the text in 1718 using Nicholas Rowe’s *The Works of William Shakespear* (1709) as copy text. Although the Hughes-Wilks *Hamlet* contains linguistic corrections and restores dozens of lines formerly cut from performance, it bears a striking resemblance to Q1676 and would remain the *de facto* performance text until David Garrick’s 1763 revision, which restored lines that had been regularly cut from the first four acts.

In addition to the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, copy texts of *Hamlet*, it would appear as though every production of *Hamlet* throughout the eighteenth century substantially abridged Shakespeare’s original text. Cutting *Hamlet* is first and foremost a practical matter. According to Alfred Hart, whose calculations correlate lines of spoken dialogue to the duration of a performance, a full production of *Hamlet* would run well

26 Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, 175.

27 Henry N. Paul, “Player’s Quartos and Duodecimos of Hamlet,” *Modern Language Notes* 49.6 (June 1934), 369–75. The one exception to this is the 1683 players’ quarto (Q1683), which included corrections from an earlier folio text of Hamlet.

over three hours.\textsuperscript{29} Prior to the Civil War, when plays were performed in open-air theatres, plays typically started around two in the afternoon and had to finish by dusk, leaving little more than two and a half hours for the play and other entertainment, including “jig[s], dances, songs, etc.”\textsuperscript{30} Hart places the average performance time of the feature between two hours and two hours and a quarter for plays numbering 2400 lines and 2700 lines respectively, and he notes that Elizabethan playwrights frequently complained of the “two short hours” allotted for a performance.\textsuperscript{31} Hart notes that plays much longer than 2500 lines were exceedingly rare, which places the production time of the average play much closer to two hours than two hours and a quarter.\textsuperscript{32}

When the theatres reopened following the Restoration, Davenant and Killigrew abandoned the concept of open-air venues and brought performances indoors. Once


\textsuperscript{31} Hart, “Acting Versions,” 2.

provided with artificial light, performances averaged about three hours, which eventually included stage dances, songs and other interludes, and afterpieces. Collations by Evans, Claris Glick, and myself, all tend to agree that Q1676 marks approximately 845 lines for excision, thereby reducing a Restoration performance of Hamlet to about 2900 lines. Assuming that the lines marked for excision represent the full extent of abridgment, a performance of Q1676 would run just over two hours and a half. In other words, the typical Restoration performance of Hamlet represented about three-fourths of Shakespeare’s original text, or about 200 more lines than was typically allotted for Renaissance performances according to Hart’s calculations. In addition to Q1676 Hamlet, Evans notes that two promptbooks (circa 1745) formerly belonging to actor-manager John Ward abridged 1,237 and 1,056 lines from performance, and many of these cuts do not align with those found in Davenant’s Q1676 Hamlet. Moreover, a 1734 promptbook revised according to Tonson’s The Works of Shakespear (1725) as edited by Alexander Pope, marks 1081 lines for abridgment, whereas David Garrick’s 1773 promptbook cuts about 1220 lines, the majority of which were in the final act, including the excision of the entire gravediggers scene. When compared to other eighteenth-century players’ quartos


34 Claris Glick, “Hamlet in the English Theatre—Acting Texts from Betterton (1676) to Olivier (1963),” Shakespeare Quarterly 1 (1969), 17-37. Glick claims Q1676 amounts to 2923.5 lines spoken for performance (35); G. Blakemore Evans, ed. “Introduction to the Smock Alley Hamlet,” 4. My own collations show 862.5 lines marked for excision for a total of 2878 lines of text.

and promptbooks of Hamlet, then, we might commend Davenant’s efforts to refrain from cutting any more than about 850 lines.

Q1676 *Hamlet* not only represents one of the most complete performance texts of *Hamlet*, but its chronological proximity to Shakespeare’s original makes it the earliest surviving example of what the play may have looked like on the stage prior to the English Civil War.36 “As it is now Acted at his Highness the Duke of York’s Theatre” reads the title page, proclaiming the players’ quarto. “This Play being too long to be conveniently Acted,” reads the advertisement following the title page, “such Places as might be least prejudicial to the Plot or Sense, are left out upon the Stage: but that we may way wrong the incomparable Author, are here inserted ac-cording to the Original Copy with this Mark “[viz. double quotation marks].” In abridging Shakespeare, Davenant successfully revived it for an audience that may have never before witnessed a performance. Indeed, Davenant’s *Hamlet* (or some variation on it) was arguably one of the most popular of Shakespeare’s plays to be performed throughout the Restoration and early eighteenth century, with Lincoln’s Inn Fields’ bookkeeper and prompter John Downes claiming that Hamlet was so popular that “No succeeding Tragedy for several Years got more Reputation, or Money to the Company than this” (21).

36 John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or, an Historical Review of the Stage from 1660 to 1706*, ed. J. Knight (London: J.W. Jarvis & Son, 1886), 20-21. According to Downes, “Hamlet being Perform’d by Mr. Betterton, Sir William (having seen Mr. Taylor of the Black-Fryars Company Act it, who being instructed by the Author Mr. Shakesepear) taught Mr. Betterton in every Particle of it.”
4.2.2 Abridging *Hamlet* and the Ephemerality of Performance

Players’ quartos like Q1676 provide a glimpse into the scope of abridgment that Davenant and other theatre managers were likely to introduce to a performance of an older play. However, to what extent do these abridgments reflect actual performances? And how might a close reading of these abridgments shed light on the ways in which Davenant reformed the play to meet the expectations of his audience? Q1676 *Hamlet* situates the text as an intermediary that connects the transitory experience of the performance with the pleasure of reading; this is effectively a kind of dialogic interchange, where the words of Shakespeare, as revised by Davenant, inform and are informed by either real or imagined renditions of the play as performed within a particular physical space by well-known actors and actresses. To show this dialogic interchange within Q1676, the lines that would have been abridged from performance are designated along the left margin by a quotation mark (“). For example, Polonius’ advice to Laertes is printed as follows, with abridgment beginning in line two:

*Enter Polonius.*

*Laer.* O fear me not,
I stay too long: “but here my father comes.
“A double blessing, is a double grace,
“Occasion smiles upon a second leave.
*Pol.* Yet here *Laertes*? aboord, aboord for shame,
“The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
“And you are staiied for. There, my blessing with thee,
“And these few precepts in thy memory
“Look thou character: Give thy thoughts no tongue,
“Nor any unproportion’d thought his act:
“Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar,
“Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
“Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,
“But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
“Of each new hatch’t, unfledg’d courage: beware
“Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear’t that th’opposer may beware of thee:
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each mans censure, but reserve thy judgment:
Costly thy habit as thy purse can by,
But not exprest in fancy: rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station,
Are of a most select and generous, chief in that:
Neither a borrower nor a lender boy,
For love oft loses both itself, and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night to day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farwell, my blessing season this in thee.
Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave my Lord.
Pol. The time invests you, go, your servants tend.

If the cuts indicated in Q1676 were indeed followed by the actors, then in performance

Polonius’ famous speech to Laertes would have resembled something closer to this:

Enter Polonius.
Laer. O fear me not,
I stay too long.
Pol. Yet here Laertes? aboord, aboord for shame,
Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave my Lord.
Pol. The time invests you, go, your servants tend.

In visually marking those lines that were abridged from performance, Q1676 deliberately
draws attention to late seventeenth-century divergences between “Shakespeare” as
literature and “Shakespeare” as drama.37 For many late seventeenth-century readers, the

37 J.Gavin Paul, “Performance as ‘Punctuation’: Editing Shakespeare in the Eighteenth
is designed to mark its deviations from the play as performed, to encode the printed play
with a means by which to recognise, and perhaps even interrogate, the distance between
printed texts and performance texts. Davenant’s address to readers is intriguing not
because it acknowledges a rift between text and performance...rather, what is significant

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use of quotation marks to designate lines abridged from performance would have carried wider implications, as George Hunter has shown that a similar use of quotation marks was employed in the commonplacing of literary texts to mark sententiae, or aphorisms.38 And Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass have shown that such typographical indicators were sometimes used to mark sententiae in Shakespeare’s plays prior to the Civil Wars, including Q1 Hamlet and Q1637. Although quotation marks were used in a decidedly different manner in Q1676 and subsequent players’ quartos, we cannot ignore the historical significance of this typography. As Lesser and Stallybrass write:

Rather than demonstrating the depth of any character, lines marked as sententiae are deliberately designed to be extracted from the dramatic situation and from the character who speaks them. And they are pre-marked as extractable precisely because they testify not to individuality but to the commonplace—to what can be taken up by any speaker in a wide range of contexts and for all sorts of rhetorical effects.39

Readers approaching Hamlet as a text to be extracted or abstracted would have seen that some passages, such as Polonius’ speech to Laertes, were extractable because, quite literally, as aphorisms they could be excerpted from the play into a commonplace book. The same can be said for many other lines spoken by Polonius that were cut from performance, including portions of his advice to Ophelia (1.3.121-135).

about the 1676 quarto is the implication that the printed page can both represent and mend the rift, and in the process become a meaningful site of exchange between the two modes of production” (392).


However, following this line of argument a problem emerges: if sententiae “testify not to individuality but to the commonplace,” how does Polonius’ frequent invoking of empty aphorisms reflect on his character? And how do these cuts reflect the revision of his character for Restoration audiences? In contradistinction to Polonius, the invoker of aphorisms, in Act 1 Scene 3, is a different Polonius, the backroom politician, who emerges in Act 2 Scene 1 as he is instructing Reynaldo to spread illicit rumors of Laertes while in Paris. Polonius’ lines here are certainly not sententiae, but the contrast to his earlier remarks is clear: Polonius is a two-faced politician who speaks empty words in public, while in private he is coldly manipulative. These lines, too, are marked for abridgment in Q1676 and constitute the single largest abridgment of contiguous lines in the play. In this version, Restoration audiences would have seen Act 2 commence with Polonius and Ophelia discussing Hamlet’s erratic behavior:

Pol. How now Ophelia, what’s the matter?
Oph. O my Lord, my Lord, I have been so affrighted,
Pol. With what?
Oph. My Lord, as I was reading in my closet, Lord Hamlet with his doublet all unbrac’d,
No hat upon his head, his stockins loose,
“Ungartered, and down gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous
As if he had been sent from hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me (Q1676, 2.1.78-89)

The duality of Polonius’ character rests on the contrast established by his interaction with Reynaldo at the beginning of Act 2. All told, of Polonius’ 343 lines of dialogue, 140 are abridged from performance. When Hamlet is abridged of the Reynaldo scene, and as well abridged of Polonius’ rambling aphorisms, the focus of the action shifts decidedly away
from Polonius and Laertes and toward Hamlet’s interactions with Ophelia and the King. In short, the earlier scenes of *Hamlet* were heavily abridged for performance until David Garrick revised and re-abridged the play in 1766. Garrick’s performance abridged about 1220 lines from performance, the majority of which were in the final act. \(^{40}\) Garrick felt that cuts to the first four acts deprived Hamlet of gravitas, while low-comedy moments like the gravediggers scene constituted a breach of decorum. As a result, Garrick restored many of the cuts made to the first four acts but cut heavily from the fifth act, a move that received mixed reviews in his own time and garnered virulent criticism in the decades following his death. \(^{41}\)

As was typical for abridgment during the eighteenth century, Davenant and Betterton relied largely on numerous minor cuts to the text in order to compress the action into an acceptable timeframe. Excisions numbering more than 10 contiguous lines are the exception, not the rule (figure 5). Spencer notes only “four cuts of more than thirty-five lines each.” \(^{42}\) While 11 or more contiguous lines marked for excision sum to 427 total lines marked in Q1676 *Hamlet*, 10 or fewer contiguous lines marked for excision sum to 467 lines marked for excision. \(^{43}\)

\(^{40}\) Evans, “Smock-Alley,” 4.

\(^{41}\) See George Winchester Stone, Jr., “Garrick’s long lost alteration of *Hamlet*,” *PMLA* 49 (Sept. 1934), 890–921


\(^{43}\) Spencer arrives at 894 total lines cut in Q1676, or roughly 49 more lines than Evans identifies.
So in cutting *Hamlet* to a more stageable length, Davenant relied primarily on small, individual cuts to the original text with only the occasional cut of ten or more consecutive lines of text.
But the example of Polonius’ brings up an especially important question: to what extent are the cuts designated in Q1676 to be trusted as accurate representation of Restoration stage practice? Both Lewis Theobald and Aaron Hill’s short-lived periodical, the *Prompter*, attest to seeing Polonius’ advice to Laertes performed on stage theatre even though the entire speech was marked for excision. Polonius’ advice to Ophelia quoted above presents an equally troubling problem. The *Prompter* quotes the lines as delivered in performance, yet the players’ quartos do not agree. First, the lines “Or (not to crack the Wind of the poor Phrase, / Wringing it thus)” are marked for excision beginning in the 1723 Hugh-Wilks players’ quarto and remained so in the 1734 text. Second, while it is possible that the author is referring to the lines as written in text as opposed to spoken on stage, the account as given re-orders the lines of text in a way that does not conform to any textual witness. The *Prompter* notes that the two-line punch line (“Affection!...Circumstance!”) comes “Immediately after” the preceding five lines. If we are to take the author of the *Prompter* essay at his word, then we have an eyewitness account of a 1735 performance of Hamlet that includes lines that the players’ quartos would have us believe to be abridged as well as lines re-ordered for performance.

These are not the only examples. Farley-Hills notes that it has long been thought that Hamlet’s advice to the players was regularly cut from performance until the 1718 Hugh-Wilks edition restored the lines. 44 Indeed, the entire paragraph is marked for excision in every players’ quarto published in Betterton’s lifetime, and the author of a

1718 pamphlet entitled *Some Cursory Remarks on the Play Call’d the Non-Jurors* notes that “I was surpriz’d, when I last saw [Hamlet], to hear Mr. Wilks (who’s the fittest Person in the World to give these Instructions) speak those Lines that ought never to have been omitted [sic].” The above quotation would lend some credence to the authenticity of the players’ quartos, but Farley-Hills observes that two other remarks contradict this narrative. Charles Gildon attests to Betterton’s performance of the lines in *Life of Betterton*, something that Farley-Hills contends would have been “extremely unlikely…if the play-going public knew that Betterton habitually omitted the scene in performance,” whereas Thomas Davies suggests in *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1784) that the lines were omitted *after* the death of Betterton and not revived until Garrick. Farley-Hills concludes that these contradictions indicate that Betterton may have acted these lines, but they were cut after his death in 1709 and not restored until 1718. Either way, the evidence directly contradicts evidence from the players’ quartos.

If we are to take eyewitness accounts seriously, then evidence also indicates that lines supposedly included in performance were in fact excised in the promptbooks. The *Prompter* essay quotes Polonius as saying to Ophelia that Hamlet is

Mad for thy Love—
This is the very Ecstacy of Love. (Farley-Hills 85)

Yet these lines are not adjacent in any extant text of *Hamlet*. My initial thought was that the m-dash following “Love” was acting as an ellipses, but if that were so then we might

expect it to consistently act as an ellipses. But this is not the case, the m-dash being used as a general replacement for punctuation or to indicate a line break. The presentation of these two lines as adjacent in the Prompter highly suggests that they were spoken in succession, which would indicate that lines 2.1.90 through 2.1.107 were abridged from performance despite the fact that every players’ quarto from Q1676 Hamlet to the 1734 Hugh-Wilks edition indicates that the missing lines were spoken in performance. These conflicting anecdotes only exacerbate the questionable accuracy of the Hamlet abridgements as performance texts as well as the ways in which those abridgments have been used by modern scholars as indications of some kind of standard stage practice.

Perhaps these abridgments, as well as the conflicting accounts of the abridgments, reaffirm that abridgments are a reflection of the ephemerality of performance rather than a confirmation of stage practices.

4.3 Reforming the London Stage

The Hamlet abridgements are broadly representative of the ways in which older main-pieces were reformed to meet the expectations of modern audiences while also compressing dialogue and action into a manageable stage time. Therefore, when theatregoers attended a performance of Hamlet, or Oroonoko for example, the performance represents one among many possibilities for theatrical abridgment, as alterations to dialogue and characters changed over time. In instances such as these, the theatre company was unlikely to print the version as it was abridged for the stage, or advertise the scope of the alterations in the playbill. In effect, plays such as Hamlet or
Oroonoko were advertised and performed as though they were unaltered from the original despite the fact that they were heavily censored.

Indeed, censorship was one of the primary motivations to abridge plays. The practice of theatrical censorship is predicated on the removal of lines from a play text in such a way that the performance itself is altered from the editio princeps of the playwright. Among the most telling examples can be found in the records of Master of Revels Sir Henry Herbert, who under Charles I and subsequently Charles II developed a reputation as an effective censor who diligently consolidated his control over public entertainment in and around London. As censor, Herbert regularly altered plays that he considered to be “full of dangerous matter” that might offend the sensibilities, or violate the moral and political norms, of seventeenth-century playgoers. This included, but was not limited to, “the elimination of oaths, banned from plays by a parliamentary statute of 1605.” For example, in Sir William Davenant’s The Wits (1634), Herbert deleted words and phrases like “sfaith,” “sdeath,” and “slight,” which, according to Bentley, were considered to be slang for profanities like “God’s faith,” “God’s death,” and “God’s light,” respectively. When the play text was returned with Herbert’s corrections, Davenant was insulted and sought assistance from his friend and patron, Endymion


48 Arthur F. White, “The Office of Revels and Dramatic Censorship During the Restoration Period,” Western Reserve University Bulletin 34 (1931), 5-45 (p. 6)

Porter, to intervene on his behalf.\footnote{Bentley, \textit{The Profession of Dramatist}, 185.} Porter took his complaint straight to Charles I, who summoned Herbert to his chamber on the morning of 9 January 1633/4. During this meeting, Herbert records that he and Charles I “went over all that I had croste in Davenants play-booke,” and “in the greater part [Charles I] allowed…my reformations.”\footnote{N.W. Bawcutt, \textit{The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), item 283.} The types of changes that Herbert made to \textit{The Wits} were largely representative of the changes he made to texts throughout his career. Herbert included extensive corrections to Walter Mountfort’s \textit{The Launching of the Mary, or the Seaman’s Honest Wife} (1632). N.W. Bawcutt characterized Herbert’s corrections as follows:

> Throughout the play several oaths were systematically deleted—‘fayth’ or ‘yfaith’, which were used frequently, and ‘troth’, ‘s’life’, and ‘by the Lord’, each of which was used once. A line referring to Christ (‘next to the sole redeemer of my soule’, line 657) was enclosed with lines by Herbert and marked with a cross, and then deleted during the revision.\footnote{Bawcutt, \textit{Control and Censorship}, 54.}

Herbert also heavily censored John Wilson’s \textit{The Cheats} (1662). As with Davenant’s \textit{The Wits}, Herbert cut every instance of the oath “Faith” (including “I faith,” “good faith,” and “by the faith”), instances of “troth,” as well as numerous other oaths, including “Lordsake,” “The Diuell take ‘em,” and “by this hand.”\footnote{Milton C. Nahm, ed., \textit{John Wilson’s The Cheats} (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1935), 126.} Milton C. Nahm, who edited the manuscript facsimile reprint of the play text, identifies a total of 44 instances of oath
excision and observes that the play was “extensively marked for alteration by Herbert.”

Moreover, oath excision in *The Cheats* was accompanied by significant cuts to entire scenes wherein the subject matter was considered scandalous for public performance. According to Matthew J. Kinservik, Herbert deleted numerous lines from Act 3 scene 5, “in which he exhorts his fellow non-conformists not to forget the ‘Good Old Cause’ of the Puritan revolution.” Kinservik goes on to note that Herbert “objected to the lines in Act 2, scene 3 in which Scruple reassures Mrs Whitebroth that ‘holy fornication’ is no sin, nor is abortion when obtained in an attempt to cover up ‘holy fornication’.”

Herbert was not only diligent in performing his duties but excelled at them to such an extent that some playwrights were able to anticipate his objections and reform their plays accordingly. Such was the case with James Shirley’s *The Young Admiral* (1633), which Herbert recorded as “being free from oaths, prophaness, or obsceanes, hath given mee much delight and satisfaction in the reading, and may serve for a patterne to other poets, not only for the bettring of maners and language, but for the improvement of the quality.” Despite Herbert’s previous disagreements with Sir William Davenant, the latter’s Restoration revival of *Hamlet* reflects the very kinds of changes that Herbert would have required for the play to be staged. Even though Herbert had lost the authority to license companies of actors following the Restoration of Charles II, he retained his right to license new plays and re-license older plays that had not been performed for

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54 Nahm, *John Wilson’s*, 126.


some time.\textsuperscript{57} So for Davenant’s Duke’s Company to stage a revival of \textit{Hamlet}, they would have had to cut the oaths and blasphemies from Shakespeare’s text. Indeed, Davenant’s 1676 edition of \textit{Hamlet} reflects Herbert’s style of censorship, with expurgations including the oaths “by heaven” and “for upon my life” in 1.1; “Fie on’t ah fie,” “Heaven and earth,” “O God!,” “in faith,” “For God’s love,” and “My Lord” in 1.2; “By heaven” in 1.4; “O God!” and two utterances of “by heaven” in 1.5; “i’th name of God?” in 2.1; “Well, God a mercy,” “how like a God!,” “pray God,” and “Fore God” in 2.2; two utterances of “God” in 3.1; “O God!,” “Faith,” “s’bloud,” “God blesse you sir,” and “By ‘th masse” in 3.2; “My Lord” in 3.3; “Your beaded haire like life in excrements” in 3.4; “God be at your table,” “God a mercy,” “all Christian soules,” “God buy you,” “Doe you this O God?,” and “commune” in 4.5; “God blesse,” “I Let him blesse thee too,” and “A shall sir an’t please him” in 4.6; “in good faith,” “God,” “By the Lord,” “Till the last trumpet,” “The Divell take thy soule,” “For love of God,” and “Swound” in 5.1; “A royall knavery,” “in good faith,” two utterances of “in faith” and “God” in 5.2. There may be additional instances of Davenant’s moral censorship, but needless to say his theatre company engaged in the practice, often without advertisement.

Censorship, while certainly corrective in moral and aesthetic terms, is also a targeted editorial action that identifies and deletes expressive hotspots, particularly controversial words and phrases, expressly to control moral or political messaging.\textsuperscript{58} At

\textsuperscript{57} See Herbert, \textit{The Dramatic Records} (1917), 20-21; 122.

\textsuperscript{58} In a similar vein, Kinservik refers to censorship as a “regulatory” tool: “The most important feature of the censorship was that instead of reacting to ‘unacceptable’ plays
times, moral censorship resulted in performance cuts that were so substantial that the narrative arc of the play was fundamentally altered. In instances such as these, it was not unusual for the playwright or theatre company to draw attention to the differences between the original and the abridged adaptation as a mode of social commentary. David Garrick’s *The Country Girl* (1765) is one notable example. Altered and abridged from William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), Garrick’s adaptation reformed the play into something more appropriate “for the increasingly prudish and good-hearted audiences that attended the playhouse during the second half of the eighteenth century.”

The role of the witty, irreverent, and sexually promiscuous Restoration rake, as personified by Horner and Harcourt in *The Country Wife*, had grown outdated by the mid-eighteenth century. Theatre companies and audiences alike gravitated toward more polite comedies that featured emerging-middle-class protagonists as representative of the moral and political underpinning of English society. To reform the play, Garrick replaces Horner, the debauched rake, with the polite and well-intentioned Belville. And rather than pursuing Margery and cuckold old Mr. Pinchwife, Belville politely courts Peggy, a new character who is only engaged to Mr. Moody. The scope of Garrick’s alterations are considerable, thus making *The Country Girl* as much an adaptation of Wycherley as it is an abridgment. “Tho’ near half of the following Play is new written, the Alterer claims that were already in performance, the law would prevent such plays from appearing in the first place.” See Matthew J. Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire: The Censorship of Satiric Comedy on the Eighteenth-Century London Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 11.

no Merit, but his Endeavour to clear one of our most celebrated Comedies from Immorality and Obscenity,” writes Garrick in the Advertisement. “He thought himself bound to preserve as much of the Original, as could be presented to an Audience of these Times without Offence.”60 Garrick goes on to suggest that the abridgment and alteration of The Country Wife into an entirely new performance is a project that is both beneficial to the English public as well as necessary to the preservation of English dramatic history. “There seems indeed an absolute Necessity for reforming many Plays of our most eminent Writers: For no kind of Wit ought to be received as an Excuse for Immorality…Without such a Reformation, our English Comedies must be reduced to a very small Number, and would pall by a too frequent Repetition” (A2v). From Garrick’s perspective, his abridgment and alteration of an older play is a public service and ultimately contributes to the longevity of Wycherley’s original on the stage by altering the premise of the comedy entirely. In the opening lines of The Country Wife, Horner’s role as a trickster figure is established in his conversation with Quack, an unethical doctor who under Horner’s direction has spread rumors across London that Horner is a eunuch. This pretended emasculation was carried out so that husbands will not fear leaving Horner alone with their wives:

Hor. A quack is as fit for a Pimp, as a Midwife for a Bawd; they are still but in their way, both / helpers of Nature. — [aside.] — Well, my dear Doctor, hast thou done what I desired.
Qu. I have undone you for ever with the Women, and reported you throughout the whole Town as bad as an Eunuch, with as much trouble as

60 David Garrick, The Country Girl (London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt; L. Davis and C. Reymers; and T. Davies, 1766), A1v. Further references will be given after quotations in the text.
if I had made you one in earnest.

Hor. But have you told all the Midwives you know, the Orange Wenches at the Playhouses, the City Husbands, and old Fumbling Keepers of this end of the Town, for they'll be the readiest to report it.

Qu. I have told all the Chamber-maids, Waiting women, Tyre women, and Old women of my acquaintance; nay, and whisper'd it as a secret to'em, and to the Whisperers of Whitehal; so that you need not doubt 'twill spread, and you will be as odious to the handsome young Women, as —

Hor. As the small Pox. —Well—

Qu. And to the married Women of this end of the Town, as —

Hor. As the great ones; nay, as their own Husbands.61

From the outset, Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* is framed as a narrative of sexual conquest and cuckoldry. The shock factor of Horner’s daring scheme propels the narrative from one outlandish situation to another, with the climax of the plot coming to a head in Act 4, Scene 3, where Lady Fidget takes revenge against her husband, Sir Jaspar. Feigning interest in Horner’s collection of rare china, Lady Fidget pretends to accidentally lock herself in the china closet. After failing to gain entry through the front door, Horner laments that he has no choice but to “get into her the back way”:

*Hor.* Nay, though you laugh now, 'twill be my turn e're long: Oh women, more impertinent, more cunning, and more mischievous than their Monkeys, and to me almost as ugly—now is she throwing my things about, and rifling all I have, but I'll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it—

*Sir Jas.* Hah, ha, ha, poor angry Horner.

*Hor.* Stay here a little, I'll ferret her out to you presently, I warrant. [Exit Horner at t'other door.

*Sir Jas.* Wife, my Lady Fidget, Wife, he is coming into you the back way. [Sir Jaspar calls through the door to his Wife, she answers from within.

*La. Fid.* Let him come, and welcome, which way he will. (68)

Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* is an unapologetic glamorization of the rake lifestyle. By contrast, Garrick’s *The Country Girl* establishes a very different premise in the opening lines, with Harcourt, now Beville’s uncle, offering some advice to his nephew who is hopelessly in love:

_Harc._ Ha, ha, ha! and so you are in love, nephew, not reasonably and gallantly, as a young gentleman ought, but sighingly, miserably so—not content to be ankle-deep, you have sous’d over head and ears—ha, Dick? [...]  
_Belv._ Don’t laugh at me, uncle; I am foolish, I know; but, like other fools, I deserve to be pitied.  
_Harc._ Prithée don’t talk of pity; how can I help you? —for this country girl of yours is certainly married.  
_Belv._ No, no, —I won’t believe it; she is not married, nor she shan’t, if I can help it.  
_Harc._ Well said, modesty; —with such a spirit you can help yourself, Dick, without my assistance.  
_Belv._ But you must encourage, and advise me too, or I shall never make any thing of it.  
_Harc._ Provided the girl is not married; for I never, never encourage young men to covet their neighbors wives.  
_Belv._ My heart assures me, that she is not married. (1-2)

The plot of Garrick’s *The Country Girl* is propelled not by an outlandish scheme of sexual conquest but rather by two young, sympathetic lovers attempting to overcome the social and political obstacles preventing them from realizing love for one another. As a result, all of Wycherley’s scenes that include Horner’s sexual promiscuity are cut from the play. In Act 4, *The Country Girl* does not culminate with a cuckoldry scene, which was abridged from the text, but rather with the previous scene, where Mr. Moody (Mr. Pinchwife) threatens physical violence against Peggy (Margery) unless she pens a letter to Belville (Horner) calling off their relationship:
Moody. Once more write as I’d have you, and question it not, or I will spoil your writing with this; I will stab out those eyes that cause my mischief. (53-54)

And rather than Pinchwife confronting Horner about his cuckolding immediately after Horner has “entered the back way” to Mrs. Fidget, Moody confronts Belville while he is alone at his lodging, trying to figure out how to overcome the obstacles preventing his love for Peggy.

Abridgments contributed to the moral reformation of the English stage by providing theatre companies and playwrights the opportunity to revive older plays, capitalizing on the popular appeal while aligning performances more closely with the prevailing moral politics of the audience. In The Country Girl, for example, Garrick’s abridgments appear to be motivated as much by moral politics as they were by reforming gender expectations to reflect Georgian England politics of patriarchy and domesticity. We can find a similar dynamic at play in Catherine and Petruchio (1756), a three-act afterpiece that Garrick abridged from Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew. Garrick’s abridgment proved incredibly popular: with over 230 performances between its debut in 1754 and the end of the eighteenth century, Catherine and Petruchio held the stage until the late nineteenth century, when Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew was revived.62 Compared to Wycherley’s The Country Wife, the The Taming of the Shrew is a relatively clean play, containing little if anything that would have been considered particularly vulgar, scandalous, or otherwise unstageable; nevertheless, Garrick abridged the play to include

only the courtship scenes featuring Catherine and Petruchio. Garrick cut the Induction with Christopher Sly, the Bianca subplot, and along with it the roles of the suitors, retaining only Hortensio, who is introduced as “new-Married” to Bianca.63

In condensing The Taming of the Shrew into a three-act afterpiece, however, Garrick largely retains Shakespeare’s original text, adding fewer than 100 lines of new dialogue, most of which reforms Petruchio’s character from an opportunistic gold-digger to “a model member of the bourgeoisie—a good business manager who, having made sure that his accounts were in order, goes in search of domestic happiness,” as Marsden frames it.64 The afterpiece opens with Petruchio negotiating with Baptista the terms of his courtship with Catherine, and with only minor variations to Shakespeare’s text. “Antonio, my Father, is deceased,” begins Petruchio:

\[
\text{Left soley Heir to all his Lands and Goods,} \\
\text{Which I have better’d, rather than decreas’d.} \\
\text{And I have thrust myself into the World,} \\
\text{Haply to wive and thrive as best I may (2)}
\]

No longer the wandering adventurer who is driven by “Such wind as scatters young men through the world / To seek their fortunes farther than at home,” as quoted from Shakespeare’s text, Garrick’s reformed Petruchio has left his home in search of a companion with whom he can build a family that will become heirs to his fortune, just as he was heir to his father. The first act goes on to introduce Catherine and set the stage for her marriage to Petruchio, which occurs at the beginning of Act 2.


64 Marsden, The Re-imagined Text, 81.
In reframing the narrative entirely around the courtship of Catherine and Petruchio, Garrick cut hundreds of lines from the first two acts. He cut all of Act 1 Scene 1, roughly 260 lines, as well as over 100 lines from Act 1 Scene 2, and in doing so dispensed with the courtship rivalry for Bianca. But Garrick also cut the first 100 lines from Act 2 Scene 1, which offered glimpse into the family life of Catherine, Bianca, and Baptista. These abridgments not only reframe the narrative and reduce the number of characters, but they also has the effect of isolating Catherine: gone are the initial scenes of Catherine sparring with Bianca’s suitors, or speaking privately with her sister. In Shakespeare’s text the fortunes of the two sisters are tied, and Bianca depends, at least initially, on Petruchio’s successful courtship of Katherine to realize her own. Shakespeare’s Katherine is introduced separately from Petruchio, and thus her development of a character, and her “taming” by Petruchio, is more independent, complexed and nuanced. In cutting all that, Garrick’s Catherine develops as a character only insofar as her relation to Petruchio will allow. In other words, Catherine’s “taming” begins before she even walks onto stage.

Playwrights turned to abridgment as an adaptive means to reform older plays for new audiences in much the same way, and with many of the same motivations, as was common for prose fiction abridgments. Ultimately, Garrick’s *Catherine and Petruchio* reformed the gender politics of the main characters, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the closing lines of the play. Katherine’s 40-line speech at the end of Act 5 Scene 2 in Shakespeare’s text is cut significantly, with some portions re-assigned to Petruchio. Garrick revised the final scene as a rebuke to Bianca, who advises her sister not to submit entirely to Petruchio’s authority:
Was ever Woman’s Spirit broke so soon!
What is the matter, Kate? hold up thy Head,
Nor lose our Sex’s best Prerogative,
To wish and have our Will. (53)

To which Petruchio replies:

Peace, Brawler, Peace,
Or I will give the meek Hortensio,
Your Husband, there, my taming Recipe
[…]
Catharine, I charge thee tell this headstrong Woman,
What Duty ‘tis she owes her Lord and Husband. (53-54)

To which Catherine replies with the first 19 lines of her closing speech, with Petruchio at times interrupting to reaffirm what she has just said. While Garrick’s Petruchio appears even more over-bearing than Shakespeare’s, Garrick included 8 new lines of dialogue to, in effect, reform Petruchio’s harsh character before the end of the play:

My Fortune is sufficient. Here’s my Wealth:
Kiss me, my Kate; and since thou art become
So prudent, kind, and dutiful a Wife,
Petruchio here shall doff the lordly Husband;
An honest Mask, which I throw off with Pleasure.
Far hence all Rudeness, Wilfulness, and Noise,
And be our future Lives one gentle Stream
Of mutual Love, Compliance and Regard. (56)

Petruchio reaffirms his love for Catherine, and in doing so projects a model of companionship based upon mutual affection, love, and support between the spouses.65

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Throughout the long eighteenth century, playwrights and theatre companies regularly abridged plays for performance. While the abridgments may have ebbed and

flowed over time, the motivations for abridging plays for performance was typically
driven by a desire to align the play more closely with the ever-changing expectations of
the audience. As these expectations changed, theatres would abridge plays accordingly,
all the while advertising a performance as though it were the original, so as to capitalize
on the popular appeal.
CONCLUSION

By the final decades of the eighteenth century, book abridgment had become a mainstay of the English publishing industry. This was due in no small part to the precedent established by *Gyles v. Wilcox* (1741), in which Lord Chancellor Hardwicke granted abridgments a right to copy, for “abridgments may with great propriety be called a new book, because … the invention, learning and judgment of the author is shewn in them.”¹ As Hardwicke’s ruling was upheld in *Doddsley v. Kinnersley* (1761), and again in *Strahan v. Newbery* (1774), thousands of abridgments were published, thereby establishing a vibrant marketplace for readers that spanned social class.² It is during this time that we begin to see the emergence of abridgments for children and young adults, as well as chapbook abridgments of novels such as *Moll Flanders*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, and *Pamela*, all of which were frequently adapted into third-person narratives. Some publishers, such as the Newberys and the Kearsleys, based their business model on


abridgments designed for juvenile readers.\textsuperscript{3} And in doing so, they laid the foundation for a children’s publishing empire that stretched into the nineteenth century.

Under the precedents established by \textit{Gyles, Dodsley,} and \textit{Strahan}, abridgments were more likely to be ruled as “fair,” and thus legal, so long as the text exhibited significant alterations in the form of cutting, summarizing, rephrasing, and, in some cases, adaptation of plot by excluding characters and changing the narrative perspective. At the same time, authors and publishers strived for abridgments that maintained some fidelity to the design and purpose of the original. So it was under these near-contradictory standards that many abridgers practiced and thrived. This historical reality has proved especially problematic for modern scholars. After all, the first-person narrative perspective of \textit{Moll Flanders} and \textit{Gulliver’s Travels,} as well as the first-person epistolary narrative of \textit{Pamela}, are vital our understanding of the history of the novel. The first-person is what allowed these texts to exhibit a psychological complexity that was so unusual and, to modern scholars, so exciting. So what happens when these novels lose the first person and are transformed into something else? According to Leah Price, the change in perspective is what sets abridgments apart from capital-L Literature in the history of canon formation. Price wrongfully pits abridgments and anthologies in contrast to one another, framing the latter as an act of preservation central to canon formation, and the former as an act of literary vandalism: “Where anthologies salvaged lyric beauties

and moral truths from their dispensable narrative frame, abridgments degraded their raw materials by reducing all literary forms to the lowest common denominator of impersonal retrospective prose narration.4 Price’s unfair comparison between anthologies and abridgments largely reflects the contrasts between artistic and popular authorship as defined by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production*. Bourdieu suggests that within the “literary field” popularity and artistry are at odds, with the book sales and broad audience appeal of the former pitted against prestige and invention.5 Although Bourdieu’s analysis focused on nineteenth-century French print culture, the theoretical implications of his study can be more broadly applied to popular literature and book abridgment in eighteenth-century England. Anthologies, as Price suggests, were instrumental in the creation of the literary canon precisely because the figure of the editor as a cultural gatekeeper vetted the materials within for inclusion. By maintaining the original voice of the author, the anthology becomes a legitimate form of re-publication because it is engaged in the high artistry of literary production and consumption, as defined by Bourdieu. Conversely, from Price’s perspective, abridgments neither preserve the original nor make any claims to do so during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, Price’s characterization of abridgments as “degraded” fails to account for abridgments of texts other than novels, many of which not only preserved the language of the original but were also instrumental in the formation of the canon. One

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need look no further than the many dozens of abridgments of Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1771) to see that abridgments were valued as vehicles for higher learning.\(^6\) The same holds true for Wynne’s *Abridgment of Mr. Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1696), as well as William Sellon’s *An Abridgement of the Holy Scriptures* (1781), both of which continued to be reprinted in new editions throughout the latter half of the century.\(^7\) Indeed, there is no shortage of examples to demonstrate that the history of book abridgment is much more varied and complicated than Price’s argument assumes. And while it is true that some abridgments published during this period altered the most renowned novels of the eighteenth century almost beyond recognition, alteration was vital to canon formation. Samuel Johnson’s call for novelists to “select objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind, those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employ’d,” was, to some extent, realized within novel abridgments, which frequently altered and omitted the “wickedness” and “temptation” that so worried Dr. Johnson.\(^8\) Novels that may have been considered too scandalous for young readers were reformed through abridgment, thereby allowing popular narratives to reach new audiences. This was certainly the case with Henry Fielding’s *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Comprised of 18 books and some 350,000 words, *Tom Jones* is a massive work of literature, but what was perhaps more problematic for young readers


\(^8\) Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* no. 4 (31 March 1750).
was Fielding’s morally ambiguous depiction of Tom Jones, who is not only sexually promiscuous but also ambivalent to the rule of law. Francis Newbery’s popular abridgment of *Tom Jones* reframes Tom’s troubling mischiefs are reframed as an innocent yet exuberant youth, and the emphasis of the narrative focuses on Tom’s victimization at the hands of Blifil’s jealous character. Newbery’s abridgment goes out of its way to emphasize Tom’s character attributes that were an example to younger readers. “In order to shew the propriety of Tom's conduct on this occasion,” reads the abridgment, “it may be necessary to mention some circumstances previous to it” (29). As was the case with abridgments of *Hamlet* discussed in the previous chapter, Newbery set about to reform Jones and make his conduct suitable for a new audience. The narrative dismisses entirely the characters of Molly and Square, and in doing so cuts some of Fielding’s bawdiest scenes that would have been problematic for young readers. There is certainly an argument to be made that abridgments did not so much “degrade” novels, as Price suggests, but rather reformed novels to make them morally palatable for a younger audience.

Abridging old novels into new novels was how the Newberys ran their publishing business. Abridgments of *Gulliver’s Travels* published by Francis Newbery revised the narrative into third-person perspective and, in doing so, cleaned the narrative of Swift’s

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The narrative is limited to Gulliver’s adventures in Lilliput and Brobdignag, thus alleviating young readers of the morally ambiguous representations of modern society featured in Gulliver’s third and fourth adventures to Laputa and the Land of the Houyhnhnms. Indeed, when Gulliver’s voyages are limited to only those two instances when he was shipwrecked and marooned, then Swift’s satire of Defoe starts to look awfully similar in a number of ways. In the end, Gulliver returns home and is embraced by his loving wife and children, much like that other famous adventurer, Robinson Crusoe. Indeed, much like his seafaring friend, Gulliver lives happily ever after. This may not be the Gulliver that modern scholars are familiar with, but for many British readers, especially the younger ones who were just beginning to embark upon novel reading, this Gulliver may be the only one they would ever know. Of the Gulliver abridgments published prior to 1801, the vast majority limited the narrative to only the first two books, and we can see the impact of this decision into the present day. The vast majority of Gulliver abridgments include only the first or first and second voyages. The first film adaptation of Gulliver’s Travels, a 1939 animated feature distributed by Paramount and directed by Dave Fleischer, is based upon only the first voyage to Lilliput. Another film adaptation in 1960, distributed by Columbia and directed by Jack Sher, is based upon both voyages to Lilliput and Brobdignag. Another film adaptation in 1977 is based on only the first voyage. And most recently, the 2010 film adaptation starring Jack Black, is based upon only the first voyage. Indeed, the only recent film adaptation to

preserve all four voyages is the 1996 two-part miniseries starring Ted Danson as Gulliver. Indeed, it seems to me that experiencing *Gulliver’s Travels* as Swift wrote it appears to be something of an exception. When the emphasis falls on the first and second voyages, when we lose Laputa and Lagado and Japan, and thus also Gulliver’s slow descent into madness and despair, when all of these things are cut from the narrative, we not only lose Swift’s sharpest cultural critiques but also the starkest contrasts between Gulliver and the prototypical seafaring hero archetype found in *Robinson Crusoe*. The abridgments make Gulliver more like Crusoe, and thus more broadly acceptable to a general readership.

The types of alterations found in the *Gulliver* abridgments are representative of those found in other novel abridgments, especially those published by the Newbery, Snagg, and others. John Newbery and his successors published several dozen abridgments during the final decades of the eighteenth century, including abridgments of *Sir Charles Grandison* (1768), *Joseph Andrews* (1769), *Tom Jones* (1769), *Pamela* (1769), *Gil Blas* (1772), *Gulliver’s Travels* (1776), *Don Quixote* (1778), *Clarissa* (1780), and *Robinson Crusoe* (1789), all of which with (one exception) were reprinted in multiple editions. These books were clearly popular. The text from these abridgments was pirated by publishers across the British Empire and North America, amounting to hundreds of editions printed out of dozens of cities. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, England was a land of abridgments. Abridgment, quite literally, was everywhere. Abridgment could be found in plays, chapbooks, novels, histories, philosophy, and in
law. Abridgment was common in letter writing and public speaking. And for the vast majority of readers, there was no distinction between original and abridgment.
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