

From a Record of Death to a Memory of Life:
The Rise of the Biographical Obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine*

Introduction

Early modern English print culture sprawled as broadly as the urban centers that gave rise to it. The swelling population of London expanded the physical boundaries of the city and diversified the reading audience. Stationers and pirates, booksellers and mercuries scrambled to sate new readers' hunger for the printed word, hawking it in the bookshops of Fleet Street, beside the brothels on Grub Street, and from the bookstalls in St. Paul's Churchyard. It was a vigorous symbiosis. The advent of new forms calculated to suit specific audiences—the news-sheets of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in particular—evinces this reader-text dynamic. News-sheets appealed to political parties and responded both to the events of the time and to each other. They were a subtle blend of propaganda and fact, rife with mis- and disinformation. Credibility, consequently, was as much a commodity to the printer as were the texts sold in London book districts.

St. John's Gate challenged the disorder of news and print with its first issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731. In founding *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Edward Cave capitalized on the chaos of print culture and value of credibility. Culling from the wide array of news-sheets and journals available, he established a new print form—the magazine. The earliest issues of *The Gentleman's Magazine* comprised daily and weekly periodicals and serials. In fact a reminder of the word's origin, “a storehouse for goods or merchandise” (*OED*), underscores the ways in which the magazine functioned as a mercantile metaphor. More than a simple attempt to collect information, however, *The Gentleman's Magazine* applied a manageable order to the variety by organizing information under general headings. Different internal forms evolved and gradually stabilized during the course of publication, undoubtedly due in part to the enduring editorial persona, Sylvanus Urbanus, who outlived Cave's own tenure as editor and printer. The success of Cave's endeavor, the magazine, resonated through almost two hundred years of monthly publications, annual supplements, and reprints. It outlasted a slew of imitators, *The London Magazine*, *The Bee*, *The Weekly Amusement* and *The Country Magazine* for instance, that briefly flourished and ultimately failed.

The Gentleman's Magazine, which began as a temporal document of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a record of advertisements and notices, survives as a timeless record of London's cultural landscape. Given both the long life of the magazine and its breadth of topics, research into *The Gentleman's Magazine* has traditionally required selectivity. Most studies focus either on the content of *The Gentleman's Magazine* as a gauge of its contemporary political, literary, and scientific movements—its niche is, as C. Lennart Carlson argues in his seminal study, the “historic-political serial”—or on attributing authorship as a base for future discussions of the magazine (Carlson 32). The interaction between the network of readers as well as between audience and text was a hallmark of the magazine's success.

Less research has examined the evolution of forms during *The Gentleman's Magazine's* print run and their relationship to contributors and casual readers. My thesis, then, will focus on the evolution of one of the magazine's component forms, the obituary. At the outset, the obituary was little more than a line of text, a death notice. Within a hundred years of the magazine's inception, however, the death notice had grown into a full obituary that, while more a form familiar to modern readers, much more biographical and inclusive. My research will document

the rise of the obituary form in *The Gentleman's Magazine* with a focus on examining the reasons for its evolution, the function of the form, and the interaction between text and audience.

I hope to demonstrate that the evolution of the death notice into the obituary was due to the rising popularity of the biography form in the eighteenth century. The later biographical obituary exhibits the traits outlined for biography by Samuel Johnson in his essays and exemplified in his biographies. During Johnson's tenure as contributor and editor, *The Gentleman's Magazine* published his early biographical writing. It was, however, removed in purpose and format for the contemporaneous death notices. When John Nichols took over editorship of the magazine, his policy united what had, since Johnson's affiliation with the magazine, become standard biographical practice with the established form of the death notice, yielding the biographical obituary.

Similarly, I hope to demonstrate some of the ways that audience and text responded to one another. I will argue that the representation of people in death notices and obituaries was ultimately an editorial decision, and consequently the evolution of the biographical obituary indicates shifts in editorial policy that speak to audience needs and desires. The evolution is evident in a surface treatment of the terms. The brief objectivity of earlier death notices gave way to value judgments about the deceased. This shift toward subjectivity, that is, toward a biographical particularity closely linked to moral values, reflects an increase in contributor-written obituaries. Unlike the early notices, these obituaries were the recollections of friends or family. The plain, Saxon diction of the earlier phrasing, "death notice," gives way to the more urbane, Latinate "obituary." The Latinate term has little semantic difference from the Saxon. It derives from the Medieval Latin *obituaries*, a compound word literally meaning "a place for death" (*OED*). The place an obituary provided was essentially a record or a notice. Beyond these synonymous denotations, however, are connotations that carry the cultural baggage which mark the shift from the function and form of the death notice and the obituary.

I also want to explore the ways the function of the biographical obituary evolved. Initially the form served an ostensibly commercial purpose. The inclusion of a death notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine* fulfilled the aim announced in its subtitle, *The Monthly Intelligencer*: it enabled creditors and financiers to make claims against outstanding debts. The brevity allowed businessmen a succinct yet thorough overview. Later biographical obituaries, which were often authored by surviving friends or family, served a memorial function, fleshing out the skeletal outline of a death notice. Obituaries hinted at the social networks operating throughout the audience of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Its anonymous contributors were often among the persons whose lives were recorded. I hope to categorize the social function of these longer biographies as class markers indicative of the social networks depicted by *The Gentleman's Magazine* by historicizing them in the public context the magazine provided.

Methodology

In order to examine the evolution of the death notice into a biographical obituary and to consider its implications for the society at large, I will begin with a study of the magazine, the biography, and the obituary in order to create a baseline for interpretation. In considering the magazine as a form, I will examine the reasons for its success, giving specific attention to the ways it overcame the failures typical of similar print forms and imitators. Such a methodology will consider some trends that coincide with and reflect patterns relevant to the form's evolution and will establish particular aspects of the changing demographic profile of the public in which

public characters demonstrated the several kinds of distinction deemed worthy of being recorded in an obituary. Simply put, this will be an examination of who was represented, giving careful consideration to how they were represented and why they were chosen to be represented in a public medium.

To provide concrete data as a basis for my discussion of the biographical obituary form, I plan to sample *The Gentleman's Magazine* at five-year intervals from 1731-1831. I will focus on the January and December issues of each sample: January recaps the previous year and introduces *The Gentleman's Magazine* goals for the coming year; December closes the year and includes "The Supplement" and the "Index." My focus, however, will be specifically on the obituaries for those months, instead of the front and back matter. In order to compare the function of the death notice versus that of the biographical obituary, I will examine qualitative differences between the two, with extensive attention to particular representative examples. I also intend to interpret data from both in the following categories:

- The number of deaths listed in the "Bill of Mortality" versus the number of death notices and obituaries included;
- The age breakdown, comprising under 2 years old, between 2-5, 5-10 and in 10-year increments from 10-100;
- The average number of lines per obituary notice;
- The number of men versus the number of women.

These categories will allow me to comment on the evolution of the biographical obituary form, how it serves as a social marker, and what it represents about society in the span from 1731-1831. In particular, these data points will enable a discussions of trends in understanding gender. To treat this broad span, I will discuss these evolutions in the context of two major editorial eras: Edward Cave's (with some attention to Samuel Johnson's contributions) and John Nichols', and I will give particular attention to specific examples to determine not only how this evolution of the form reflected shifting editorial policy but also varying social norms. I will determine the ways in which private lives could be represented publically in a way that reveals prevailing notions of public character.

Habermas's Public Sphere: The Drawbacks of Generality

In the past twenty years, scholars of eighteenth-century coffee-house culture and the rise of periodical and magazine publications have had to reckon with the theory of the public sphere that Jürgen Habermas advances in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*¹ as a possible methodology for understanding eighteenth-century journalism. The sociocultural model is built both on an idea that resonates with eighteenth-century periodical and textual scholarship—that the press was the vehicle for social change in the eighteenth century—but also on a sociological approach that is problematic because of its tendency to generalize. Essentially, Habermas's model presents the formation and emergence of a middle-class public sphere as a space for the public interaction of private men, that is, males at the head of familial and commercial private spheres. The public sphere, for Habermas, was a construct situated within printed and physical institutions, the coffee-house and

¹This is a surprisingly recent trend in eighteenth-century periodical scholarship. Habermas's work was originally published in 1962 as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, but as Thomas Burger, the English translator notes, "[t]here was no good reason why *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, one of Habermas's most influential and widely translated works, should not have appeared in English sooner," before its translation in 1989 (Habermas xi).

the press, in which these private men could participate in critical-rational discussions of art and letters, of business and politics (32). It is a self-regulating and self-defining construct. Three primary traits define the function of the sphere for Habermas: first, the critical-rational debate occurred exclusive of status; also, it allowed the private men of the public sphere to question areas that had previously been off-limits; finally, the sphere served to define itself through the participation and communication of the private men (36-7). Habermas points to *The Gentleman's Magazine* as proof of this function, that "the press was for the first time a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate" (60).

This model seems to have some application in discussing *The Gentleman's Magazine*; portions of it were designed to represent an on-going political debate,² and much of the magazine comes from the contributions of magazine correspondents.³ In both its form and function, *The Gentleman's Magazine* seems emblematic of the Habermasian model. Reading the magazine through this model, however, is as dangerous as reading the social and cultural developments of the eighteenth century through the theory: each reading generalizes to an extreme that misrepresents the historicity of either the magazine or its overarching cultural context. In her treatment of public opinion and the press in eighteenth-century England, Hannah Barker warns that, at best, "[o]ne can identify social developments which appear to fit into Habermas's model in most countries in eighteenth-century Europe, but historians should be wary of accepting his vision of the emergence of the public sphere as a generalized European concept" (180). More specifically, Thomas Keymer argues that Habermas's fashioning of the public sphere and its evolution is too easy. In his introduction to a recent facsimile edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, he argues that Habermas's public sphere is a "neatly evolutionary model of development" which offers a "coherence and alertness of early eighteenth-century civic culture" that is unrepresentative of the messiness inherent in rise of the middle class (Keymer xii).

It is under the death notice and obituary headings that the clutter of the larger culture becomes evident and that Habermas's model becomes unsuitable as a means for making sense of it. The obituaries and death notices depict a range of people far beyond the reach of Habermas's public. Many of the deceased were neither the heads of a family nor a commercial enterprise; they were not the private people whose discussion created a public sphere. Instead, wives could appear next to bachelors, a "comedian" next to "the "comptroller of customs," and a marchioness next to a reverend (*GM XXX*, January 1760, 46-47). It is a bigger social picture than Habermas's sphere allows. Divested of its constituent parts, its private men, the public sphere can have no public, critical-rational debate. The death notices and obituaries stand mute; they act as static representations of cultural trends rather than responses in a Habermasian dialogue.

Sylvanus Urbanus: A Model for Public Character

A better way to discuss representation in the magazine might be in the terms the magazine itself provided. From the outset, Edward Cave instituted a presence in the magazine that remained strong as the magazine form flourished. He instituted a persona, the very public

² As a means of presenting both the Tory and Whig perspectives, for instance, Edward Cave first experimented with a two-column layout in the June 1731 issue, presenting each opposing stance in adjacent columns on the same page (Carlson 56).

³ In fact, they often contained the bulk of it. The eminent *Gentleman's Magazine* scholar James Kuist asserts that "the grounds on which . . . [the magazine] maintained its strength after 1750 were the intimacy and plenitude with which it represented the mind of its audience since it published the work emanating from that audience itself" ("Collaboration" 302).

“Sylvanus Urbanus, Gent.” whose name and identity were affixed to the front page with the image of St. John’s Gate where *The Gentleman’s Magazine* was published. This persona was nothing new to the eighteenth-century serial and is remarkable for outliving all other periodical personae, who thrived for a few years and died with their publications. Despite their short lifespan, these personae were crucial to the “success or failure of the journalistic venture” as their public characters (Spector 109). Such personae required consistency, which was maintained through the regular publication of the serial, and an engaging character (Bond 114). In the literary periodical, the notion of the persona also takes into consideration the reader, who must be able to return comfortably to the periodical after a brief interruption or after a few missed issues (Bond 113). These personae lent their character to the publication. To *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, the persona of Sylvanus Urbanus suggested the breadth of character that the magazine would publically represent. Richard Steele’s *Tatler* “became the first essay journal to use in a subtle and substantial way the device of assumed author-editorship” (Bond 113). Addison and Steele’s Mr. Spectator or Johnson’s Rambler were the namesake foci of their literary periodical form, the Spectator who sits back to observe privately and then to comment publically on social graces and aesthetics or, similarly, the Rambler who topics follow the rambling pattern of his mind to examine morals. As individuals, their character establishes the thematic identity of the publication. Unlike the array of topics covered in the magazine, the observations of such distinct commentators comprised the entire content of the literary periodical. Not only was the public temperament observed but also, purportedly, codified. Sylvanus Urbanus is a remote cousin to such eighteenth-century periodical personae. Where the Spectator and Rambler project their remarks out of their retirement from society, Sylvanus Urbanus almost silently stands in a space meant to represent society. While the Spectator lingers in the corner of the coffee-house, Sylvanus Urbanus appears sporadically amid the news, the correspondence, just after the prices of stocks, and in the obituaries.

In its purest form, the idea behind the magazine precluded the personal, editorial commentary specific to the literary periodical. Cave’s *The Gentleman’s Magazine* was to be a convenient rehashing of previously published pieces. In such a form, commentary might have seemed intrusive. One of the magazine form’s innovations is the application of a persona to blend personality and news unlike other serials before it, thereby maintaining some air of objectivity while allowing separate space for opinion that did not impinge on the news. By creating the persona of Sylvanus Urbanus, however, Cave imbued the magazine with a particular capacity for meta-commentary. Indeed, the name Sylvanus Urbanus seems like a *nom de plume* recalling Cave’s own varied experiences as an editor of a provincial paper, an association with the country Sylvanus, and as a news distributor while employed by the London Post Office, a correlation to the metropolitan Urbanus (Carlson 11). It might be a personal joke or, more likely, a nod at his own credentials as a public character himself, an editor with the network from town to country, from the provinces to the court, capable of undertaking an attempt to store up newspaper information in a magazine. Much like the persona of a literary periodical, Sylvanus Urbanus can call his successes to readers’ attention as easily as he can “confide his editorial vexations. This function of editor is not so prominent as that of writer, but it is there and it is part of the business of the literary eidolon. The full persona furnishes the essential unity, the indispensable continuity to the publication” (Bond 114). The image of Sylvanus Urbanus is the picture of a editor or proprietor very much concerned with the success of his literary endeavor, and he continued to live past his creator. Nichols, as editor, was addressing letters to Sylvanus

Urbanus in the early nineteenth century, almost a hundred years after the institution of this persona for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

The infrequency with which Sylvanus Urbanus addresses his readers suggests a balance between news and commentary that favored the news. His public presence neither superintended public arguments nor acted as a *vox populi* or the readership. After all, like Isaac Bickerstaff, the persona of Steele's *Tatler*, the persona of Sylvanus Urbanus "would have been difficult to create . . . a man of the proper age, social status, temperament, education, intellectual agility, and individuality . . . who would have been fully and precisely qualified to present the broad range of topic" that the *Gentleman's Magazine* presented (Bond 113). Sylvanus Urbanus, however, was a persona whose very name suggested the ability to present an array of information to a variety of readers by bridging the gap between country and city. This is not to suggest that, in grounding his publication in town and country, Cave sought either to generalize or to isolate every facet of the populace; at best, he could hope to cater to the attributes of his audience and publishing networks and, in the process, expand both. Sylvanus Urbanus was a gentleman, a centralized public stand in for the readers of the magazine.

As a persona, he promised to represent the interests of the old, landed gentry, the country squires and gentlemen in their ancestral estates, as well as the rectors and curates and the members of their provincial parishes. Such a promise included the implicit suggestion that *The Gentleman's Magazine* could appeal to country politics, most likely the Tories of a more traditional political bent. The representation also promised equal appeal to progressive Whigs and their typical representatives, the swelling merchant class of London, the inhabitants of city where the magazine was published. They accounted presumably for the largest portion of the audience, at least initially in the magazine's publication. For both groups, but especially the merchant class, the magazine was a commercial endeavor that enabled their commercial endeavors. This commodification of news is no where more evident, perhaps, in the regular, apolitical features that closed the magazine every month such as the "Death Notices," "The Prices of Goods and Stocks," and the "Bill of Mortality." *The Gentleman's Magazine* promised benefit to this increasingly wealthy class, a benefit underscored by the magazine's subtitle, *The Monthly Intelligencer*. Cave was working toward capturing a city audience and the "many persons of culture and education resident in the country, persons who would appreciate the completeness with which the magazine provided authentic reports from London" (Carlson 60).

Cave seems to have been considering how his personal factors could affect the success of the new magazine form. Unlike Defoe's creation, Mr. Review, whom Defoe used "as a pale spokesperson for himself" (Bond 113), Sylvanus Urbanus was not an alter-ego for Cave. By dissociating his magazine from a particular party affiliation, Cave was perhaps downplaying his earlier printing experience, which had been characterized by Tory-sympathies. Nichols notes that Cave's first printing and journalistic experience in London was with "Mr. Barber, a man much distinguished and employed by the Tories, whose principles had . . . much prevalence with Cave" (4). His appointment at the London Post Office would have likely been indicative of Whig tendencies, as governmental positions were presumably more easily procured for people sympathetic to the ruling party. In the early 1700's, when Cave returned to London from his provincial editing experience, Walpole was at the height of his power. Cave, then, was able to appeal to both parties as fluidly as he had navigated his own mixed political past. His creation and use of Sylvanus Urbanus was a means of depersonalizing his publication in order to give it a bipartisan public character, whereby he could double the readership he would have if he ascribed to one side.

Sixteen years after the inception of the magazine form, in 1746, Cave comments in his “Preface” on the circulation of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. In a metaphor befitting the public persona of Sylvanus Urbanus, he compares the successful performance of his magazine in the public to that of a tenant and the “*Lords of the Soil*,” a member of the landed gentry and write: “A relation somewhat like this, between Tenant and Lord, Mr *Urban* always consider’d as subsisting between himself and the public, whose encouragement he gratefully acknowledges to have experience equally with the most favour’d tenant; and in particular by an increased and unexpected demand of 3,000 Magazines monthly” (*GM XVI*, January 1746, Preface). Such a metaphor, such a presentation of public character, might seem out of place as a means of relating to a London populace. Its strength, however, lies in its ability to connect the town to the city by casting one in terms of the other. The object of the metaphor is, of course, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* and its distribution; the connection between “sylvanus” and “urbanus” that the metaphor sets up reinforces the strength of the public network Cave’s publication has established, which is evidenced by the rise in distribution. This claim of “3,000 Magazines monthly” probably did not include Cave’s reprints, for he set up a “practice of reprinting the numbers of the periodicals after the edition on the market sold out” (Carlson 62). Statistical accuracy is not what makes Cave’s declaration significant; that it seeks to represent itself as a document of eighteenth-century publicity is much more important, suggesting that it has the capacity to serve as a model for public character. Both the cultivation metaphor and the tone of “humble” braggadocio seem calculated to stress this capacity. The personality of Sylvanus Urbanus suggests a representational approach that, in the obituary form, translates into a depiction of the populace that favors the individual, that does not shy from the disparate groups or from portraying them in the same public space. It is the picture of a public space defined by networks of people. By establishing a nonpartisan, open environment and an image of public character, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* created a public space devoted to the personal and private.

The Rise of the Obituary Form: A Diversity that Defies Quantification

A brief survey of antiquarian and scholarly attempts to order the wide range of topics and content typical of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* suggests a disregard for the obituary form. The early compilation efforts of Edward Kimber focus solely on the books noted in the *Magazine*. His work, however, is little more than a reproduction of Edward Cave’s own lists provided in the Annual Supplements to each volume. This early work indicates an attention to the cultural and literary affairs of Cave’s world that would have rightfully not included lists of deaths and obituaries. The omission is more pointed in George Laurence Gomme’s *The Gentleman’s Magazine Library: Being A Classified Collection of the Chief Contents of the Gentleman’s Magazine from 1731 to 1861*. The closest Gomme comes to treating obituaries or death notices is his attention to “Funeral Customs” section of his *Manners and Customs* volume. Though he admits that his compilation “does not pretend to be exhaustive,” he suggests his selection of materials “is sufficient to give a definite conception of many of the habits and ways of those who have gone before us” (vii). His introduction, while it does provide a brief topical outline of the volume, does not discuss the “Funeral Customs.” Moreover, he only devotes three, brief articles to customs surrounding death, not mentioning the one so particular to his source, the obituaries of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. The void in scholarship or, at least, documentation of the obituary form in these studies indicates a prevailing disregard for the outline of society that the obituary implies, particularly in contrast to the article-based, social picture these studies prefer.

The methodology they employ in examining the social context of the public considers the press as a means for overtly prescribing terms through which the public discusses itself, neglecting the subtle comments made by the obituary through its representation of the public.

Closer attention is given to the obituary in Benjamin Nangle's *The Gentleman's Magazine Biographical and Obituary Notices, 1781- 1819 : an Index*. Though this index is comprehensive, it is merely a list of deaths noted in the *Magazine* roughly coinciding with John Nichols' time as proprietor and editor, but it is unaccompanied by any treatment of the form or the underlying ideology or guiding principle. Significantly, C. Lennart Carlson makes no direct mention of the form, focusing more closely on patterns in the contributions from the correspondents. His attention to author identification, especially in his index, seems to initiate contemporary scholarship's focus on author attribution.

But the death notice and, later, the biographical obituary were important to the magazine and the readership. Cave's original advertisement for *The Gentleman's Magazine* in the *Universal Spectator* on January 30, 1731 proposed his new form would be "a Collection of all Matters of Information and Amusement" (qtd. in Carlson 30). Of the thirteen heads under which he would collect his information, he placed the heading "Births, Marriages, and Deaths of Eminent Persons" near the top of the list, second only to "Publick Affairs, Foreign and Domestic," a heading of self-evident importance to a magazine or news source (qtd. in Carlson 30). Their proximity to the affairs of inherent interest to the national public suggests a similar, broad public appeal. More importantly, they served as a flag of the magazine's monthly currency, providing up-to-date news that did not depend on the unpredictable occurrence of national and international public affairs. The births, marriages, and deaths were a fixity at the end of each issue, and the "Annual Supplement" to *The Gentleman's Magazine* always indexed the names of the deceased. Carlson points out that the magazine's "inclusion . . . of such practical information as the rate of exchange, the bills of mortality, the accounts, of births, marriages, and preferments, and more particularly the prices of goods, stocks and commodities, was a relatively late innovation" (52).

The utility afforded by such lists of data seems dry, hardly a "Matter of . . . Amusement." Given Cave's statement of purpose, Carlson would probably argue, as usual, the obituary form need not amuse, that it was not without precedent but instead represented the culmination of other extant forms. Most likely, his reading of *The Gentleman's Magazine* would put obituaries and death notices in the tradition of "the historical miscellanies [which] . . . were compilations [that] . . . aimed to inform and record, rather than to amuse" (Carlson 36).⁴ Such a tradition would be consistent with the list-like, brief presentations of the death notices and biographical obituaries, at least in the earlier years of their publication. James Fergusson, however, posits a different reading of the magazine, arguing that its "eye for small detail marked the *Gentleman's Magazine* out and makes it as fascinating and important an exhibit of historical evidence as it proved, in its time, entertaining and useful to its readers" (149). Indeed, the lists of deaths and the lengthy obituaries offered a rare public glimpse into private lives, often recording the circumstances of a private person's death and, especially, of the events that marked a person's life. It is an almost voyeuristic entertainment in an age that revered privacy over publicity.

⁴ It is worth remember that Carlson confines his study to years Cave was alive and wielding a heavy, controlling hand in the production of the magazine. His comments do not treat the changes in policy that would naturally accompany changes in editorial leadership that a favor a more amusing overtly approach to the death notices and obituaries.

During Cave's tenure, from 1731 to 1754,⁵ the death notice column occupies 68.7 lines per issue, a brevity which supports Carlson's premise. This number would rise drastically later, during Nichols' editorship and suggests a blatant, broadening notion of character through the depiction of private people. His tenure and leadership from 1778 to 1816⁶ was directly responsible for the growth of the obituary, which filled on average 1060.88 lines per issue. The increase in biographical information swelled the size of the death notices published during Cave's time, at 2.24 lines per entry, reminiscent of brief information catalogued in a historical miscellany, to the obituary of Nichol's time, 42.79 lines per entry. Nichols' characteristic attention to the obituary not only expanded the form but also popularized it; he was, after all, the first editor in a family of "enthusiastic obituarists over three generations," the magazine's editing dynasty (Fergusson 151). His obituaries evidence *The Gentleman's Magazine's* "eye for small detail" and more fully deliver Cave's promise of amusement as well as capitalizing on the popularity of biography in the eighteenth century.

This widening between Cave's and Nichols' periods presents a question of representation, still present in the form's modern manifestations.⁷ This is a consideration complicated by the diversity represented in obituaries which any serious study of the form in *The Gentleman's Magazine* must address; Fergusson, for instance, begins his discussion of obituaries with a nod to the unruly range of people represented, notable for their skill in their occupation, their lineage or their living family, the surprising circumstances of their death, the dense crop of hair covering their bodies, and some of them, like John Wesley, notable by virtue of their national fame (149-150). To point out that the diversity of people presented in *The Gentleman's Magazine's* obituaries defies easy categorization is a bald understatement.

The challenge of classification is evident in an example like the obituaries for January 1780, appended as Appendix A. This issue is on the cusp of the shift from representing "Deaths of Eminent Persons" to "Deaths of Considerable persons" and is prior to Nichols wresting the content from the clipped death notice and placing it squarely in the obituary form, in the biographical traditions of the eighteenth century. There are only fifty-nine people presented, so that they are easier to examine individually and in relationship to the other people in the sample. Even in its brevity—on the average, the obituaries are 2.80 lines long—this single-month obituary sample demonstrates the breadth of the people represented and depicts the limitations any attempts at cataloguing and categorizing this picture of the public. The distribution of males and females represented is comparable to other years during Cave's and Henry's tenure; male obituaries represent 83% of the total obituaries whereas female obituaries represent 17%. The most obvious approach to organizing the obituaries of January 1780 as a social construct is to look at them in terms of social ranking.

These rankings might be divided broadly into members of the peerage, the clergy, and the military, since each grouping has its own established, internal hierarchy. Of the fifty-nine obituaries, however, ten fall outside of these hierarchies. That 17% of the obituaries are

⁵ 1731 to 1750 in the study sample

⁶ 1780 to 1815 in the study sample

⁷ In her examination of the obituary form, *The Obituary as Collective Memory*, sociologist Bridget Fowler is interested in "the selection of the lives chosen for enduring memory," asserting that "it has to be conceded that certain figures appear now who would never have been given obituaries a hundred years ago" (3). She cites the obituaries for a "Nigerian-born hot-water fitter and anti-colonial activist . . . [and] the daughter of a meter-reader, who won Brain of Britain . . . and the working class Cumbrian hiker" (3). Had she cast farther back, she would have found a similar diversity in the obituaries of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, particularly when Nichols was editor, similar to that which amazes Fergusson.

unrepresented by such broad categories demonstrates the challenge that cataloguing the occupations presents. Even as a loose group, these eight hardly fit together. Four are distinguished by their occupations: there is an “attorney at law, and seal-keeper of the county palatine,” a “head clerk of the bullion office in the bank,” the “master of the Bank coffee-house,” a “farmer, whose ancestors were farmers in . . . the reign of Henry IV,” and the “treasurer and ware-house-keeper to the Company of Stationers” (see Appendix A). This grouping, though, cannot represent fully the different socioeconomic associations to each category. It lacks the internal division that exists, for instance, in qualifying different members of the peerage.

Privileging such socioeconomic, public character or its representation in the obituaries of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* is inaccurate and reductive. Is there more prestige associated with an institution like “the bank” or Company of Stationers or, perhaps, with a longstanding familial connection, like the man whose family has farmed in Elcombe, Kent since the early 1400’s? This is a question of context: the men associated with prominent institutions are given equal public representation in the obituary form as a man descended from a respectable family. Creating categories to record accurately and represent realistically this disparity in occupations and in prestige is not easy, particularly considering how to make the groupings inclusive of the other 85% of the obituaries listed. Factoring in social prestige as a variable for categorizing social markers raises another issue. How can the significance of social phenomena that were important to the eighteenth century be accurately represented? The master of the Bank coffee-house embodies a cultural marker particular to his time, yet creating a category for a single obituary, albeit significant, would diminish the importance of the other fifty-nine obituaries, misrepresenting the public by imposing convenient generalization. An attempt to represent thoroughly the diversity of the populace represented in the obituaries, specifically the variety of characters made public through the obituary form, would fragment the categories into irrelevance.

Considering occupations alone as a means of outlining the social terrain also neglects obituaries that do not distinguish people without an occupation. In January 1780, four of fifty-nine obituaries had no professions: one was a man “aged 104”; another, a man “universally acknowledged to have been the best angler in Great Britain”; yet another, the “inventor of the cork jackets”; one, “well known by his many useful publications for youth”; and one, finally, woman “aged 110” (see Appendix A). These men are known largely by reputation, thus their presence further complicates any quantification of the society. Reputation introduces a new variable that cannot be accounted for as systematically as the wildly divergent professions might be. It is, after all, as much a personal achievement as success in an occupation, or renown born of rank. To advance from being a “bookseller in Fleet-street” to a position in the Stationers Company is a mark of reputable achievement on par with being nationally esteemed as the finest fisherman (see Appendix A). Yet each holds a different sort of social capital that does not easily lend itself to representation. The example of the man well known for his publications, likewise, straddles profession and pastime, undefined either as a professional printer of books or as an author. A treatment of this diversity has to favor either the specificity and individuality of examining these people as public characters, which seems simultaneously the truest and least performable approach. Distinguishing the varieties of character represented by the obituaries would be an attempt to fix attributes even more fleeting than rank or occupation. How can the social importance of reputation and profession be tracked in a way that effectively shows the shifts in public opinion through its representation in the obituaries of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*?

Following the most evident, broad categories seems like an easy compromise that at least accounts for 86% of January 1780 and would, presumably, suffice for a representation of the obituaries from 1731 to 1830. After all, such distinctions crop up in varying degrees from 1731 to 1830. Working through groupings like peerage, clergy, and military association, however and perhaps most importantly, poses problems for systematizing social representation in the obituaries. The majority of the deceased listed, forty-three, take rank from the order of precedence, predominantly of the lesser orders. Together they comprise 73% of the total deaths represented. Of this group, twenty-seven were esquires. Two were knights and two, baronets. Nine of the forty-three are women who have some tie to the order of precedence and could themselves be subdivided by title and marriage. The remaining three are men with honorary titles. Of the six left, only four represent the clergy, which catalogue neatly as a three rectors and a vicar. The remaining two are members of the military, a captain and a “Lieut. . . [the] aid-de-camp to Brigadier-general Braithwaite” (see Appendix A). While these delineations are advantageous for categorizing a social distribution, they oversimplify the social picture presented by the individual obituaries.

Essentially, the complexity of the obituaries lies in the social overlaps they present, which consequently complicates any attempt to categorize them. For instance, the longest obituary in January 1780 is a thirty line entry for an esquire “well-known in the trading world, as one of the first characters that this or perhaps any other age ever produced” (see Appendix A). As an original, the man represents an intersection of social markers commonly represented in the obituaries. He is a gentleman with an indeterminate claim to some rank, whether by birth or upward mobility, who was not necessarily contained by the hierarchy of the peerage. In fact, more of the obituary is devoted to his role in the commercial world, both as business man who “raised the credit and affluence of the house at Amsterdam, which continues to bear his name” and as a functionary for “the Prince of Orange, first in the West India, and afterwards in the Dutch East India companies” (see Appendix A). Moreover, this “character” attained a reputation as “a merchant [who] could at once prescribe laws to sovereigns in the East, and, by his moneyed powers, greatly sway the scale of empire in Europe” (see Appendix A). From these three perspectives, this obituary could be classed as a member of the peerage, the commercial world, or for an influential reputation. Though this one is most extreme example, there are other, similar deaths listed with it. In January 1780, the group of esquires could also be represented as “a Lisbon merchant,” a “barrister of Gray’s Inn,” a “director of the Bank,” “the governor of all his majesty’s forts and fortifications in” St. Christopher’s, or even as the “commissioner of sewers for Holborn and Finsbury divisions” (see Appendix A). This sample of professions suggests a variety of different categories, commercial, civic, military, administrative, and legal, yet even within these distinctions, there are overlaps. These tendencies in the January 1780 obituaries typify the broad challenge any attempt at a discussion of the social picture as represented through the obituaries in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*.

Since a sampling cannot fully portray anything more than vague trends in the social distribution of the obituaries, the question of how to categorize the professional associations becomes one of purpose: which social markers take precedence in a representation of society? The solution seems like a simple matter of assigning a preference according to the very specific purpose of the study and tabulating its occurrence in the obituaries. To make such a choice is to favor a pattern of representation in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* and to neglect the thoroughness of what the complexity itself represents about societal trends and to skew the overall image of the public, that is, the intersections of public, private, and social life. The complexity is not

typified as “sylvanus” or “urbanus” but as “sylvanus” and “urbanus.” It is an area ripe for further research. At best, a study such as this one can treat the singular traits that mark a small subgroup group, which allows some limited attention to the public characteristics that overlap the dominant attributes represented in each obituary. A particular group worth examining, because of its narrow representations in the obituaries, is the women. Again, the problem with this examination is that it pictures a small group unrepresentative of the overall social network.

Women in the Obituaries: Boundaries of Representation

A logical baseline for examining female representation in relation to the overall social picture of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* is to consider it first in relation to male representation. Of the 4,191 obituaries that comprise the death notices and obituaries between the twice-annual sampling from 1731 and 1830, 3,093 belong to men and 1,098 are for women; 74% of the obituaries are male versus 26% that are female. This disparity is even more interesting considering the total representation of men and women in the magazine’s “Bill of Mortality.” Female deaths represented 50% of the total, as opposed to representing a quarter of the deaths listed in the death notices and obituaries. Perhaps the most obvious way to account for this disparity is to historicize this representation as a matter of eminence or consideration; the women represented are much more limited in the ways they earn the public esteem represented by the inclusion in the obituaries. They are not merchants or heavily involved in commerce, and little mention is made of their occupational or professional affiliations until 1785. In this regard, women seem limited in their representation by the meritocracy; there are few ways they can distinguish themselves aside from being titled.

Unlike the array of male occupations that makes cataloging their occurrence challenging, even in a one-month sample, the women are overall only represented by eleven occupations, which appear so sporadically throughout the sample that a tabulation is unnecessary. Three of these fall under a heading that might loosely be labeled manufacture: one woman, Martha Bay, made besoms, that is, brooms made of twigs attached to a handle (*GM LV*, December 1785, 1009); another, Anne Jamieson, was “one of the greatest spinners in the world” (*GM XCV*, January 1825, 92), and a third, Mrs. Charles, was noted for being a woman who “carried on [such] an extensive business” that she was able to support her husband in his “ministerial labors” (*GM LXXXV*, January 1815, 91). The magazine’s candor in treating the success of these women may seem surprising, given the few options a woman had for work, but it is worth noting these jobs seem largely homebound. They are not necessarily public in the way that the jobs for men were; this seems to have been a matter of choice as well as of limited opportunity. Again, an important consideration is that these are the only three manufacturers listed in a hundred year period. Aside from the home industry, three women were also recorded as the proprietors of public business. One of these women, Mrs. Payne, was “a creditable shopkeeper” (*GM LXXV*, December 1805, 1181). Two others, Mrs. Wright (*GM LXXV*, January 1805, 85) and Mrs. Elizabeth Kirkley (*GM LXXX*, January 1810, 88) are innkeepers. The latter are as tied to home as the three manufacturers. A separate woman, Mrs. Chamberlin, was “for many years, post-mistress of Derby” (*GM LXX*, December 1800, 1219). Her position, and she is the only woman to represent this in a hundred years, was not only public but held some authority.

Even more public than a shopkeeper was Mrs Pitt, who was “upwards of 40 years an actress” (*GM LXX*, January 1800, 84). She is, however, a standout, particularly compared to the professions more traditionally open to women. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* records the deaths of

two midwives, two housekeepers and a servant, and two school mistresses. A final profession is represented in Jane Ruspert, “an unfortunate woman of the town, [who died] in great distress” (*GM LXXX*, January 1810, 93). Given their scant coverage, the women’s professions are easily sampled and indicate that most professions for women centered in the household. This suggests that, given the limited opportunities for being public available to women, they made a very conscientious choice to step into public attention; this suggests that by stepping out of the household and becoming public figures, women stood to lose esteem. The relatively late attention the magazine gives to women’s professions, fifty-five years after its inception, suggests a shift in policy perhaps best accounted for by the expansion of the obituary section throughout the Nichols period. This trend not only allowed for more biographical information in obituaries, but also created spaces for a more thorough representation of women, that is, a more thorough representation than its absence before 1785.

Another consideration in examining the representation of women in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* is how their deaths are framed by or connected with family. As they are reflected in the magazine, women’s lives were tightly bound to the male network of influence. Of all the women listed in the death notices and obituaries, 79% are listed with some familial connection, ranging from predominantly marital connections, to nuclear and extended families. Women with some claim to class distinction are, quite often, more grounded in familial connection. A woman is most qualified for inclusion in the obituaries through one family tie, marriage: 62% of the women represented were married or widowed. Of the remaining 38%, 13% were unmarried and 25% were indeterminate. As a qualifier, the importance of marriage reflects the importance of marriage for a woman’s position in society; it was almost compulsory for recognition as eminent, considerable, or remarkable.

The 25% of women whose marital status was indeterminate were a group bound more in the convention of female representation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The *OED* points out that the title “Mrs.” began, in the eighteenth century, to represent both married and unmarried women. Given the importance placed on marriage in the period, this conscious choice for representation seems a concession to the slight stigma associated with being unmarried, particularly for middle-aged women. The 13% of women who died undeniably unmarried were largely young women and children or the elderly, who are safe from the shame of being known as a “dame” or a “maiden lady.” Connected to the conventions for addressing or representing a woman’s social standing is the somewhat nebulous principle for printing a woman’s name. The majority of men listed throughout the obituaries are identifiable by their given names and surnames, but the names of women are noticeably missing. On the whole, 54% of the women represented are not listed with their given name, only the surname of their hereditary family or husband. It is not until 1815 that the convention shifts, and the women’s identity is represented in a fashion comparable to men. The disregard for a personal representation of female identity in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* is not a matter of policy so much as a reflection of the mores of eighteenth-century society. A woman in many instances is a nameless, private entity recognizable only through her associations to public figures and family members. Her familial connection give her more shape and definition than her individual identity.

One distinguishing feature of female representation is the circumstance that occasions the death. The most prominent circumstances for deaths are unspecified illnesses. Generally, they are qualified as long or painful illnesses and are only listed in conjunction with a note of the Christian grace and perseverance throughout the suffering. This sort of representation is not

limited to women; the men often are pictured in a similar fashion. The tendency to represent suffering and death as endurable with dignity indicates a value the society placed on those traits. More significant, however, is where the representation of female deaths departs from the male. The second most frequent circumstance for women is death by burning. Of the sample, twelve women burned to death, most often next to a cooking fire that sends sparks on their clothes. Within this group, though, is an interesting subgroup, women who die by reading. To say reading killed them is inaccurate—the candle they left burning at their bedsides so they could read was the cause of death. Reading is only the catalyst. One woman, “Miss Tredaway, a young lady, . . . was so shockingly burnt as to cause her death in 48 hours. The fatal catastrophe was occasioned by setting fire to the bed furniture while reading” (*GMLX*, January 1810, 89). Stressing initially that Miss Tredaway was a young lady seems to stress some impropriety in her reading, the consequence of which is how shockingly she was burned. It is seemingly shocking that reading can bring about such a fatal catastrophe. The implication, then, is that a young lady has no business reading.

The same issue reports the death of an older woman, “Mrs. Sukey Thomlinson . . . who was burnt to death in consequence of reading in bed, to which she had unfortunately accustomed herself” (*GMLX*, January 1810, 92). The danger of reading relayed through Mrs. Thomlinson’s obituary is more explicit than Miss Tredaway’s. Mrs. Thomlinson’s death is a direct consequence of her unfortunate habit. There is some ambiguity in what is more unfortunate, the reading which became the cause of her death or the habit of reading in bed. The implication of both is that women have no business reading, at least in bed in the former obituary and perhaps at all, as the second seems to suggest. More significantly, these obituaries do not specify what sort of materials or genres the women were reading, whether they were sermons or novels, but instead stress that the act of reading led to the demise of Miss Tredaway and Mrs. Thomlinson. These are not overbearing admonitions, but it is interesting to note they are gender-specific, exhibiting the vestiges of earlier incarnations of England’s print culture, in which careful censorship was necessary for shielding the delicate sensibilities of certain audiences. The most comparable obituaries for men are those demonstrating the danger of handling firearms carelessly, particularly for younger men or boys. There is some irony in representing books and guns as equally dangerous.

The image *The Gentleman’s Magazine* presents of women was of an identity subsumed by a society favoring the identity of men. It is not, ultimately, a surprising conclusion to draw about women in the society of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century London of the larger country. It commends itself by being tidy and predictable, but which, while does depends on sociological generalizations, accords women no place in the public. At least initially, the obituaries of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* seem to support this conclusion, but the form progresses into an image that, while not completely egalitarian, is lumbering in that direction. By 1830, balanced, fair representation has not of course arrived. As gender is represented with sheer numbers and statistical figures, females were obviously given short shrift by the magazine. To understand representation in the obituaries of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* through the weight of numbers is useful for outlining trends in representation, but it seems to neglect interpretations of the obituaries as documents that record the society with public characters, since the obituary form presents “individuals’ images of their society’s past” (Fowler 50). A generalized approach can only promise to understand the deceased as a “sylvanus” or an “urbanus.”

Such a reading threatens to deny the deceased their humanity and, in turn, the society its vitality. Generalizing glosses over an important consideration: every obituary printed in any

issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* was as public a record and as publically presented as every other obituary in that issue, even if the obituary records a person from a group that has been underrepresented in the body of previous issues. Privileging the individuality of the obituary instead of the traits it shares with like documents—"like" signifying any attempt to corral and generalize the diversity of the obituaries—permits a reading of the social context as it was quite literally written on the public character of the deceased. Both approaches have merit; the social outlines afforded through generalizing, when the sample group is small enough to allow it, are best appreciated through the nuances individual obituaries disclose.

Beyond Numbers: Biography and the Obituary

The rise of the obituary form is a commercial and social phenomenon, and like the rise of the magazine, it is a phenomenon bound to discourse. The obituary is just as complicated by issues of representation as the sections of the magazine are by treating the news. While the obituary form did not have the overt political implications that a news story might, the editors of obituaries had to consider, nevertheless, who to represent and how they should be represented. The editors of magazine recognized the significance operating within this discourse, for the obituary form held

importance in the historical record . . . [and was] an especially exacting form of news-gathering. On the one hand, it involves more original labour than a running story; on the other, it is examined by more rigorous stories, from another time. The grieving relative or friend makes an old-fashioned, unforgiving reader. (Fergusson 151)

Given the public nature of *The Gentleman's Magazine*—it both contained pieces pulled from the extant public writings and also generated new pieces from private and often anonymous correspondents—the publicizing of a person's death required careful editorial choices to make it fit for the consumption of its own reading public; it is easy to forget when generalizing the attributes of those represented in the form that the audience was characteristically "the grieving . . . old fashioned, unforgiving reader." Examining the editorial choices that focused on addressing the needs of this specific reader above all other considerations requires attention to the context in which these decisions were made. It is a necessary, foundational step toward historicizing the obituary form and foregrounding the humanity of the individual character which downplays an approach that generalizes a few of their attributes.

Changes in editors and editorial policy made the obituary form more palatable to the reading public by shifting the brief death notice to the fully realized obituary. Their choices both define and reflect audience tastes and, therefore, coincide with the increasing popularity of biography in the eighteenth century. It helped, in part, to set the standards for more "exacting news gathering" and more "rigorous stories." Obituaries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries evince many of the conventions that dominate the eighteenth-century biography form. Literary historians John Butt and Geoffrey Carnall illustrate the popularity for biography in the achievements of "Thomas Birch, who wrote over six hundred original biographies for the *General Dictionary* (1734-41) [and] . . . William Oldys, who wrote much of the *Biographia Britannica* (1747-66) . . . a man of comparable energy" (289). Doubtless, these examples illustrate the form's popularity to an unrealistic extreme. At best they provide "the

scholarly context in which more popular and abiding biography was written (Butt and Carnall 4). This context is the growing antiquarian movement which emphasized recording the lives of the eminent. Depictions of public characters, in their representation in a biography or in an obituary, would define the public character. Either of which would likely have been the product of an anonymous correspondent or fellow member of the public who helped create the public document, the magazine, since they would be constructing it through their publications, but also would be defining the other participants by providing a model for their emulation.

In two of the most enduring treatments of biography in the eighteenth century, Mark Longaker and Donald A. Stauffer ascribe the biography's rise in popularity to different cultural currents in the eighteenth century. In his work *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, Longaker asserts that biography was in part a product of coffee-houses, a cultural trend that served as "the clearing house for all manner of stories concerning eminent Londoners. Here great men were leveled to the rank and file of ordinary human beings" (69). This setting, Longaker argues, gave rise to a variety of forms, letters, diaries, and autobiographies, that manage to be both public and intimate; the discourse that happened there mingled private readings of texts as well as public readings and often devolved from discussion into gossip. The forms are tinged with a realism dependent on the truest relay of personal experience possible in a public venue.

The other trend influencing the rise of the biography form was the rise of the novel, wherein the a realistic representation of life was highly regarded for creating a believable fiction: "[r]ealism, the banner around which the authors of the age rallied and which they followed at times when another standard might been followed to advantage, made possible the true record of personality" (Longaker 90). Biography, then, was the middle way: "[s]omething different was demanded by the times which delighted in the whispered conversations of the coffee-house and in the reality of Tom Jones and Roderick Random, and by the middle of the century, biography in its truest and most engaging form was the result" (91). This focus on realism would lend itself to the representation of life's most undeniable reality in the later obituary form.

In *The Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, Stauffer broaches the idea of a reading public differently than Longaker, who favors considerations of public space. Stauffer dubs the eighteenth century "the golden age of English biography," arguing that it is "a time when writing biographies was a natural pastime and a natural art" (552). He suggests a much broader, yet more humanizing context for the rise of the biography form than coffee-houses: "[i]t is not too much to say that the eighteenth century, engrossed in this world, in social relations, and in the individual, thought in biographical terms. Such interest in personal human life almost necessarily resulted in a vary series of biographical productions" (552). Similar to Longaker, Stauffer attends to the influences of other forms besides the novel, namely plays, satire, and travelogues. Like these forms, biography was considered literature by the eighteenth-century reading public.

Stauffer's examination of these influences, however, seems to parse their influence on biography form by pointing out how eighteenth-century biographers, for instance, presented the psychological motives of their subjects more than previous biographers (Stauffer 264). An important distinction Stauffer explains is a developmental shift in the form: "[o]ne of the distinguishing characteristics of . . . biography . . . before 1700 is a tendency toward objectivity. A man's life was equal to the sum of his actions" (257). Such a mode would easily result in lists of achievements and commendations that would not accurately portray the subject, that is, with any real sense of realism regarding the achievements and character of the subject. The eighteenth century reconfigured this mode into a more personal, subjective biography, which was a "shift in

emphasis to include the contemplative as well as the active life that became more pronounced in the latter half of the century” when the form was presumably maturing into its most complex and penetrating attempts to capture the life of a person (257).

At both ends of the century that elevated the biography as a form, however, are two men who bring biography to bear on *The Gentleman’s Magazine* through their involvement with the magazine and contributions to the canon of eighteenth-century biography. Samuel Johnson, early in the eighteenth century, wrote biographical lives for publication in the magazine and, later in the century, produced the magnum opus of his literary criticism, his *Lives of the Poets*. Similarly, John Nichols worked with biography and, most likely, the obituary form as it matured from the brief death notices that defined the obituary writing of Cave’s era. Again, like Johnson, Nichols followed his dabbling in the obituary form with his greatest study in biography, the *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, “and their sequel, the *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*” (Butt and Carnall 271).

Johnson’s influence on the biographical form is considered in all major, comprehensive studies of eighteenth-century biography, but this at best suggests a tangential, merely coincidental connection to the shape and form of obituaries in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. His personal interest in biography and his prominence both as author and critic, however, undoubtedly played some role in popularizing the form during the Age of Johnson. Johnson’s early literary endeavors were intimately linked to *The Gentleman’s Magazine*; his work with the magazine began his literary career in London. In total, Johnson published ten biographies in the magazine, seven of which were published during his time as editor (Butt and Carnall 43). Johnson’s period of direct, editorial activity under Cave ranges from 1738 through 1747, during which time he contributed material in a variety of genres (Carlson 21-22). After 1747 following his period of editorial direction, “there is little reason to doubt that he retained some type of connection with the magazine to the time of Cave’s death [in 1754] and beyond . . . no one appears to have been so closely connected with the magazine over so long a period” (Carlson 23). There is, of course, no clear evidence that corroborates Carlson’s supposition past suggestive coincidences. Later, during Nichols’ editorial work, Johnson’s connection to the magazine seems thin at best, though his acquaintance with Nichols is plain: in a note to the literary anecdotes of Edward Cave, Nichols glosses the text, noting that “[t]hus far this article is given in the words of Dr. Johnson, from *Gent. Mag.* vol. XXV. P. 55-57; revised by its excellent author, at my particular request, in 1781” (9).

During his nine year stint as editor and contributor, Johnson’s most highly-regarded publications in the magazine were the biographies and parliamentary debates, most outstanding because they are most easily identified as his works on the pages a form authored anonymously for most part and largely by correspondence. The parliamentary debates were innovative and their rhetoric was designed to skirt bans on the publication or distribution of exact debate transcripts. Johnson’s biographies, however, rose from different motives: “[i]t is not surprising that a learned man, much of whose livelihood depended upon executing commissions for the book-sellers, should have written so many biographies at a time when the public appetite for biography was insatiable. But this was Johnson’s favorite pursuit” (43). His varying degrees of editorial control over the content of the magazine does not signify an irrefutable, causal relationship between Johnson and the growth of the obituary form like which is evident in the work of Nichols. Johnson does not expound on the obituary form in his essays, after all, but the growth of the obituaries coincides, nevertheless, with the biography form that Johnson and, most notably, a host of eighteenth-century biographers, worked to popularize. The initial, clipped style

of death notices during the Johnson and Cave years had, at Nichols' hand, filled out by 1815 into "Memoirs" that headed the death notices and, later still, were both encompassed under the category obituaries.

The broadening of the form was, under Nichols' leadership, not the result of some peripheral interest in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. James Kuist outlines the situation in which Nichols stepped into his tenure as an editor. Nichols came to a magazine that was in the scattered control of editors and close editorial business partners, so "[w]hen he entered the proprietorship by buying the shares inherited by Cave's nephew, he set about gathering the reins of leadership into his own hands and consolidating the several functions of management" (*Nichols File 4*). Such an attention to centralization of all aspects of the magazine form had clear repercussions for the obituary form: "Nichols and his heirs, like their predecessors, were essentially conservative editors, but they instituted important changes in policy" (*Nichols File 4*). Essentially Nichols introduced four major changes in policy, two of which have a direct bearing on the formation of the obituary form: "[t]he most important was to double the number of pages each month, creating from 1783 onward additional space for the magazine's prolific correspondents," and significantly, "[a] change of emphasis which Nichols introduced in the 1780's occurred in the obituary columns, where the simple listing of deaths was supplemented by full-scale memoirs" (*Nichols File 4*). It is, again, after the 1780's, that the average number of lines per issue becomes 1177, averaging fifty-three lines per obituary entry.

Nichols first created the space for the obituary, then he imbued it with enough precedence as a portion of the magazine for it to thrive as a form. It is worth noting that for Nichols and presumably many other late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers, the biography and obituary were closely linked. The obituary form in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, in its fullest flourish, bore the stamp of the biography; the biography form, as it is represented by Nichols' post-editorial publications, reads like a collection of obituaries, for "[t]hey are exceptionally untidy volumes, obviously the work of accretion rather than composition" (Butt and Carnall 271). Though they were not the foundational principles for the development of the obituary, Johnson's treatment of the biographical form, then, and the standards he sought to establish provide a useful point of comparison for interpreting the function content of the obituaries and the ways in which they represent public character individually. While they do not exhibit the direct control that distinguishes Nichols policies from Johnson's earlier submissions, they offer a general statement of the policies for biographical writing in eighteenth century that lends insight in the practices demonstrated by later obituary writers and Nichols in particular.

The easy criticism of Johnson is that, as a critic, he is too prescriptive, too didactic and stuffy. In his last biographies, *The Lives of the Poets*, he defines literary and poetic taste with varying degrees of heavy-handedness; in his *Dictionary of the English Language*, his prejudices and tastes are clear in many of his definitions. His direct instruction for writing biography comes by way of his essays on the topic in the *Rambler* 60 "The Dignity and Usefulness of Biography" and, nine years later, the *Adventurer* 84 "Biography How Best Performed." Again, it is important to bear in mind the contrast between the distant coincidence Johnson's guidelines in their relation to the obituaries and in Nichols' policy decisions regarding the development of the obituary form. Interestingly, no evidence or attribution of authorship exists that points explicitly to Johnson as the author of any obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; nevertheless he makes clear traits that would serve an obituary equally as well as a biography. Conversely, Nichols, for all of his hands-on treatment of the obituary form in the magazine, very rarely makes any

comprehensive statement of the ideology guiding his editorial policy, but his presence is documentable in writing obituaries, since many saw their way into his *Literary Anecdotes*.

Johnson's theory for biography, influential throughout the eighteenth century, hinges on the idea that its applicability for the reader makes it worthwhile: "[b]iography is, of the various kinds of narrative writing, that which is most eagerly read, and most easily applied to the purposes of life" (*Idler*, II, 261). In both essays, he is quick to stress applicability by demonstrating what is not; stories from history of armies and great leaders are too far removed from the majority of humankind and "are oftener employed for shew than use, and rather diversify conversation than regulate life" (*Idler*, II, 262). Conversely, then, Johnson views the purpose of biography as regulating life, which lies in the effectiveness of the biography to rouse the reader's humanity: "[o]ur passions are . . . more strongly moved, in proportion as we can more readily adopt the pains or pleasures proposed to our minds, by recognising them as once our own, or considering them as naturally incident to our state of life" (*Rambler*, III, 319). Thus biography raises in its readers a strong sense of self-awareness and a strengthened ability to self-regulate. In other words, and more importantly for considerations of the obituary, it relays the lives of public people ought to stress their humanity in such a way that it resonates with the audience. Stressing the didactic role of public writing is a rhetorical maneuver seemingly evoked by Nichols fifty years later. In his conceptualization, however, the role of the press is not to reinforce the humanity of an individual public character who represents character publically, but instead for representing the public at large. The editorial intervention of Nichols in the obituary section, of expanding its representation of public characters, is a more apt analog to the approach Johnson endorses.

One of the distinctive marks of good biography by Johnson's standards, which presumably strengthens the form of subjective, individualized biography, is that a biographer has the responsibility of presenting a subject truly: "[t]here are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection . . . If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth" (*Rambler*, III, 323). The "faults or failings" seem bear some usefulness for self-improvement, affording varied points for reflection and improving humanity. Very few things are more "naturally incident to our state of life" than death; very few things are easier to reflect upon than mortality. The best time to capture a person's humanity and individuality in a biography, thereby evoking it in the reflections of the reader, is soon after the person dies. To write a biography before a person dies, Johnson argues, is to risk partiality and to wait until the person has been dead for any length of time is too lose the individualized essence of the person: "[i]f a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition" (*Rambler*, III, 323). These seem reasonable considerations about how to record a rigorous biographical account.

Moreover, Johnson's observations for biographies mirror the various options for recording a person's death in the eighteenth century. The early death notices in *The Gentleman's Magazine* were of the dry variety Johnson describes. They are entirely impartial and almost equally devoid of detail, essentially an entry in an Augustan antiquarian catalogue, noting where a person died, his or her name, and sometimes the profession and age of the deceased. In fact, they underscore the distance Johnson's opinion had on the direct workings of the obituary column and stress that it is not his scanty involvement with *The Gentleman's Magazine* that

makes his opinions about the obituary form valuable, but only his explication of those opinions that makes them a useful point for comparison. These early death notices were not necessarily the products of a biographer's patience, content to let the "life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end," but the motive, the adherence to a strict sense of propriety regaling impartiality, is the same for each. In a sample equally representative of the dry factuality Johnson endorses and an issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* during Cave's era, seven of the thirty-three total lines read:

22. Miss *Wright*, only daugh. Of Ju. *Wright*.
23. *John Green*, Esq. at *Richmond*.
Sir *Jam. Pennyman* of *Thornton*, *Yorksh.* Bt.
Sir *Tho. Rainford*, Bart, in *Friday-Street*.
Hon. Baron *Blomberg*, at his seat in *Yorksh.*
26. Sir *Edw. Melton*, justice of peace, and deputy lieutenant of *Berkshire*.
(*GM XV*, December 1745, 668)

In their impartiality, these six death notices completely skirt any "interest and envy" associated with the person. There is no controversy in this presentation; it is completely safe and, as a record, as transparent as its purposes require. What it lacks is the "volatile and evanescent" qualities that, in Johnson's scheme, evoke the reflective humanity that can "enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition" (*Rambler*, III, 319). What it lacks is easily attributable to limited space Cave made available to obituaries and stands in clear contrast to Nichols' policy of expanding both magazine and obituary length.

Numerous obituaries seem to share some of the values represented by Johnson's suggestive specifications for biographies but, more significantly, are recognizable as the handiwork of Nichols. A typical example is the obituary of Mrs. Elizabeth Breton, a woman born to some slight hereditary distinction and privilege: "She was the younger surviving co. heiress of the Wolstenholme and Raynton families, whose estate at Enfield, is one of the finest in the co. of Middlesex" (*GM LX*, January 1790, 90). It is evident from her brief background sketch that she had a higher station. The opening of her obituary, however, foregrounds her relationship to her family, stressing its renown. Such a beginning coincides Johnson's notion of biography: "[i]t is, indeed, not improper to take honest advantages of prejudice, and to gain attention by a celebrated name; but the business of the biographer is to pass slightly over those performances and incidents" (*Rambler*, III, 321). The opening of Mrs. Breton's obituary does not, however, constitute its emphasis.

Her outstanding attribute is not her wealth or inheritance but her fortitude. Physically, she had "a body as insensible of pain and illness as it was unimpaired by either" (*GM LX*, January 1790, 90). Mentally, Mrs. Breton "possessed a mind steeled to those vicissitudes of fortune which would have broken the spirit of the most obdurate pride" (*GM LX*, January 1790, 90). She applied these traits in surviving the loss of her home and her family estate; she "saw it dismembered under Mr. Christie's hammer, through the misconduct of her offspring," survived the indignity of a "renunciation of a noble paternal fortune," and only in the final months of her life did she falter due to dementia (*GM LX*, January 1790, 90). The indignities Mrs. Breton suffered could have befallen any of her contemporaries, and the obituary presents these brief occurrences "to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence

and virtue” (*Rambler*, III, 321). If the “prudence and virtue” of Mrs. Breton’s obituary are not enough to evoke the humanity of the readers by virtue of demonstrating the “parallel circumstances, and kindred images, to which we readily conform our minds” (*Rambler*, III, 319), the obituary closes with a somber exhortation: her endurance was “[a] lesson to those more immediately related to her, and to all who knew her” *GM LX*, January 1790, 90). Additionally, “and to all who know her through this obituary” might easily have been appended. Mrs. Breton’s obituary differs severely from death notices written prior to Nichols’ tenure. Her obituary illustrates an important and persistent difference between obituaries as a manifestation of a public character whose attributes are most important to the public and its varied networks. Even if she were included, her humanity would be at odds with her society; she is not represented as a private person exercising an educated voice that can be engaged. It is static, fixed by death and its record.

The stamp of Johnson seems lightly impressed on the general editorial policy of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in the later eighteenth century. In an editorial parenthesis uncommon in the obituary section of the magazine, Sylvanus Urban follows an obituary for the Hon. Jas Bowdoin, recently deceased governor of Massachusetts, with an editorial request:

The character which a correspondent desires for us to insert is of too rhapsodical and general a nature for our Obituary; and we take this opportunity, once and for all, to request that no such essays may in the future be obtruded upon us, as we wish to be the faithful recorders of historic facts, not of the panegyric tributes of the friends, acquaintance, or relatives of the parties deceased. (*GM LX*, December 1790, 1147)⁸

This statement of policy acknowledges two ways of recording death, with a focus either on the “historic facts” surrounding the deceased or on the feelings of the survivors. The first serves as a testament to the life of the person; the second serves more as a testament to the regard of “friends, acquaintance, or relatives” for the deceased. The policy’s implicit disdain for the subjectivity inherent in the second method mirrors the sorts of biography criticized by Johnson: “we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be known from one another, but by extrinsic and casual circumstances” (*Rambler*, III, 323). Such sentimentality in a biographer or obituary writer can cloud the authenticity of the biography or obituary and, consequently, lessen the value of both. The magazine eschewed “panegyric tributes,” writing that is “of too rhapsodical and general a nature,” because the value of the obituary lay in the true record of identity of the deceased; if it was to be true to this value, it had to record the “historical facts” of that identity, not “uniform panegyric.” Panegyric threatens to supplant the humanity contained in the historical facts, both in biography and obituary. Johnson wrote, “I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not prove useful” (*Rambler*, III, 320). The idea of a recording these historical facts in obituaries derives in part, presumably, from the growing antiquarian movement in the eighteenth-century England: “antiquarianism of a more miscellaneous kind flourished, and help to shape a new historical consciousness” (Butt and Carnall 4). The usefulness, either of the biographical obituary or the biography, is in proportion to the accuracy of its presentation and its

⁸ Page 1152 of this same issue includes a nineteen line verse by J. Crane, M. D. in tribute to his friend Dr. John Clarke. While it is, ironically, just the sort of writing this policy rejects, it is also one of the last pieces of this sort of writing to appear through the 1820’s and 30’s.

capacity to evoke the humane self-reflection of the reader. This is province of individuality, not generality.

Commerce and the Obituary: Estates, Meritocracy, and Philanthropy

Initially, the death notice had a usefulness different from the one it developed through the rising influence of biography. While the death notices held a prominent position in Cave's original plan for the magazine, they were positioned at the end. Their placement in the magazine is not in the modern mode of burying unimportant topics deeper than the first few pages. This "practical information" was a regular feature that closed the magazine, as tabular in form and regular in presence as the "Table of Contents" that began each issue (Carlson 52). Their immediate utility, however, most denies the stigma of last position. Such a position reinforces the currency of the magazine as a monthly publication, providing documented, up-to-date information. Including it at the end stressed that this portion of the magazine was printed last and that the magazine was representing the information as quickly as it happened. The obituaries give the idea of the magazine form a sense of urgency connected to the pressing news in its immediate context.

The information accompanying the death notices and obituaries would undoubtedly serve commerce-minded readers. The prices of goods and stocks would have a direct bearing on their trade; often the "Bill of Mortality" was posted alongside this information. The death notices were immediately framed by the list of marriages at the front and at the back the list of preferments. Each category represents social structures that are, in some way, contractual and a matter of business: marriage, at least cynically, could be regarded as nothing more than a market for dowry-determined eligibility. "Preferments," likewise, signified some binding agreement between an employer and employee which provided a context for advancement. By 1735, death notices often end on the same page as the "Bankrupts" section of the magazine or, by 1755, the "B—K R—PTS" section, much more polite for the insolvent but no less of a commercial context for the death notices.⁹

The death notices were not out of place next to information regarding recent bankrupts any more than the monthly "Bill of Mortality" appeared beside the prices for stocks or corn. Throughout the first hundred years of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, a business-driven thread ties transaction to mortality. In particular, this commercial thread binds people to their estates. The first issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* notes the death of

The Lady *Catherine Howard*, Widow and Relict of the late Lord *Frederick Howard*, and formerly of Sir *Richard Kennedy*, of *Mount Kennedy* in *Ireland*, Bart. She left issue only a Daughter by Sir *Richard, Elizabeth*, married to Sir *William Dudley*, of *Clapton* in *Northampton*, Bart. To whom and her Issue by Sir *William*, she hath left the Bulk of her Estate. By her Death, a Rent-Charge of 350*l.* per *Annum*, fell to *Robert Jones*, Esq; of *Westminster*." (*GM* I, January 1731, 34)

⁹ *GM* LV, January 1785, 79 lists thirty-one b—nk r—pts alongside twelve obituaries; Moses Moses, a watchmaker from Whitechapel was declared, politely and without all the stinging indignity associated with vowels, b—nk r—pt. Nothing could be done, however, to alleviate the embarrassing redundancy of his name. In a slightly related example, *GM* L, December 1780, 592 lists the "Prices of Stocks" with the obituaries.

The Lady Catherine Howard's death notice is suggestive of several business considerations that typify the ways in which the death notice and obituary sections of *The Gentleman's Magazine* could function. It is worth noting that Lady Catherine's family connections are listed primarily to frame the passing of her estate. Her death notice comprises the circumstances of her life and connections to her male relations, from father to husband to son-in-law. Lady Catherine's death, represented as economic transaction in this death notice, pictures the intricacies of a familial network between men that is characteristic of an older model, the land-based economic model. It is largely a closed system, dependent on principles of entailment or primogeniture. A significant omission from Lady Catherine's death notice, however, is the name of her father, whose rank as an earl or higher superseded that of her husbands or heirs and devolved on her lifelong title. The absence of this important connection stresses Lady Catherine's authority to navigate the system and suggests a departure from a model that favors the male line: she is free, even though she is a woman, to bequeath her estate as she wishes. Her death notice is able to represent and, at the same time to deny this traditional model.

Many of the monetary listings in the death notices are focused on an estate held by a member of the landed gentry, without indicating the complex networks that characterize the traditional system. Notice of these deaths seems, in part, to provide notice of the estate's value, which again seems to reduce their death notices to a point of fiscal transaction. In a similar fashion, *The Gentleman's Magazine* makes record of "Wm. Nicholas, Esq; at Guilford, a bachelor, worth 150,00*l.* aged 81" (*GM XX*, January 1750, 43). It is only slightly longer than the average death notice entry, but of the scant detail the magazine ascribes to Mr. Nicholas, the three most distinguishing are his worth, bachelorhood, and age. That they hold such significance, that they are the features that separate his notice from others, points to economic representation inherent in *The Gentleman's Magazine*: as an aged bachelor, he has no direct heirs to which a fortune may pass, suggesting the importance of connection and heredity in the traditional, landed gentry model.

The first example, however, provides another means for financial transaction. Though her finances pass as part of an estate, Lady Catherine did not bequeath Mr. Jones a lump sum or "Bulk," but instead the ability to garner money, 350*£* annually, as a rent-holder instead of being an estate-holder, as the issue of Sir Richard will become. The nature of the connection that earned Mr. Jones his rent-charge is unspecified by the notice, which suggests that it falls outside of the scope of the traditional system as much as Lady Catherine's ability to entrust her estate to heirs of her choice. Similarly, a notice for the Reverend Mr. Martin notes that "he recently changed his name for an estate of 600*l.* per *Ann.*" (*GM XXXV*, December 1765, 590). His ability to function within the system demonstrates a more flexible means for operating in the closed system. Both Mr. Jones and Mr. Martin exhibit the business thread or interest that connects the death notices and obituaries to *The Gentleman's Magazine*. The representation of their operation within the system seems to hint, if only slightly, at access points to the traditional system of the landed-gentry that might have proven encouraging to the new class of businessmen seeking a means to validate their newfound status in the context of the older system.

Another financial connection socially opposed to the older, traditional system was mercantile and commercial transaction. Very few listings indicate monetary gain through the market-based economy; one, for instance, is "James Drummond, Esq; a *Turkey* Merchant, worth 50,000*l.* and 200*l.* *Ann.*" (*GM V*, December 1735, 738). Likewise, the death notices record "Oliver Peard, Esq; [who died] at Tivertown; he was one of the greatest serge-makers in the kingdom, and died worth 120,000*l.*" (*GM XXXV*, January 1765, 46). It is significant to note

that, while each man is an esquire, it is not his title that distinguishes him, but his commercial interests. Much like the bachelor, Mr. Nicholas, these gentlemen have no notice given of their connections to the network of gentry attached to Lady Catherine. Their living, however, is grounded on a self-sufficiency typical of the landed gentry that is far removed from trade in woolen fabric and turkey dealing. Much like the example of Mr. Martin, each man has taken some measures to accrue an estate, yet their options were of a commercial ilk outside the operation of the traditional system, even to the degree it is represented by the name of the Reverend Mr. Martin and the estate of Lady Catherine. The death notice form, then, does not seem to favor neither the older, landed nor the newer, commercial model. Instead it values what its nominal proprietor represents: the “sylvanus” and the “urbanus.”

The tempting interpretation of this disparity between fiscal means is that they exhibit the growing shift from a land-based to market-based economy during the eighteenth century. It is the argument that James Drummond and Oliver Peard, as esquires and members of the landed gentry, signal a transition that straddles both the landed- and market-based economic systems. Even women, though, are representative of some variation within the traditional system. Such an interpretation, then, that argues the obituaries bear witness to the financial shift writes too much significance over too little information. While these examples are present throughout the magazine, they appear sporadically. Favoring such a focus, again, risks generalizing the public and the deceased who represent it in the obituaries with the consequence of presenting an inaccurate image of the populace.

In the latter years of the hundred-year sample, these money-focused obituaries seem to represent a different type of transaction. The obituary for Mrs. Anne Gillison and Reverend Dr. Jonathan Davies, D. D. are characteristic of this altered focus and both depict different philanthropic strands particular to the eighteenth century that expand on a traditional sense of Christian benevolence that urged care for the disadvantaged (Andrew 15-16). Philanthropists of the eighteenth century sought to “aid . . . a changing national policy” and to foster “the improvement of public morale” (Andrew 198, 200). In Mrs. Anne Gillison’s obituary, less attention is devoted to her death and age than her benevolence. Her place of death, her age, her name, and her status as “a maiden lady” only introduce her charity (*GM LX*, January 1790, 87). These identifying details only occupy 1.50 lines of her 8.50 line obituary during a month in which the average line entry is 6.31 lines per entry. Not only is Mrs. Gillison’s entry noteworthy for its above-average length during January 1790, but especially for its attention to her donations to the community. She is noted for having divided up her estate between eight different groups: “eight distressed old maids; . . . the Lancaster Dispensary; . . . the Charity-School for girls in that town; . . . the Manchester [and] . . . Liverpool Infirmaries; . . . eight different relations; [and] . . . her servants” (*GM LX*, January 1790, 87). Her money dispersed through a much broader social network than does the estate of Lady Catherine Howard, whose network for the dispersal of her estate was, with the exception of Robert Jones entirely familial.

Mrs. Gillison’s death connects family to servants and to civic responsibility in a way that represents neither a market- nor land-based economy. Her civic concerns are reminiscent of a philanthropic ideal extant in the early eighteenth century which held that charity was voluntary but that, “properly employed . . . could foster nation national prosperity and power” by strengthening the condition of the populace (Andrew 198). While the civic responsibilities or philanthropic duties this obituary represents are readily evident, it also raises several underlying

issues that stem from questions of whether inheritance laws would take precedence over charity, especially since “the ownership of property [sufficed to] inherently oblige and entail the duties of charity” (Andrew 200). Moreover, this raises the issue of whether the application of the laws would change if no deceased left no heirs, such as Mrs. Gillison. While these are important considerations, they cannot be resolved with Mrs. Gillison. Her obituary offers no indication of whether her money was in any way encumbered through connections of landed wealth or whether it was acquired through commerce. Likewise, it does not indicate how much of her final estate these charitable donations comprised.

In a similar fashion, the obituary of the Reverend Jonathan Davies is a testament to the man’s benevolence, but unlike Mrs. Gillison’s, it marries his accomplishments and endowments to the community’s benefit. As a former provost of Eton College and headmaster of Eton school, his gifts to the University of Cambridge, 1000*l.*, and King’s College, 2000*l.*, seem to be fitting endowments(*GM LXXX*, January 1810, 88). His gift, moreover, is a testament to his accomplishment: his gift to the University of Cambridge was “for the purpose of founding a scholarship there, similar to those of Lord Craven, one of which he had himself enjoyed” (*GM LXXX*, January 1810, 87-8). The award he received by Lord Craven’s dispensation and the subsequent achievement in his studies are given treatment equal to the dispensation he bequeathed to his alma maters. In this instance, Reverend Davies’ benefit is recognized as a direct benefit to others which, after the fashion of late eighteenth-century philanthropy, held that “charity must be given, even to the deserving, only in the manner most conducive to the improvement of manners and morals” (Andrew 200). Such improvement might easily be acquired through educational opportunities. Commerce, primogeniture, and entailment, however, are not the conduits for these transactions between individuals and the social contexts—philanthropy is. Their obituaries serve more as a character than an economic indicators, focusing on charity of the individuals and not their estate value.

This content shift in during the period from 1730 to 1830 might lend itself to various interpretations. Perhaps the variation signifies a shift in social representation, an inclination toward a strict propriety that frowned on a public display of personal means which would reach its zenith in the stereotypically repressive Victorian ideal of well-mannered decency. On the contrary, this shift might purpose an implicit moral inculcation by providing models of morality most remarkable because “they are not distinguished by any striking or wonderful vicissitudes” and are, therefore, more easily emulated (*Rambler*, III, 320). It is most likely that the presence of both modes of economic representation, strictly commercial and strictly philanthropic, points toward a general widening of the social networks or, at least, records a multiple aspects of a public character identifiable with the Christian ethic stressing charity and benevolence. Undeniably, however, the presence of varied financial threads running through *The Gentleman’s Magazine* indicates their presence in the contemporary culture and denotes some importance to the function of that culture. Given the extremely public nature of this document, the representation of these threads is hardly casual, seemingly analogous to the presences of these threads in the lives of the magazine’s readership, within their circles of influence and concern. The irregularity of their occurrence throughout the first hundred years of publication again makes any assignation of value dangerous; in the hundred year sample of 4,191 death notices and obituaries, obituaries that make direct mention of the economic means or dispensations of the deceased seem inconsequential. Its importance derives in part from its purpose; these obituaries provide are the thread that binds the death notices and obituaries to the contractual interactions, Marriage and Preferments, to the “Bank Rupts,” and to the monthly “Bill of Mortality,” as well

as the “Prices of Goods, Stocks & Co.” and ultimately that ties them to the original subtitle of *The Gentleman’s Magazine: The Monthly Intelligencer*. These visible connections between these adjacent features in the magazine and, overall, their connection to the larger context of the magazine itself pictures an economic web which contributes to a cultural representation and social picture of the magazine’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readership.

Historicizing the Obituary: The Eminent, Considerable, Remarkable Deceased

An important starting point for examining the representation of cultural singularities in the obituaries is the terms with which *The Gentleman’s Magazine* framed its public characters. Such broad categorization has the advantage of treating the individual death notices and obituaries in the terms the magazine itself define. Essentially it considers them in terms of themselves, within the confines of their original trends and not those in modern generalizations. From a sociological perspective, function of the obituary form: it “is part of the social apparatus for the selective ‘justification’ of certain individuals at death . . . [making a] case for the merits of the an individual . . . within a purely secular space” (Fowler 41). From its initial advertisement, the magazine promised to open this “secular space” and represent the “Deaths of Eminent Persons” (qtd. in Carlson 30). In January 1731, “Deaths of *Eminent Persons*” headed the death notice category (*GM I*, January 1731, 32-34). For the next forty-four years, until December 1775, eminence is implicit; the headings most commonly and logically read “List of Deaths” or later “Deaths,” and they are made up of death notices, not obituaries. This 1731 to 1775 period is represented by 817 death notices and covers the editorship of Cave and Henry; on the average they include 18.57 death notices per issue. Historicizing their choice of the word “eminent” is a useful means of establishing the norm that the magazine’s choice of the people who were considered public characters. The *OED* traces two denotations of “eminent” prevalent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. First, it suggested the distinctions particular to the social hierarchy in England, “exalted, dignified in rank or station.” This speaks to an exclusivity reserved for members of the English peerage or, perhaps, nobility beyond the English system, as well as the baronetage and the gentry, who rank below the nobility, but above those without station, such as “Rt. Hon Ridgeway Pitt, Earl of Londonderry, at Knightsbridge” (*GM XXXV*, January 1765, 46). Either group, the nobility and the gentry, would likely be at odds with a single network grouping. To a lesser extent, this distinction in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* also suggests the various lesser offices of the clergy.

The *OED* provides another definition of eminence applicable to the period from 1731 to 1780. At the time, the meaning lacked the irony or sarcasm that, according to the *OED*, modern usage connotes. Alongside the exclusivity denoted by rank, eminence also denoted a person who was “[d]istinguished in character or attainments, or by success in any walk of life.” This definition opens more meritocratic possibilities for representation of eighteenth-century culture. A representative group for this meritocratic connotation is the deaths of military and naval officers, such as “Capt. *Hardwick of Lincolnshire*” (*GM XV*, January 1745, 52) and “Capt. Howdell, an half pay Officer of Drag.” (*GM XL*, December 1770, 591). Neither of them are distinguished by anything except their rank, unlike “Wm. Tucker, Esq; late of the Royal Navy” (*GM XL*, 1770, 591). Since his death notice gives precedence to his title while giving more words to his former position in the Royal Navy, his title of esquire, whether it was meritocratic or hereditary, is balanced against his profession and both are balanced against other officers with no title. However, lower ranking officers of less distinction are also classed “eminent” by their

inclusion, officers such as “Lt. Pearson of the 66th R. at Newcastle” (*GM XXX*, December 1760, 46). The equality afforded the treatment the death notices provide this swath of military men with gentleman soldiers and higher ranking officers points to a leveling effect the death notice is having in general, a broadening of what constitutes eminence. Even more interesting is the rather broad range of deaths that signify distinguishing attainment, some personal acquirement.

Some the death notices, not surprisingly, record the deaths of people who have attained some respect in their profession, such as “Mr Solomon Lowe, master of a private academy at *Hammersmith*, and an accurate grammarian” (*GM XX*, December 1750, 570). Others are reduced to their profession and its apparent connections to their jobs and contributions to the community: “Mr *Townsend*, an eminent Hosier in *Cheapside*, and one of the Governor’s of *St Thomas’s Hospital*” (*GM XX*, December 1740, 623). From the outset of the magazine, age merits note; from 1731 until 1775, only three sample months included no ages in the death notices, December 1745, January 1770, and January 1775. This is not to assert age was a prominent indicator of eminence included in the death notices; during this time, the ages of only forty-eight people indicate some eminence. Of those, only ten died younger than eighty. Eleven of the remaining thirty-six were older than one hundred. These received the longest entries when the deceased exhibited some indications of good health. Robert Bristow, for instance, who died “aged 105, at *Stamford, Lincolnshire*, (He had lost his Hearing, but had his sight and other Senses to the last)” (*GM I*, January 1731, 33). Most outstanding for the period is the death notice which lists: “Mrs. Moore, at *Enneskellon, Scotld*, aged 120” (*GM XXXV*, January 1765, 46). The most noticeably infrequent but nevertheless interesting are the death notices for popular figures of national interest. Their entries are often more brief than others and seemingly require no introduction or accompanying explanation of their eminence. The best example is “*Rob Roy*, the famous *Scots Highlander*” (*GM X*, January 1735, 51).

Another, rarer, tendency in this era is to buck occasionally against eminence in favor of general interest. Of interest, most often, are the circumstances of death. A fairly benign example is the death of Nathaniel Micklethwait, “Esq; at *Croyden* suddenly as he was washing his hands” (*GM V*, January 1735, 51). This sort of short, declarative note is most common in such instances. It would make sense that some sense of deference owed to the eminent would exclude having the events of their death reported. Nevertheless, a death notice for Henry Herbert, whose eminence derives from his titles as the “E. of *Pembroke and Montgomery*, and Baron *Herbert*, groom to the stole to his majesty and, and 1st commissioner for *Westminster* bridgo [sic],” died ultimately of an “overfatness, or swelling of the intestines,” following a day of occasional suffering (*GM XX*, January 1750, 43). This death notice indicates a level of bodily intimacy that calls for a less publicized account of his death, particularly since he is an earl. That his death notice is exceptional in this regard, however, does hint at a propriety reserved more for the titled classes, though not for him, particularly upon his “being opened” (*GM XX*, January 1750, 43).

Even more rare are the death notices that have an instructional purport: a year prior to his death, Mr. Charles Martin was bitten by “a mad dog . . . He had used several methods of cure, and was supposed out of danger, till about a month ago, when some symptoms of the disorder appeared, which increased daily, till in spite of all the assistance imaginable he miserably expir’d” (*GM XV*, January 1745, 52). The miserable death is used to underscore the significant note that “[t]his instance, with too many others, justifies the opinion of Boerhaave, that an infallible cure for the bite of a mad dog is as yet a secret” (*GM XV*, January 1745, 52). The additional line tacked on to the end makes this death notice most idiosyncratic for framing the death in terms of what appears a cultural concern and hinting, slightly, at a call to action for

discovering the secret of a cure. It reads like an afterthought. The allusion to the studies of the Dutch physician Dr. Herman Boerhaave is worth mentioning because it recalls an earlier treatment of the man in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; following his death in 1738, he is the subject of Johnson's second biography for the magazine, published in 1739, six years prior to this reference. It occupied space in the magazine from January to April in 1739. Although Johnson's biographical account makes no mention of Boerhaave's medical opinions on curing the bites of rabid dog, specificity of the reference implies a thorough understanding of Boerhaave's work, suggestive of the attention a biographer for and contributor to the magazine might exhibit.

The bulk of the death notices during this period, however, are in sharp contrast to Mr. Martin's, exhibiting little suggestion of editorial intervention past their inclusion in the magazine. The death notices during Cave's and Henry's tenure embody Carlson's definition of the historical miscellany precursor in which, "[i]f a reader found amusement, it was incidental and not inherent in the historical . . . material that formed the staple of their contents" (36). These are fairly consistent and, by comparison to the following era, fairly bland in their form and their offerings: all include the date of death; most the name of the deceased and, less frequently, the additional, accepted claims to eminence. Again, however, public representation at all afforded some voyeuristic pleasure for the audience. The broadening characters deemed worthy of this appellation was part of the process in which the collective memory was less "conceptualised in terms of national greatness" and was increasingly focused on "what *new forms of distinction* might be honoured in a radically modern society" (Fowler 49-50). Successive representations of the culture range even wider in their coverage of the populace. Consequently, they evince an opening of the reasons, perhaps even less honorable to the "radically modern society," that a person might be eminent, while maintaining and expanding their representation. As a representation of the public, the death notices branch outwards, the network extending into increasingly nontraditional notions of eminence.

After Nichols acquires the editorship in 1778, the scope of the coverage widens, especially as the number of deceased represented increased. From 1780 until 1815, Nichols put 2236 obituaries in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which is an average of 147.88 obituaries per paper during that thirty-five year span, proof that Nichols' concentrated efforts to invigorate the obituary form were coming to fruition during his own editorship. These efforts come to evidence shifting focuses in editorial policy; most notably, a nomenclature more familiar to the modern reader, "obituary" and "memoir," supplants "death notice" as a way to categorize deaths in the practical information at the end of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. This trend is increasing frequency of Lives, Memoirs, or Character Sketches published in the national or foreign news and, later, preceding the obituaries until they are finally subsumed in obituaries as obituaries. Between 1775 and 1795, nine Lives, Memoirs, or Character Sketches appear in the front of the magazine. By 1815, obituaries are being headed by Memoirs which, themselves, become Obituaries that head a briefer accounts that maintain the tradition of the earlier death notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, usually headed under "Deaths." Tracing the evolution of these categories indicates some of the general cultural trends in how and who the magazine chooses to represent the deceased. This approach is best for locating coincidental cultural strains portrayed in the obituary form and for individualizing the public character.

By 1775, eminence is no longer the standard, though it is still implicit in the five different headings. In the course of one year, 1780, "Deaths of considerable Persons" at the beginning of the year becomes "Obituary of considerable Persons" by December. The most

obvious difference in this interval is the shift from “Deaths” to “Obituary,” but equally important is the shift from “eminent” to “considerable” in categorizing which people are represented. The *OED* indicates a subtle shift in meanings; considerable persons are “important; of consequence or distinction; highly regarded or esteemed.” While these connotations allow room for the eminence, particularly of rank and position, of the previous issues to determine whose deaths will be represented in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, they strike a stronger balance between the distinction of the titled with those deserving more general regard. Alongside the Right Hon. Hans Stanley, F. R. S. appears “Tho. Hope, esq; [who is] well known in the trading world” and “Archi. Stewart, esq; late an eminent merchant in London, and formerly lord provost of Edinburgh,” as well as notices for the clergy and soldiers (*GM L*, January 1780, 50-51). They all share space, however, with entries for “Charles Bowlker, universally acknowledged to have been the best angler in Great Britain” (*GM L*, January 1780, 50-51), or a later obituary for “Mr. Ignatius Sancho, grocer and oilman,” who was esteemed for his social connections as “a character immortalized by the epistolary correspondence of Sterne” (*GM L*, December 1780, 591). These are men noteworthy for their achievements, the character of which is the obvious connections to some external, public network, either commercial, civic, or social.

By 1785, a marked change accompanies a new heading: “Obituary of considerable Persons; with Biographical Anecdotes.” This heading marks the explicit influence of biography on the obituary form. More noticeable is the addition of “Anecdotes” to the heading, which to Nichols’ later work, the *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, published from 1812-1816, near the end of editorship. This tome undoubtedly, as Butt and Carnall suggest, had its beginnings in the details of the obituaries Nichols culled from *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (271). Unlike the modern denotation for “anecdotes,” the eighteenth-century sense of the word, according to the *OED*, was “secret, private, or hitherto unpublished narratives or details of history.” It is a denotation suggesting the direct application for antiquarians. Such narratives are easily recorded and catalogued. It is during this era, for instance, that age is regularly indicated in obituaries and not reserved to exceptions like Henry Francisco who died “aged 134; after an illness of 45 days brought on by an attack of the fever and ague” (*GM XC*, December 1820, 570). By 1810 and through 1830, roughly 50% of the obituaries include an age of the deceased. Age, after all, can be easily and efficiently recorded by an antiquarian.

Of more particular interest, however, are the traits of the deceased, the sort of traits Johnson had in mind when he wrote that biographers should capture pertinent, character-defining details in a biography: “[t]here are many invisible circumstances which, whether we read as enquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences” (*Rambler*, III, 321). He prefers the traits of the person, the individual character, over lists of accomplishments. These are the sort of traits that Nichols, too, favored in his obituaries, but he is willing to balance a public virtue with public accomplishments particularly publications. He focused his anecdotes, after all, on literary figures. The general format of these obituaries, however, lacks the specificity that Johnson prescribes. Most begin with a brief mention of vocational accomplishments or, more likely, an almost blatant declaration of character traits, which indicate some of the values of the readership. The implication is that these virtues are as worth emulating as the lives are worth remembering. Virtue held in such blatant regard captures the moral character of the age as clearly as Homer’s Odysseus, who is skilled in all ways of contending, arguably represents the trait most highly regarded by the ancient Greeks. The weight of a civilization’s values, however, is too much for any one obituary in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. Their assemblage represents the complex

texture of moral virtue in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in a way one character could not. Moreover, these attributes are inextricably linked to the deceased; they become public characters who, by way of their publicity in the obituaries, represent the character traits most valued by the times.

Though they present some abstract standards, Nichols' obituaries are balanced with the biographical details and anecdotes deemed most noteworthy and definitive of the person's life, so that a forty-two line obituary for "Edward Wynne, esq; barrister at law" records that "[t]his gentleman's knowledge and proficiency in polite literature could only be exceeded by his charity and benevolence," and gives credit to and a synopsis of six anonymous, legal tracts he printed (*GM LV*, January 1785, 77). The moral values written on the obituary of Edward Wynne elevate education through his "knowledge and proficiency." To a higher degree, these values are also the product of character, evident in his "charity and benevolence" and his anonymity and reservation to publish what he had printed. The other proofs of his character, his publications, underscore what, presumably for Nichols, was an important means of establishing public character: they were proofs that could be documented as "historical fact" untainted by "panegyric tributes" set forth by his statement of editorial policy for obituaries (*GM LX*, December 1790, 1147). They stood as a very public testament to private virtue, despite their anonymous publication.

A similar instance is the obituary of Mrs. Anne Joseph, which opens with a treatment of her character before moving to the cause of her death. Her character was remarkable for her "great soundness of understanding, and quickness of apprehension, [and] this amiable young lady united a sweetness of disposition, animation, and cheerfulness [sic]; which made her a general favorite with all who knew her" (*GM LXXXV*, January 1815, 88). In a fashion similar to Mr. Wynne, Mrs. Joseph's character traits, her mental and emotional faculties, are worthy of praise and memory. Unlike Mr. Wynne, one of her strengths of character is to be well-liked by others. Admittedly, Mr. Wynne's character traits have a direct benefit for the his society, but Mrs. Joseph's graces put her in a more direct and more immediate benefit to those around her, endearing her to all of her acquaintance. While these examples are not anomalous and while they do suggest the range of character traits that encourage social intercourse, attributes appreciated by the readership of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, they are not comprehensive. Even to characterize them as representative of the social behaviors that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-readers might have held in some esteem is to brush over the nuances of moral virtue pictured through the deceased.

By January 1800, the direction Nichols ascribed to the obituary form's representation of public behavior and public character was diversified under a new heading, in which the importance the anecdotal record becomes more apparent in a slight change: "Obituary, with Anecdotes, of Remarkable Persons." Later, by 1825, the title becomes the more familiar "Obituary." In the meanwhile, the varied lengthening of the entries does not only give rise to shading in the moral virtues of the deceased, but also invites a broadening of content especially noteworthy for its almost morbid attention to the circumstances of death. Relaying the particulars of a person's death in this era blends the journalistic with the sensational; while the information is newsworthy, its detail often seems calculated to shock. This tendency is much more pronounced in the later stages of Nichols' editorial leadership, and consistently seems reserved for the deaths of the more traditionally remarkable or considerable. They represent untitled people, in whose obituaries the details surrounding the deaths of "the illustrious General George Washington" and "Joseph Black, M.D. [the] professor of chemistry, and first physician to his

Majesty for Scotland,” whose deaths resulting from “an inflammatory sore throat” and “an apoplectic fit” are respectfully conveyed (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85).

In the same spread, however, is a pair representative of the vein of sensationalism running through the expanding anecdotes. They represent only a slice of the obituaries even on these pages, representing only two of eleven. They are blatantly different from the other nine in content: the other nine focus much of the biographical information on the lives of the deceased prior to death. With their journalistic bent, the sensationalist biographical obituaries tend to be more concerned with the aftermath of the deaths. While the death of “Miss Conolly, of Dawson-street, Dublin” was attributed to her “[e]xtreme parsimony and avarice,” which had given rise to the suspicion she was “amassing great wealth: and to that opinion she unfortunately fell a victim” (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85). Typically, the causes of death are glossed over as the result of some medical condition. But in Miss Conolly’s biographical obituary, the causes of death are, legalistically, examined first as a matter of motive, then as a physical cause: she “was found strangled by some unknown villain . . . with several marks of savage violence on her body, and her mouth stopped with an handkerchief” (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85). Moreover, her obituary posts leads in finding the possible murderer, her servant, who was seen leaving her house three days previously (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85).

A similar case is the death of “Mrs. Abbot, wife of Mr. A. broker,” whose “head was literally beat to pieces by a mallet, which lay by her, and her left ear was completely torn off” (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85). Such lurid details can serve little other purpose than to startle the readership of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* and tantalize it with the possibility of further sensational stories. Her biographical obituary furthers the journalistic quality evident in Miss Conolly’s; Mrs. Abbot’s entry includes news of a magistrate’s investigation, noting that his questioning of both the husband and a “Jew, who had repeatedly frequented the house” (*GM LXXX*, January 1800, 84-85). Admittedly, violent murders merit some presentation that will distinguish them from natural deaths, but these obituaries serve different purposes than those whose format centers around character; these are news reports, more concerned with particulars of a crime, the apprehension of the criminals, and consequences for those involved. Their narrative mode, however, seems designed to maintain reader interest in a way that the repetition of dry facts, character attributes, and well-styled accolades cannot or, at least, they are designed to generate greater appeal for readers with less antiquarian interests.¹⁰ Admittedly, the infrequency of these sorts of obituaries is easily accounted for by the infrequency of such macabre murders, at least in regard to the number of natural deaths represented by the obituaries.

The gratuitous details of their deaths are not listed simply as a matter of journalistic integrity, but sometimes read like cautions against anti-social behaviors. The admonitory tone evokes the public character inversely, by calling attention to its absence. The language describing the death of “G. Bailey, son of Mr. B.” exemplifies the strand of admonition that runs through these sensational obituaries: “His death was occasioned by a squib being thrown at him, in what was fatally thought a joke. It exploded in his eyes, and, after dreadful suffering, produced a brain-fever, affording another melancholy instance of the impropriety of using such truly dangerous compositions” (*GM LXXV*, December 1805, 1174). Like the deaths of Mrs. Abbot and Miss Conolly, which were overpowered by the sensational details of their murders, the

¹⁰ *The Gentleman’s Magazine* had an advantage over modern magazines and newspapers in its ability to balance entertainment, though sensationalist, with terse treatments of public character and society. Fergusson laments that this is “a tradition suddenly defunct in an age when newspapers have lost their self-confidence and the duty to inform defers cravenly to the duty to entertain” (151).

presentation of G. Bailey's death is overpowered by the "impropriety" that caused it. Its singularity and integrity as a record of one person's death is downplayed when it is framed as an exemplum, exhorting the audience to avoid carelessness with fireworks. A much more subtle exemplum is conveyed in the death of "J. Honeyball; who for the trifling wager of 1s. 6d. undertook to drink three quarts of beer in twelve minutes; which he performed within the time, but died in five hours afterwards" (*GM LXXX*, January 1810, 92). The disparaging description of the wager itself, that it is "trifling," downplay the gravitas due to his death and, in obituaries, to its record. J. Honeyball's death, like G. Bailey's, is framed by its avoidable circumstances, but the consequence of his sensational folly, of his choices to bet and drink heavily, are as cautionary as the direct warning appended to the death of G. Bailey.

The remarkable circumstances of some deaths, barring journalistic or moralistic implications, serves to justify the gratuitous detailing of the deaths. Their inclusion seems for the sake of shock value. Wm. Shipley, for instance, died from an accidental hunting wound, but *The Gentleman's Magazine* offers an anecdote focused more on the particulars than on the death of the man. The magazine notes that Mr. Shipley was shot by a "peasant" who was carrying an additional gun for Mr. Shipley's use, which "went off within two or three yards of Mr. Shipley, and lodged its contents in the back of his head, which literally shattered it to pieces" (*GM XC*, December 1820, 572). The close description of violence that led to the death of Mr. Shipley is easily reducible to a report that treats his death more respectfully, at least with deference due to an esquire, the "eldest son the Very Reverend the Dean of St. Asaph." (*GM XC*, December 1820, 572). Instead the details lucidly represent the gruesome quality of his death. Such treatment is reminiscent of Cave's handling of the death of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery.

The obituary of Miss Peggy Hambly is equally revealing and provides the intimate specifics of her death, which was "occasioned by a pimple, which first rose on the back part of her neck, and, daily increasing in length spread itself into the size of a large turnip, resembling a body of putrified [sic] flesh. No medical assistance could reach the nature of her disorder, and, after languishing several months, she expired without the least struggle" (*GM LXXV*, January 1805, 86). While she is not remarkable for her connection to the peerage, the means of her death, as in earlier issues, make her remarkable. It smacks of the medical treatment given during Cave's editorship to Mr. Charles Martin, who was bitten by a mad dog. Mr. Martin's death, however, is connected to the prevailing medical theories of the Dutch physician Dr. Herman Boerhaave. On the contrary, Miss Hambly's obituary stresses the grotesqueness of her final condition without considering attempts at medical treatment. Her obituary is most remarkable for its startling qualities. It is an example of a trend that increasing typifies the obituary form throughout Nichols' editorship and afterward into 1830. More than anything, these representations underscore the voyeuristic quality so appealing to early magazine readers. Such gruesome, intimate details were not the public's due, yet their logical portrayal of as part of a life and death's record opened them to the public in a fashion that other news segments could not.

Historicizing the headings for the obituaries provides a sense of *The Gentleman's Magazine's* policy regarding which cross-sections of the populace the obituaries were intended to represent. It is a treatment of localized generalizations that allows for closer attention to the obituaries in their context, affording an examination of public character truer its society and social representation. The connotations shift from the peerage, age, and the occasional odd circumstance of death with people whose eminence is relayed in the magazine, to the broadening groups of people regarded as considerable and, later, remarkable. This broadening might suggest

distant undertones of Johnson and his approach to biography, but without question, it demonstrates the extensive handiwork John Nichols and his editorial policies. Each approach calls for a more intimate study of a person's life and, in particular, a person's character opens the possibilities for portraying considerable or remarkable aspects of the readership. These tendencies are easily illustrated through examples that track the occurrence of different types of information. A widening representation of people also suggests shifts in a social context that are not as easily tracked as shifts in content elucidated through different headings.

Conclusion: Problems in Representation

Grappling with society as it is depicted in *The Gentleman's Magazine* is a matter of coming to terms with discourse and representation, particularly in the obituaries. They are more than simple records of death or memories of life. They are the submissions, representative of the people who mattered to networks of anonymous correspondents and readers. But they are also editorial choices, calculated to entertain and amuse or to edify, but ultimately to sell more issues by appealing to the tastes of the readers. The obituaries listed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* represent cultural value judgments. Nowhere are these values more apparent than in their omissions. The January 1780 issue lists the deaths of two men, Robert Douglas, the governor of St. Christopher's, and the Honorable Hans Stanley (see Appendix A). The circumstances of Douglas's death seem almost humorous; because he was "rather corpulent and heavy," his death was occasioned by leaning against a rail that broke under the strain (see Appendix A). His painful death resulted from the ensuing fall and followed a day of "excruciating torture" (see Appendix A). But the editor's diction in describing his estate seems at once fitting and funny: "He has left the bulk of his fortune (which is very considerable) to his brother," an estate that seems to recall Douglas's own very considerable bulk. The details of Douglas's death are in stark contrast, however, to the absence of details surrounding the Honorable Hans Stanley. Stanley was a suicide and killed himself "cut his own throat," like his father, in a "sudden fit of frenzy" (MacDonald and Murphy 234). The taboo is represented by the its absence and signifies a social norm that guided editorial choice. Of course, accounting for the absences is nearly impossible, particularly considering that the obituaries did include suicides that were listed as such. The presence of such gaps in representation stress the challenges inherent in trying to quantify representation.

An accurate picture of the society and networks pictured in the obituaries in *The Gentleman's Magazine* is complicated by social statements and empty spaces or taboos, by patterns of representation that overlie other equally important patterns. Gender is laid over social standing which in turn is layered over reputation or rarity or irregularity. Even this manner of representation, of picturing the obituaries as layers, suffers from oversimplification. A better strategy might be speak of the patterns as a comingling, as twisted threads that are not easily teased out. But teasing the strands out is what a study must seek to do. The best place to start is perhaps by picturing a pattern of the generalities, a framework that can be filled in with the specificity of the actual circumstances of the people represented in the obituaries. Sylvanus Urbanus, Gentleman, is the framework of generality *The Gentleman's Magazine* itself provides. Such a framework would, most likely, not lend the sorts of new insights into the culture that an examination of the individuality in the obituaries would, but it would be the logical, most important place to start.

The enduring vibrancy of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, is its ability as a print form to provide one of the most engaging pictures of the various social networks typical of the eighteenth century. Most research of *The Gentleman's Magazine* itself has focused on author attribution, which offers a practical means of access the social networks of the time and place in which the form was constructed. Further work will, undoubtedly, continue in that vein. The magazine's ability to present static depictions of the mores, values, and institutions specific to the eighteenth century happens on the pages of correspondence but especially in the columns of the obituary, where the virtues of public characters come to exemplify the character of the populace. The evolution of this form and historicized contexts are a means of access the richness of sociocultural material the magazine present as a historical document. It is an area with great potential for future research. A general understanding of the obituary form in *The Gentleman's Magazine* would be an examination of the correspondents who contributed to the magazine; such a study would connect the obituaries with the current canon of research on *The Gentleman's Magazine*. A more specific understanding would benefit from in-depth treatments of various sociocultural markers, like the occupations represented, to frame historicized notions like eminence, which in turn serve to individualize the obituaries. This sort of scholarship is the necessary next step for understanding the picture of the society *The Gentleman's Magazine* presents; it must be built on extant scholarship that seeks to examine the social networks represented by correspondents. Such study holds promise for examining social markers, maintaining the humanity of the people who are marked by them, and reinforcing the notion that, ultimately, the intersection of all social networks is the people.

Births, Marriages, and Deaths.

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 Have the honour to wait on you from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and commons of the city of London, in common-council assembled, to present you the freedom of it as granted, in this box, made of heart of oak, ornamented and embellished with gold agreeable to the unanimous vote of the court of common-council, on the 14th day of February last, for your long and faithful services to your country; for your ready acceptance, at the call of your sovereign, of the important charge of Commander of the British Fleet, in this of imminent danger; for the anxious attention shewed by you in every instance of your conduct to the safety of this country; for your judicious ability, and spirited behaviour, on the 23rd of July, 1775, in your attack on the French fleet; for your generous and gallant efforts to renew the engagement in the afternoon of that day; for the want of obediency to your orders by the Vice-admiral of the Blue; for the great protection given to our trade; for which we were mutually indebted to you for the safe arrival of the East and West India fleets; for your animating conduct and example, happily followed by the several officers and crew of the British Fleet; as contrary terror to our enemies; and obliged them to seek shelter in their own ports, by an ignominious flight.

17. At Litchfield, Major Patton, to Miss Dockett, niece to D. Garrick, esq; John Macnamara, esq; of Lincoln's Inn, to Miss Jones of Kensington.
 18. Rev. Mr. Collinson, rector of Kingston, Surrey, to Mrs. Burt.
 Sparr, Philip, esq; brother of Sir John, to Miss A. M. Homer.
 24. John Cooper, esq; to Miss Cotes, sister of Sir Charles.
 DEPARTS.
 1. Ately, at Jamaica, Hon. Lieut. Gen. Tho. Stately, brother to the earl of Derby, and member for the co. of Lancaster.
 Hon. Mr. Hay, governor of Barbadoes.
 At Chelsea, Mr. H. Whitlaw, attorney at law, and legal-keeper of the court-petition.
 Right Hon. Lady Camden.
 Mr. Bevan, relict of Arthur Bevan, esq; Sir Thomas.
 At Eddon, Lady Tattersall, relict of Sir Thomas.
 Rev. Humphry Griffiths, rector of Ripon, Herefordshire, and 53 years schoolmaster at Prelegh.
 On his passage to England with the colours of Fort Mifflin, taken from the French, Major B. S. Bate, aide-de-camp to Brigadier-general Brantworth.
 Robt. Raker, esq; the late surviving nephew of Alexander Pope, esq;
 At Hertford, Mr. Kitchin, aged 104.
 Oct. 24. At St. Christopher's, Robert Douglas, esq; governor of all his majesty's forts and fortifications in that island. This gentleman's death was occasioned by a most extraordinary accident; indeed; leaning against the pillar which enclosed his court-yard, and being rather complacent and heavy, the wind blew away, and he falling with great violence, occasioned a contusion of the spine, of which he died in 24 hours, labouring under the most excruciating tortures, but perfectly placid and resigned. He has left the sole of his fortune, which is very considerable, to his brother, Capt. John Douglas, of his Majesty's ship the Terrible.
 Nov. 13. At Chirkburn in Kent, the Rev. John Lawson, B. D. R. of Swancombe in that county, and formerly fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. This gentleman was remarkable for his knowledge in ancient and modern geography, and was admired, and his acquaintance courted, by those who had a true taste for that sublime science.
 Dec. 26. Of a lingering illness, in the 72th year of his age, Tho. Heppes, esq; well known in the trading world, as one of the first characters (vizt. this or perhaps any other age ever produced. He was originally descended from the elder branch of the family of Heppes in Scotland; and, endowed with great natural abilities, he with unremitting application paid the credit and assidue of the house of Amsterdam, which continues to bear his name, to such a height, as perhaps no other house of trade in any country ever arrived. Not

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 Nor were his thoughts in business confined to this object only, having for many years past, first in the West India, and afterwards in the Dutch East India Companies; where, particularly in the latter, he established such wide laws and regulations in their trade, as must make his memory respected and adored as long as those companies shall exist. And it will be remembered by the latest posterity, that a merchant could at once purchase laws to be enacted in the East, and, by his moneyed power, greatly sway the scale of empire in Europe. He was tall in all his dealings; and friendly, worse he had once placed his confidence, to a degree that by many might be thought to exceed the bounds of prudence in trade.
 R. v. Mr. Richardson, rector of Crenanville, Suffolk.
 28. G. Berth Tynshale, esq; nephew to Lord Dismar.
 29. Lady Cuth, relict of Sir Richard, mother of Sir John, grand-mother of Lord Brewinlow, and sister to Sir John Brownlow, vicount Tyconnet.
 Mrs. Wilton, wife of J. Wilton, esq; of Dulham Tower, Wiltshire.
 Near Hereford, Constance Bickerton, esq; aged 72.
 31. At Ludlow, Charles Boulker, universally acknowledged to have been the best angler in Great Britain.
 Jan. 1. At Ebbwham, Lady Hudson, relict of Sir Charles.
 At York, Tho. Fountaine, esq; aged 22.
 2. The lady of Tho. Lawrence, M. D.
 3. Near Birmm, Philip Orenville, esq;
 At Richmond, Elix. Oran, esq; aged 90.
 Arthur Jones, esq; many years eminent florist of flowers for Halston and Finchbury divisions.
 4. Arch. Finney, esq; captain in a marching regiment.
 8. Mr. Ward, inventor of the cork-jackets.
 Richard Kent, esq; major of the North-ampshire militia.
 9. Rich. Ireland, esq; of Ringette Place, aged 80.
 Bp. Brasili, esq; a director of the Bank and of the Sun fire office.
 Sebastian Humphreys, esq; aged 71.
 At Barnes, Geo. Lambly, esq;
 At Ludington near Bury, Chas. Blake, esq;
 11. Jephthah, esq;
 Rich. Mordant, esq; barrister of Gray's Inn.
 At Chelsea, Griffith Price, esq; consul.
 72. At Lindley, Shropshire, Robert More, esq; F. R. S.
 Right Hon. Hans Stanley, F. R. S. conferrer of his majesty's household, governor of the Isle of Wight, treasurer of the British Museum, and member for Southampton.
 13. Mr. Dewar, many years head clerk of the Exchequer office at the bank.

Deaths of considerable Persons.
 10. Nathan Richardson, esq; a Lisbon merchant.
 10. Tho. Darrington, esq; of Seeth.
 Mr. Roberts, master of Bank coffee-house.
 Sir J. H. More, bart. by whose death the title becomes extinct.
 Sir Archibald MacDonald, bart.
 At the Herald's College, Isaac Herd, esq;
 17. John Faulford, esq; of an eminent and honourable family in Devonshire.
 At Wapping, Mr. Tho. Dilworth, well known by his many useful publications for youth.
 18. At Canterbury, aged 83, Lady Head, relict of the late Rev. Sir John Head, bart. and abbees of that diocese.
 19. Mrs. Ludford, widow of the late John Ludford, esq; of Andley-Hill, Warwickshire, first of Sir Roger Newdigate, bart.
 Rev. Mr. Stockdale, one of the vicars choral in York cathedral, near of St. Mary, Bishop-hill, in that city, and of Hylton near Feverslinton.
 23. Sir Arthur Molineux, bart.
 At Elcombe, Kent, Mr. Tho. Elcombe, farmer, whose ancestors were farmers there in the reign of Henry IV.
 24. At Bath, Arch. Stewart, esq; late an eminent merchant in London, and formerly lord provost of Edinburgh.
 At Steyning, Mrs. Armstrong, aged 110.
 Robt. Field, esq; of Hitchen-hatch, Bucks, aged 72.
 26. At Greenwich, Capt. Jas. Montagu, aged 80.
 27. At Station-hall, advanced in years, Mr. George Hawk, rector and wine-house-keeper to the Company of Stationers. He was formerly a bookeller in Fleet-street, and many years kept a shop during the fashion at Turnbridge-Wells. He was a man of fair character, and much respected by the nobility and gentry who frequented his shop.
 GAZETTE PROMOTIONS.
 Dec. 1. LORD ONLOW, treasurer, and Sir Rich. Worley, by comptroller, of his majesty's household.
 6. John Smith, esq; appointed, by the 14th year, of Ireland, one of the commissioners of the murder.
 7. Lord Oha. Spencer, treasurer of his majesty's chamber.
 Frederick North, esq; one of the chamberlains of his majesty's revenue.
 Sam. Hayes, of Avenham, esq; a governor of the county of Warwick.
 11. Patrick Brydson, esq; accomptant and comptroller general of lamp duties.
 CIVIL PROMOTIONS.
 LORD GRANHAM, chief justice in eyre, North of Trent.
 Lord W. Grey's, high steward for Bewdley in the room of Lord Iyvelton.
 Dr. Simpson, official of London archdeaconry.
 Lord Breuchamp, conferrer of the household.
 Col. P. Flew, a groom of the bedchamber.
 Gen. Conduitt, lieutenant of Barbadoes.

50
 To this address the Admiral answered: "I receive, with the warmest gratitude, the valuable mark of the regard of the city of London, testified by their unanimous vote of the 14th of February last; and I beg you to assure them, that the sincere zeal for the public, which has animated me during my forty years service, is in no degree altered by events which compelled me to retire from the high honour of the command of a British fleet."
 BARRISTERS.
 ADY. OF Hon. Chs. Townsend, a daughter.
 Jan. 1. Lady of Lord viscount Galloway, a daughter.
 MARRIAGES.
 Dec. 30. G. Drummond, esq; to Miss Jan. 10. Rev. Caltes. Domes, vicar of London, to Miss Verter.
 12. Rev. John Eysland, jun. to Miss Wm. Chilling, of Wyford Lodge, esq; to Mrs. Baiter.

51
 Nor were his thoughts in business confined to this object only, having for many years past, first in the West India, and afterwards in the Dutch East India Companies; where, particularly in the latter, he established such wide laws and regulations in their trade, as must make his memory respected and adored as long as those companies shall exist. And it will be remembered by the latest posterity, that a merchant could at once purchase laws to be enacted in the East, and, by his moneyed power, greatly sway the scale of empire in Europe. He was tall in all his dealings; and friendly, worse he had once placed his confidence, to a degree that by many might be thought to exceed the bounds of prudence in trade.
 R. v. Mr. Richardson, rector of Crenanville, Suffolk.
 28. G. Berth Tynshale, esq; nephew to Lord Dismar.
 29. Lady Cuth, relict of Sir Richard, mother of Sir John, grand-mother of Lord Brewinlow, and sister to Sir John Brownlow, vicount Tyconnet.
 Mrs. Wilton, wife of J. Wilton, esq; of Dulham Tower, Wiltshire.
 Near Hereford, Constance Bickerton, esq; aged 72.
 31. At Ludlow, Charles Boulker, universally acknowledged to have been the best angler in Great Britain.
 Jan. 1. At Ebbwham, Lady Hudson, relict of Sir Charles.
 At York, Tho. Fountaine, esq; aged 22.
 2. The lady of Tho. Lawrence, M. D.
 3. Near Birmm, Philip Orenville, esq;
 At Richmond, Elix. Oran, esq; aged 90.
 Arthur Jones, esq; many years eminent florist of flowers for Halston and Finchbury divisions.
 4. Arch. Finney, esq; captain in a marching regiment.
 8. Mr. Ward, inventor of the cork-jackets.
 Richard Kent, esq; major of the North-ampshire militia.
 9. Rich. Ireland, esq; of Ringette Place, aged 80.
 Bp. Brasili, esq; a director of the Bank and of the Sun fire office.
 Sebastian Humphreys, esq; aged 71.
 At Barnes, Geo. Lambly, esq;
 At Ludington near Bury, Chas. Blake, esq;
 11. Jephthah, esq;
 Rich. Mordant, esq; barrister of Gray's Inn.
 At Chelsea, Griffith Price, esq; consul.
 72. At Lindley, Shropshire, Robert More, esq; F. R. S.
 Right Hon. Hans Stanley, F. R. S. conferrer of his majesty's household, governor of the Isle of Wight, treasurer of the British Museum, and member for Southampton.
 13. Mr. Dewar, many years head clerk of the Exchequer office at the bank.

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