

The book cover features a dense, repeating pattern of human faces in profile, rendered in a dark, textured style. A large, light-colored circle is centered on the cover, containing the title and subtitle. The title is written in a serif font, with 'The' and 'of' in italics, and 'ECONOMY' and 'CHARACTER' in all caps. The subtitle is also in italics. The author's name is at the bottom in a simple, all-caps font.

The
ECONOMY
of
CHARACTER

*Novels, Market Culture,
and the Business of
Inner Meaning*

DEIDRE SHAUNA LYNCH

A Virtual Tour of

The Economy of Character

Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning

by Deidre Shauna Lynch © 1998 by the University of Chicago Press

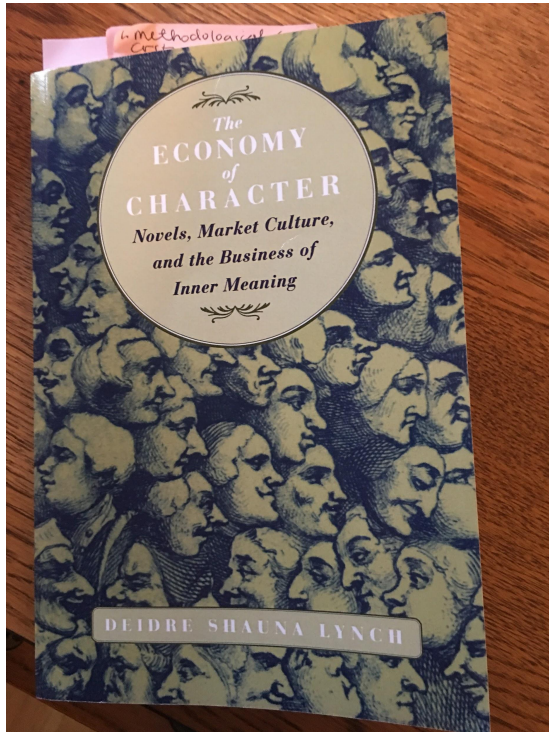
Your Tour Guide: Kelly Plante

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(Please feel free to go there on your electronic device for our discussion)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=XsLkYcJAzcIC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover...Or John Locke will Judge YOU



“Locke raises, that is, the problem of judging the book by its cover, of appraising character by face value. Second, Locke unfixes the system of differences underwriting our notion of what is proper to humans” (Lynch 52).

Physicality

- 265 pages of post-structuralist literary criticism
- 5 chapters in a general-to-particular flow
 - Part 1-The **Economies** of Characteristic Writing (New Historicist)
 - Intro-**Recognizing** Characters
 - Ch.1-**Fleshing Out** Characters
 - Ch.2-Fictions of **Social** Circulation, 1742-1782
 - Part 2-**Inside** Stories (Close Reading)
 - Ch.3-“**R**ound” Characters and **Romantic-Period Reading Relations**
 - Ch.4-Agoraphobia and Interiority in **Frances Burney’s** Fiction
 - Ch. 5-**Jane Austen** and the Social Machine
- w/ 8 illustrations ---> which you will see LATER!

Chapters

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*the overall structure of
this book suggests that
Burney the h Austen, epist-
omize round characters*

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PART TWO

Inside Stories

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in Nineteenth-Century Culture*
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1. Thesis of Work

“My emphasis on the economy of character has, I hope, the effect of historicizing the very category of literary and of historicizing the disciplinary divisions and divisions of audience and market that sustain it. ... History can also demonstrate something a bit different about our own individuating identification with the characters in our fiction--a consumption practice reshaped by that romantic recasting that made knowledge of characters' truths into personal, private knowledge: that our transactions with characters remain, that change notwithstanding, profoundly social experiences” (20).

2. Methodological/Theoretical Approach: Post Structuralism/New Historicism

1998: Post-Structuralist Heyday

Examples of when/how Lynch Diverts from Structuralist
Theory of the 1950s --->

Examples of post structuralism in Lynch's *Economy of Character*

— — —

- **Deconstructs binaries** such as round | flat (3), depth | legibility (12), individuals | types (48), caricatures | characters (cover), novels | Shakespeare (139), good | bad readers (149)
- **Negates structuralist commonplaces** (14-17, 19) including Ian Watt's structuralist 1951 book *Rise of the Novel* (4, 16, 124, 126, 268, 285-6)
- Studies **HOW** knowledge is produced; history/culture **CONDITIONS** the study of underlying structures; to understand **an object (character)** understand system of **characters** that produced it.
- Critiques **Levi-Strauss** (173) which Derrida loved to do (i.e., *Of Grammatology*)
- David Foster Wallace on Poststructuralism: "Derrida and Foucault see literary language not as a **tool but an environment**. A writer does not wield language; he is subsumed by it. **Language speaks us**, writing writes, etc."

3. Contribution

Departs from Ian Watt's structuralist Rise of the Novel reading of Jane Austen as the epitome, ultimate realization of what flat characters always had lurking underneath (4)

Literary Criticism

At the start of the eighteenth century, talk of literary "characters" referred as much to letters and typefaces as it did to persons in books. Yet by the nineteenth century, characters had become companions to their readers, friends with whom readers might spend time and empathize.

Although the story of this shift is usually told in terms of the "rise of the individual," Deidre Shauna Lynch proposes an ingenious alternative interpretation. Elaborating a "pragmatics of character," Lynch shows how readers used transactions with characters to accommodate themselves to newly commercialized social relations. Searching for the inner meanings of characters allowed readers both to plumb their own inwardness and to distinguish themselves from others. In a culture of mass consumption, argues Lynch, possessing a belief in the inexpressible interior life of a character rendered one's property truly private.

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"*The Economy of Character* is one of the most ambitious and important books about eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction to appear in years. Fundamentally rethinking the ways in which the history of the novel is conceived, Lynch shows how our very notion of 'character' is historically specific and socially constructed. After reading her book, we will no longer be able to assume that the work of the novel is and has always been to represent interiority, and we will appreciate the enormous amount of cultural and nationalizing work that had to be done before British fiction would be genericized in this way."
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"The best rethinking of the idea of 'character'—both novelistic and otherwise—in many years. Lynch offers a larger cultural perspective on the character-making activities of early British novels, seeing their work as part of other economies involving commodities and money as well as ideas and texts. Besides providing a new narrative of novelistic progress from Haywood and Defoe to Burney and Austen, *The Economy of Character* places novels in a richer context of other, less familiar narratives and discourses of character-definition. Sophisticated cultural analysis and knowing literary sensitivity."
—J. Paul Hunter, University of Chicago

Deidre Shauna Lynch is assistant professor of English at the State University of New York, Buffalo. She is coeditor of *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*.

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Cover illustration: detail from *Characters and Caricatures*, William Hogarth (1835?).
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library.



4. Virtual Tour of Chapters

(Pay No Attention to the Marginalia)

Illustrations

— — —

ILLUSTRATIONS

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- FIG. 2 William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricaturas* 65
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Figure 1

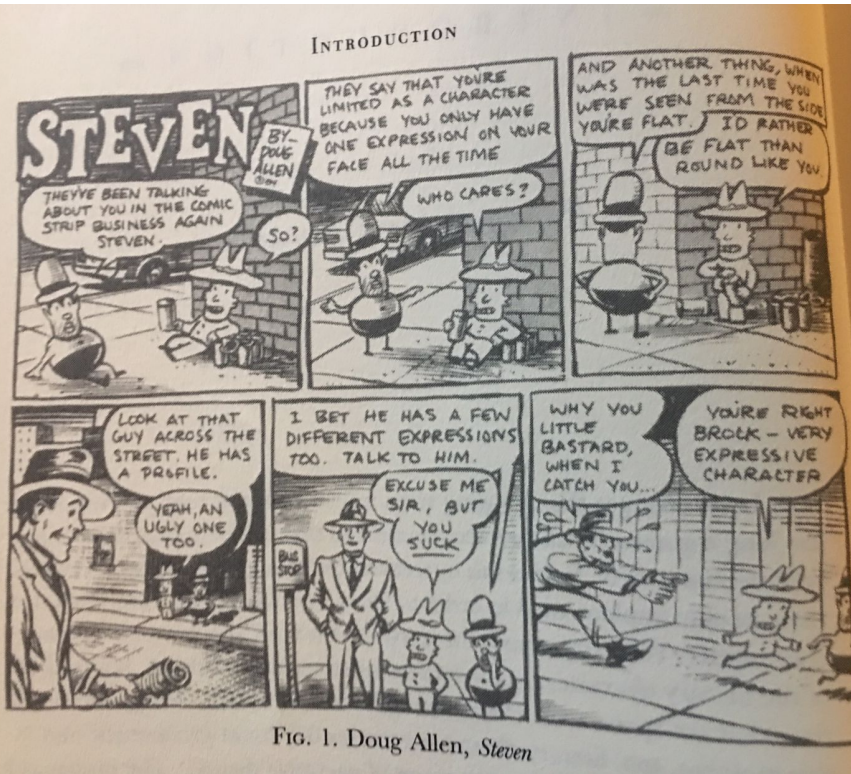
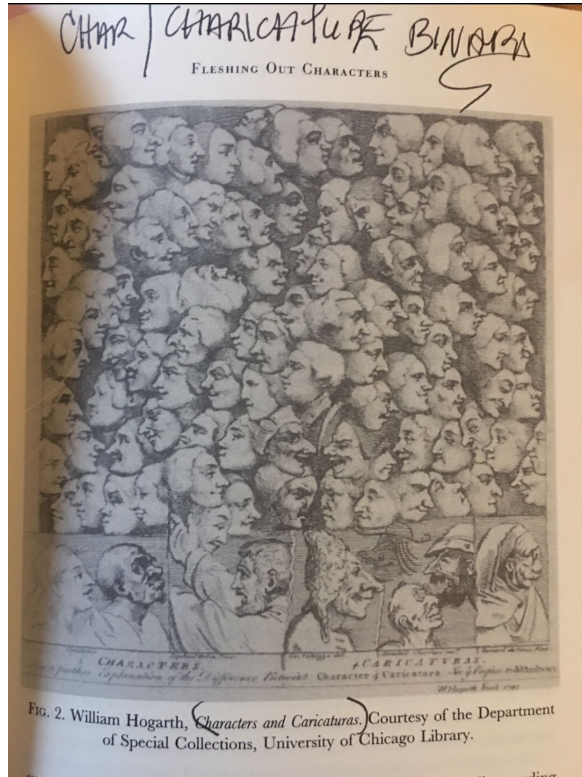


Fig. 1. Doug Allen, *Steven*

In figure 1, Lynch begins deconstructing the binary between Round | Flat, launching her book with a close reading of a comic strip and orienting the modern reader within the realm of characters.

She shows that the flat character CAN triumph over the round, and that the round is acting in a flat (predictable) way while the flat character is more fun.

Figure 2

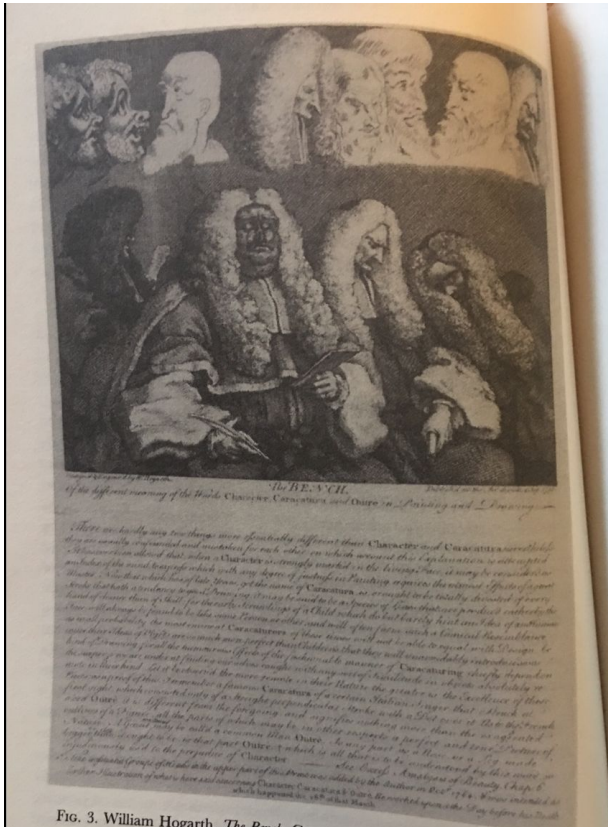


Lynch takes us from 1990s comic strip into Hogarth's depiction of characters vs. caricature. He takes on a crusade to show the superiority of "character" in chapter 1, *Fleshing Out Characters* (61-70).

"Hogarth's attempt to polarize the two modes of characterizing and thus the two kinds of art" (66).

Fig. 2. William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricatures*. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library.

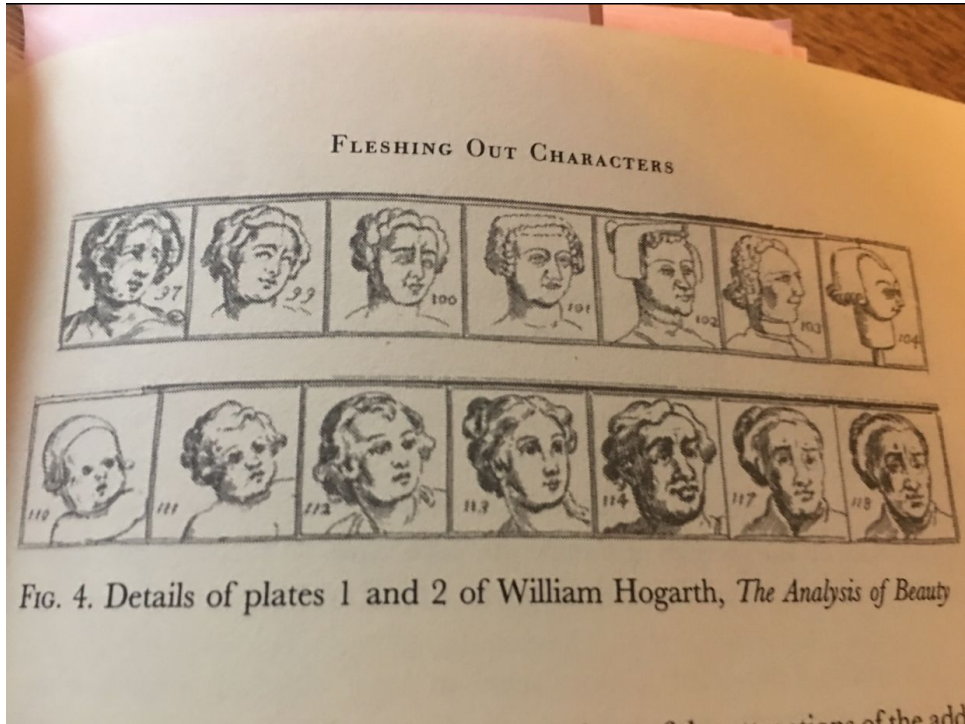
Figure 3



“Indeed, further on in ... *The Bench*, Hogarth betrays himself and all but admits that it is not abbreviation but excess that jeopardizes the identify of character. ... [indicating] the ambivalence in his attitude toward caricature’s techniques of overcharging and its manipulations of physical dimension...” (67)

Fig. 3. William Hogarth, *The Bench*. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library.

Figure 4



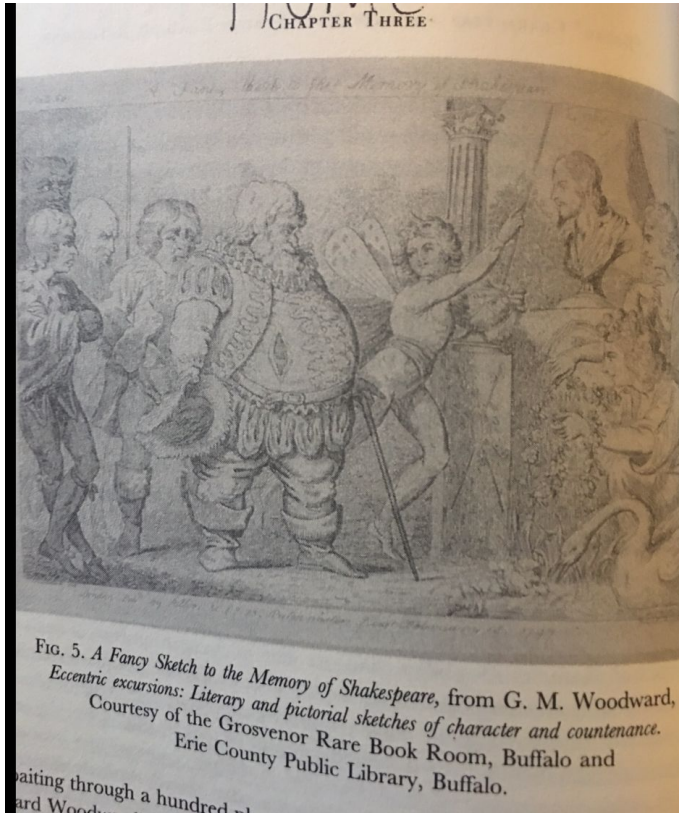
On the next page, the next section of chapter 1, *Fleshing Out Characters*, begins: *Garrick's Face*.

“Judging by the complaints that David Garrick’s critics made, especially when they remarked on his face, the player’s acting also exemplified the dangers of extra strokes. ... The intimate relation between Britain’s print culture and performance culture is suggested by the way both Hogarth and Fielding found it politic, while they promoted their own ways of negotiating the economy of character, simultaneously to promote what Garrick was doing in the same line” (70).

Evelina writes to the Rev. Mr. Villars on Garrick: “The celebrated Mr. Garrick performs *Ranger*. I am white in ecstasy...I have hardly time to breathe” (before seeing him).

“His action--at once so graceful and so free!--his voice--so clear, so melodic--And when he danced, how I envied *Clarinda*” (after seeing him).

Figure 5



In chapter 3 Lynch close-reads reviews of Shakespeare from the 18th to 19th Centuries (134-142):

“By the close of the eighteenth century literary characters have moved out of time. Immortals, they survive, surpass, and in some sense are realer than human authors” (138).

Interesting read of Hamlet on 136-137

FIG. 5. *A Fancy Sketch to the Memory of Shakespeare*, from G. M. Woodward, *Eccentric excursions: Literary and pictorial sketches of character and countenance*. Courtesy of the Grosvenor Rare Book Room, Buffalo and Eric County Public Library, Buffalo.

Figure 5-continued

Coleridge on Hamlet
(i.e., our earlier
discussion in class re:
Pamela vs. Hamlet in
terms of interiority)

Hamlet

is really like. So do similar essays by Morgann's contemporaries Henry Mackenzie (the author of *The Man of Feeling*), William Richardson, and Thomas Robertson. At times these writers also cast Shakespeare's Falstaff as the recipient of their efforts of reanimation. Quite often, however, the round character who receives the homage of their character sketches is Shakespeare's Hamlet, who, it bears remembering, resembles Falstaff in at least one respect: Hamlet is "fat, and scant of breath" (V.ii.27).²¹ And indeed the fleshy excessiveness that Hamlet and Falstaff share might well serve as a metaphor for the new genre of character criticism that these two inspired beginning in the 1770s and 1780s.²² The character appreciation often deploys an overnourished style. Intent on a thorough presentation of a psychological subtext that is nowhere stated in print, it is, by definition, excessive with respect to its subject matter. The most egregious instance of this excess is usually said to be Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines, in a Series of Tales* (1851), anticipated almost twenty years earlier by Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical and Historical* (1832). (For readers of the Victorian period, the Shakespearean heroine is the paradigmatic prop for commentary, taking over the function that Falstaff and Hamlet exercised for the last quarter of the eighteenth century.) However, the same over-the-top effect and purple prose that distinguish Clarke's panegyrics to heroines' lives of their own may be encountered in both Morgann and Mackenzie.

Mackenzie, for example, is capable of sentences such as this one: "Falstaff is the work of Circe and her swinish associates, who in some favoured hour of revelry and riot moulded this compound of gross debauchery, acute discernment, admirable invention and nimble wit"; Mackenzie continues, adding three more subordinate clauses.²³ When Morgann describes Falstaff—who is bulky, he writes, "as if his mind had inflated his body and demanded a habitation of no less circumference" (170)—he attempts to cast his own self-indulgence in verbal excess as, in this case, an effect authorized by its object. At the turn of the nineteenth century readers of Shakespearean character seem suddenly to have determined that such expansive interiority needed more room than the envelope of language had hitherto supplied for it. Coleridge suggests, for instance, that Hamlet's mind is given to "superfluous activities." Mackenzie asserts, similarly, that, being a melancholy man, Hamlet must feel "in himself . . . a sort of double person"—"one that . . . looks not forth into the world nor takes any concern in vulgar objects or frivolous pursuits; another, which he lends . . . to ordinary men, which can accommodate itself to their tempers and manners."²⁴ In this period, conversely, readers

Give rise to psycho analysis of Pamela (2 July?)
type energy

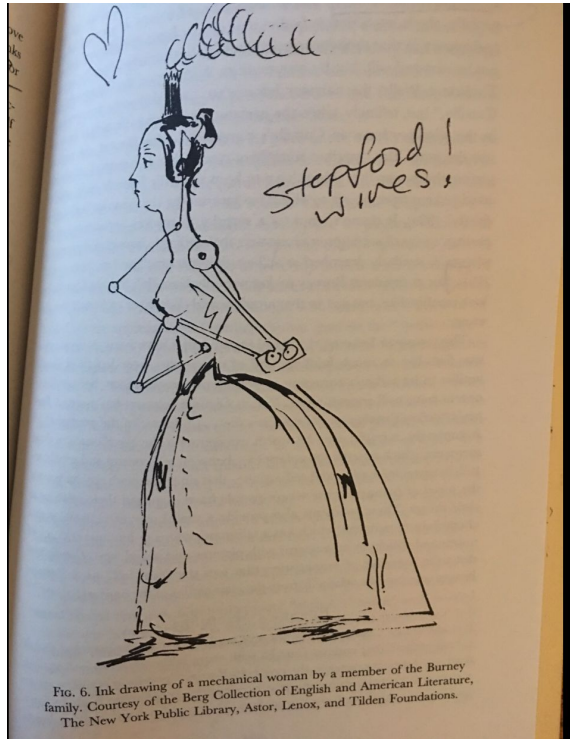
1. e. g. class discussion re: Pamela
v. Hamlet

"ROUND" CHAR

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Figure 6



“And, conversely, the spectacle of their impersonal labor provided a ritual reaffirmation of the beholder’s personhood ...”

(On the facing page): “...in its definition of character, the [OED] stages a confrontation of person and machine and cites John Stuart Mill’s declaration that ‘One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character’” (192).

Figure 7

— — —

“*Evelina*’s transformation in 1822 points to how the meanings of character, those depths and those signs of the psychological real that discerning readers read for, cannot be understood in isolation from the wider field of social relations...” (264)

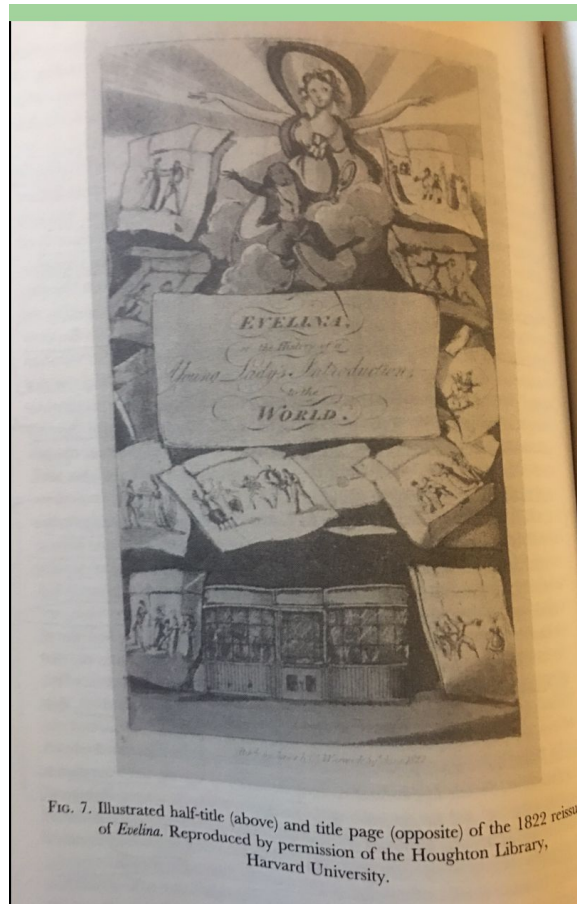


FIG. 7. Illustrated half-title (above) and title page (opposite) of the 1822 reissue of *Evelina*. Reproduced by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

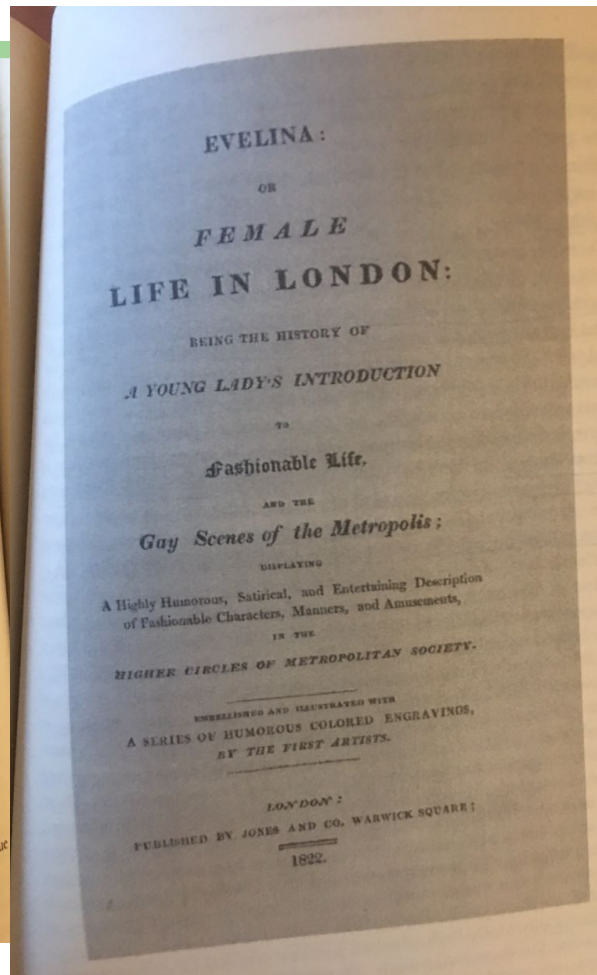


Figure 8

— — —
“... the same pictorial idiom that they mobilized when they draw cartoons about hypochondria or hallucination...”
(264)

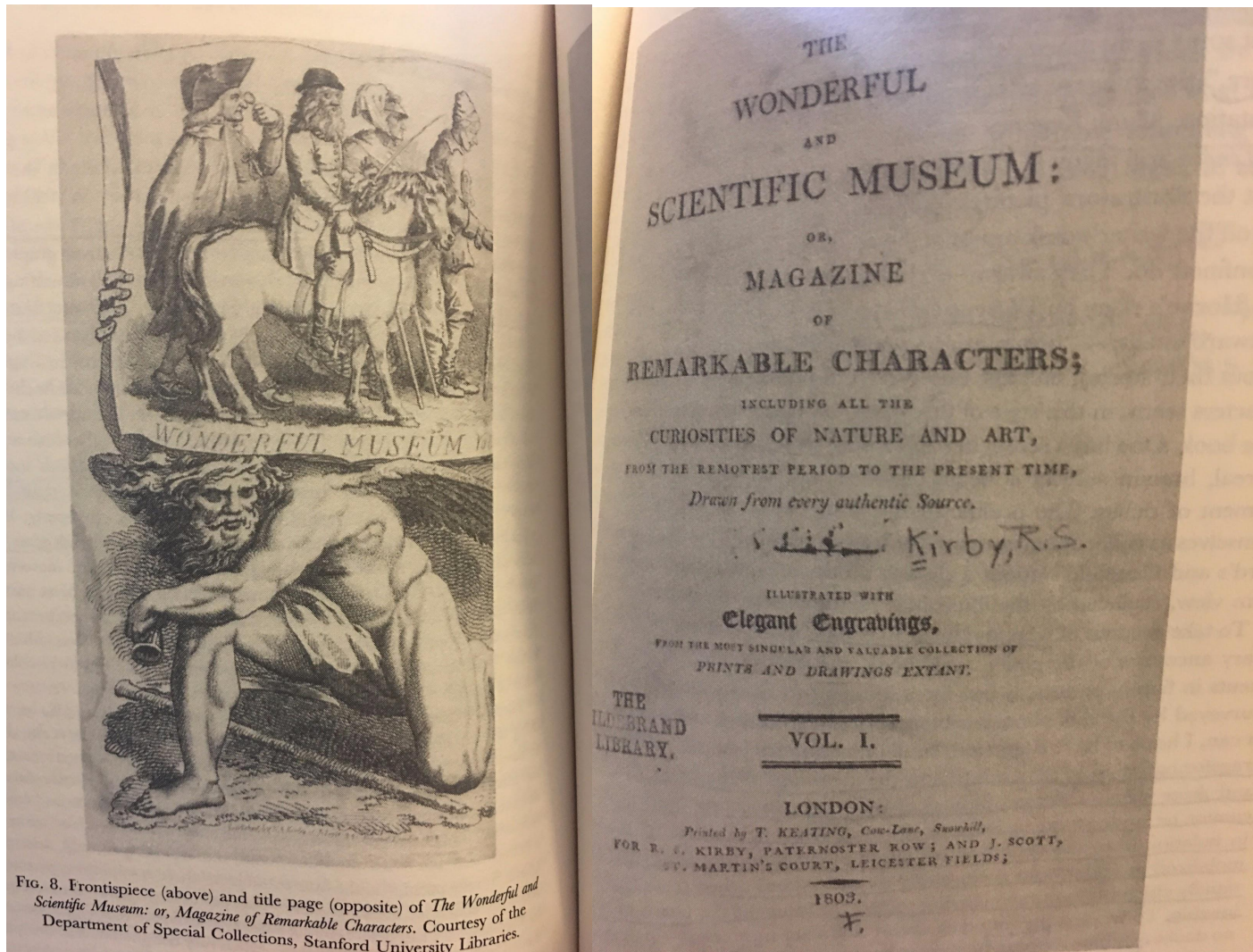


Fig. 8. Frontispiece (above) and title page (opposite) of *The Wonderful and Scientific Museum: or, Magazine of Remarkable Characters*. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

5. Connections, Applications, Extensions

Connections, Applications and Extensions to our Class

— — —

- *Evelina*
- *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen, and Free Indirect Discourse (301-2, 305=funny)
- Market Culture (chapter 2-3 especially)
- *Clarissa*
- *Tom Jones* (Whither *Pamela*?)
- Gallagher (298)
- *Hamlet* / (Richardson on) Shakespeare (139)
- Romantic poets, i.e.,
 - Wordsworth
 - Coleridge
 - Blake (my own brain)

6. Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths

— — —

- Excellent, intriguing close readings of Burney and Austen
- Structure lends to ease of reading/comprehension of DENSE, interesting ideas
- The post-structuralist lens held to the *Rise of the Novel* introduces new, exciting ways to view our texts
- I LOVE THIS BOOK!!! Like a round character, this book lends itself to rereading!

Weaknesses

- Weak link between the two broad sections in this book, organized between the older, 18C “flat” character and the newer, 19C-to-present “depth” of character.
- Lacks adequate data re: ROUND characters’ profitability vs. flat, which might be hard to come by but which would bolster that roundness of character rose due to market forces.
- Though she attempts to deconstruct the idea of Austen as the epitome, the culmination with a full chapter on Burney and then on Austen suggests Austen’s “superiority” over, and evolution from, Burney. No 18C flat character boasts a full chapter.

My Favorite Passages

Rapid-fire Quotations!

- **Passages:** 13, 19–20, top of 29, 42, 43 (watches/faces), 77 (Evelina lost in crowd as individual), 85 (“When is the mental museum’s collection complete?”), 92–3 (Gallagher!), 123 (Coleridge’s epigraph!), 127 (key passage), 129 (power of close-reading), 164–175 (Evelina! & the Captain), 196 (Madwoman in the Attic!), 256 (Burney, Austen, Bronte!)
- **Ideas:** Austen and crowd noise, from Evelina to Catherine Morland to Ann Eliot of *Persuasion* in terms of women’s “character” in making their own decisions (shopping) (and second chances!)



Literary Criticism

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8. Questions?