



The Women's Print History Project

By the Author of...*The WPHP Monthly Mercury*

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Moffatt, Kate, and Kandice Sharren, hosts. "By the Author of..." *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, Season 3, Episode 1, 29 June 2022, <https://womensprinthehistoryproject.com/blog/post/108>.

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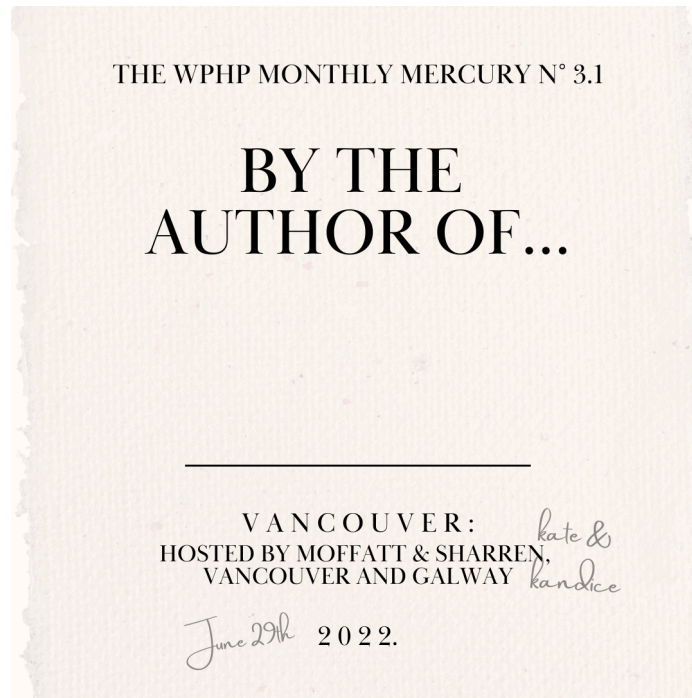
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By the Author of...
Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren



In 1808, *The Woman of Colour* was anonymously published, its byline simply reading “By the author of “*Light and Shade*,” “*The Aunt and the Niece*,” “*Ebersfield Abby*”, &c.” These referenced titles—*Light and Shade*, *The Aunt and the Niece*, and *Eversfield Abbey* (the last of which is incorrectly spelled on *The Woman of Colour*’s title page)—link to more titles, and no author’s name. This attribution chain, in fact, spans more than 18 titles between 1795 and 1817, and while some are confidently attributed to a Mrs. E.M. Foster, the authorship of some of the later titles, including *The Woman of Colour*, is dubious.

The mystery of who wrote *The Woman of Colour* is driven by the fact that the work is deeply sympathetic towards the novel’s main character, Olivia, a biracial heiress from the Caribbean, during a period when such portrayals in print were uncommon. In this episode, we don’t set out to solve it; rather, we talk about the other titles most closely linked to it through the attribution chain and how they might help us contextualize this work’s position in the literary marketplace. The WPHP has two fields that capture information about authors: the contributors field, where person records are attached with a defining role, such as “author,” and the signed author field, which captures how the author’s identity is presented on the book itself. This signed author field in particular piqued Kandice’s interest in *The Woman of Colour*—it captures the long and tangled attribution chain formed by the bylines of eighteen individual titles.

(We've included a helpful table, below, that lists each of the titles in the attribution chain and hyperlinks to any title listed in the byline of another work, and includes the primary publisher for each. Click the first part of each title to be taken to their title records, where you can see more information about their publication, including any additional printers or booksellers.)

Episode 1 of Season 3 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, "By the Author of..." shows Kandice and Kate diving into this tangled attribution chain, asking, which titles are attached to which? How many times? Who published them? What layers of influence do they reveal? Featuring audio from a podcast brainstorming session, this episode invites listeners behind-the-scenes and into the delightfully messy reality of research (and podcasting!) to kick off Season 3 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*.

Attribution Chain Title Table

Year	Title	Publisher
1795	<i>The Duke of Clarence. An historical novel. In four volumes. By E. M. F.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1798	<i>Jaquelina of Hainault: an historical novel, in three volumes, by the author of "the Duke of Clarence."</i>	Joseph Bell
1799	<i>Rebecca. A Novel. In Two Volumes.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1799	<i>Fedaretta. A Novel, By a Lady; Embellished with a Frontispiece.</i>	Crosby and Letterman
1800	<i>Judith. A novel. In two volumes. By the author of Rebecca, Miriam, Fitzmorris, &c.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1800	<i>Miriam. A novel. In two volumes. By the author of Frederic & Caroline, Rebecca, Judith, &c.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1800	<i>Frederic & Caroline, or the Fitzmorris Family. A novel. In two volumes. By the author of Rebecca, Judith, Miriam, &c.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1800	<i>Emily of Lucerne. A novel. In two volumes. By the author of the Duke of Clarence.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1801	<i>Concealment, or the Cascade of Llantwarrybn. A Tale. In Two Volumes. By the Author of Miriam, Judith Fedaretta, &c.</i>	Minerva Press, William Lane
1803	<i>Light and Shade: A Novel. By the Author of Federetta; Rebecca; Miriam; and Concealment, or the Cascade of Lantwarrybn.</i>	George and John Robinson
1804	<i>The Aunt and the Niece. A novel. In two volumes.</i>	Minerva Press, Lane, Newman, and Co.

1806	<i>Eversfield Abbey: A Novel. By the Authoress of The Aunt and the Niece.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1807	<i>A Winter in Bath. In four volumes. By the author of two popular novels.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1808	<i>The Banks of the Wye; or, Two Summers at Clifton. In four volumes. By the author of A Winter in Bath, &c. &c.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1808	<i>The Woman of Colour. By the author of "Light and Shade," "The Aunt and the Niece," "Eversfield Abby", &c. In two volumes.</i>	Hannah Black, Parry, and Kingsbury
1809	<i>The Corinna of England, and a Heroine in the Shade; A Modern Romance, by the Author of "The Winter in Bath," "The Banks of the Wye," "The Woman of Colour," "Light and Shade," &c. &c.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1810	<i>Black Rock House; or, Dear Bought Experience. A novel. By the author of "A Winter in Bath," "Eversfield Abbey," "The Corinna of England," "Banks of the Wye," "The Woman of Colour," &c. &c. &c. In three volumes.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1811	<i>The Dead Letter Office; and a Tale for the English Farmer's Fire-Side. By the author of Corinna of England, Winter in Bath, Eversfield Abbey, Woman of Colour, Banks of the Wye, &c. &c.</i>	Benjamin Crosby and Co.
1812	<i>Substance and Shadow; or, The Fisherman's Daughters of Brighton. A Patchwork Story. In four volumes. By the author of Light and Shade; Eversfield Abbey; Banks of the Wye; Aunt and Niece, &c. &c.</i>	Minerva Press, A. K. Newman and Co.
1814	<i>The Splendour of Adversity: A Domestic Story. In three volumes. By the author of Black Rock House, Winter in Bath, Corinna of England, The Dead Letter Office, &c. &c.</i>	Benjamin and Richard Crosby and Co.
1817	<i>The Revealer of Secrets; or The House that Jack Built, a new story upon an old foundation. In three volumes. By the author of Eversfield Abbey, Banks of the Wye, Aunt and Niece, Substance and Shadow, &c. &c.</i>	Minerva Press, A. K. Newman and Co.

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Burney, Frances (person, author)

The Woman of Colour (title)

Sense and Sensibility (title)

Churchill, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough (person, author)

An abridgment of the secret history of Crete. Translated out of Greek; and humbly dedicated to His Grace the Duke of Cambridge. Never printed in English before. By Greg's Ghost. (title)

Guénard, Elisabeth (person, author)

Light and Shade (title)

The Aunt and the Niece (title)

Eversfield Abbey (title)

Fedaretta (title)

Rebecca (title)

Miriam (title)

Concealment, or the Cascade of Lantwarryhn (title)

Foster, Mrs. E. M. (person, author)

Crosby and Letterman (firm)

Frederic & Caroline (title)

Judith (title)

The Corinna of England (title)

Black Rock House (title)

The Dead Letter Office (title)

The Duke of Clarence (title)

The Banks of the Wye (title)

A Winter in Bath (title)

James Fletcher Hughes (firm)

A Winter at Bath; or, Love As It May Be, and Friendship As It Ought To Be (title)

Bayfield, Mrs. E. G. (person, author)

Benjamin Crosby and Co. (firm)

Minerva Press, William Lane (firm)

Minerva Press, A.K. Newman and Co. (firm)

The Revealer of Secrets (title)

Northanger Abbey (title)

Joseph Bell (firm)

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00:00:00  [music playing]

00:00:09 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Hi. It's me, Kate, one of the co-hosts of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*. We are officially back for Season 3 and we are so excited, but before we hop into the first episode, we wanted to let you know about a couple of changes coming down the line. We started this podcast back in June of 2020, smack dab in the middle of the pandemic, and it kept us connected and creating and researching in ways that would have felt completely impossible otherwise.

00:00:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But it's been two years since then, and changes are afoot! Kandice has stepped out of the Project Manager role and into the role of Lead Editor, and is currently working and living in Ireland; and I've relocated to Vancouver, taken over the Project Manager role, and will be starting my Ph.D. in the fall. Alongside the excitement and hecticness (hecticity? hecticorousness?!) of these changes, we're now wrangling new schedules and new roles and new timezones.

00:01:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) We're always so keen to show you the behind-the-scenes of the WPHP, so we wanted to start this season by giving you all a brief glimpse into the behind-the-scenes of your two co-hosts because we'll be changing things up a bit for this third season while we navigate these new adventures. We'll be releasing our episodes on the last Wednesday of every month for Season 3, and we might be trying a few new episode formats on for size—

00:01:30 (Minisodes? Live episodes? More Kate and Kandice review bonkers eighteenth- and nineteenth-century lit segments? The podcasting world is truly our oyster.) We're excited to see where the season takes us, and very thrilled to finally release the first episode of this next season. Listen on for Episode 1 of Season 3 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, "By the Author Of..." —and a very warm welcome back!

00:01:54  [music playing]

00:02:03 Kandice Sharren (co-host) For the last two years, we have opened our seasons of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury* with episodes focused on major canonical novelists. Our inaugural episode looked at Jane Austen's publishing networks, with a focus on how they connected her to other, lesser-known writers, while the first episode of Season 2 saw us hunting down early nineteenth-century editions of Frances Burney's novels, which we had discovered were missing from the WPHP.

00:02:29	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Fascinating and beloved as they are, though, canonical authors are only a tiny fraction of the people we include in the database—so this year, we wanted to try something a little different by focusing on an author whose identity itself has remained shadowy: the anonymous author of the 1808 novel, <i>The Woman of Colour</i> , who may have written up to twenty novels that have been linked to each other by the phrase, “By the author of...” on their title pages, which we capture in our signed author field.
00:03:00	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Kandice has been interested in this question for years—she even wrote a Spotlight about it in 2020, complete with a borderline incomprehensible flow chart [Kandice laughs] that traced the relationships between the different titles, and which inspired her to start reading them. This month we’re going to talk about what she has found so far, and where she wants to go with this. And, spoiler alert, it’s so delightfully convoluted that we had to have a pre-scripting brainstorming session [Kandice laughs] to make sure we knew what we were actually talking about. And we recorded that conversation, actually, so, in true transparent <i>WPHP Monthly Mercury</i> fashion, we are sharing it throughout today’s episode to give you a real-time glimpse into both Kandice’s—frankly, fascinating <i>and</i> bonker—in-progress research, and the process of how these episodes come to life.
00:03:46	♪	[music playing]
00:03:56	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Hello and welcome to the third season of <i>The WPHP Monthly Mercury</i> , the podcast for <i>The Women’s Print History Project</i> , a bibliographic database that collects information about women and book production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My name is Kate Moffatt—
00:04:10	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And I’m Kandice Sharren—
00:04:11	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And we are long-time editors of the WPHP and the hosts of this podcast. Join us on the last Wednesday of every month this season to see us interviewing more brilliant scholars, taking a trip across the Atlantic for our first-ever live and in-person episode, and, as always, diving into the ins-and-outs—and sideways-and-upside-downs!—of working on women in print.
00:04:35	♪	[music playing]
00:04:43	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	But no, seriously, if you had to describe <i>The Woman of Colour</i> ’s plot in one single sentence, telling us what’s happening in this book, what would that sentence look like?

- 00:04:53 Kandice Sharren (co-host) [laughs], So I would say that the plot could be summed up as biracial heiress is forced to go to England and marry her cousin by her dead father in his will, except it turns out that he is already secretly married and he doesn't even realize it. So it's actually bigamy and she becomes a widow and goes back to the Caribbean [laughs]
- 00:05:23 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [laughs] Oh my gosh [Kandice laughs]. I'm so excited to read this book.
- 00:05:27 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Although it was published in 1808, *The Woman of Colour* really only came to the attention of scholars as the result of James Raven, Peter Garside, and Rainer Schöwerling's bibliography of *The English Novel, 1770–1829*, which was one of the major sources we used to enter titles in the WPHP in our early days. This novel's inclusion in *The English Novel* is a striking example of the role bibliography can play in drawing attention to lost works; 200 years after it was first published, in 2008, Lyndon J. Dominique edited a Broadview edition of *The Woman of Colour*, which has increased its readership substantially, transforming this long-forgotten novel into a staple for researchers and instructors alike.
- 00:06:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This is all the more remarkable considering that the author remains unknown. Garside's introduction to the second volume of *The English Novel* references it as one of over twenty novels that point back to a single author—one Mrs. E.M. Foster. However, Garside posits that this was more of a marketing strategy than a factual claim that all of these titles were written by the same author; accordingly, after 1803, the bibliography lists the titles in this attribution chain as anonymous. In this case, the novel's anonymity opens up an intriguing space of possibility.
- 00:06:45 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Following Garside's lead, Dominique speculates in the introduction to his edition that "this text was probably written by a woman but not a British one—rather, one who had significant ties to the colonies as well as in-depth knowledge of British society—it seems most plausible to propose that a woman of colour wrote *The Woman of Colour*" (32). There has even been an attempt to use stylometry to draw conclusions about who the author might be: Corrinne Harol, Brynn Lewis, and Subhash Lele have compared the text of *The Woman of Colour* to a handful of other texts, but concluded that their analysis didn't reveal anything definitive about its author.

- 00:07:27 Kate Moffatt
(co-host)
- Of course, in WPHP terms, this leaves us in a sticky spot when entering the title into the database. One of the major questions that haunts the WPHP is the matter of anonymity and how to handle it. Conventional narratives about women's writing hold that women usually didn't publish under their own name, and instead wrote anonymously or using male pseudonyms. While some canonical authors certainly followed this practice—Jane Austen's identity, for example, wasn't revealed during her lifetime—instances of women using male pseudonyms are less frequent than blanket claims about women writers of the past might lead us to think. For every Jane Austen or George Eliot, there are a lot of women authors who *did* sign their names, sometimes from the beginning of their careers, and sometimes once they experienced a degree of success or public approval.
- 00:08:13 Kandice Sharren
(co-host)
- Even when an author's name didn't appear publicly, there are sometimes publishers' records or other private material like letters that tell us who wrote something. This means it can be more useful to think about anonymity as a spectrum: just because someone doesn't sign their name, doesn't mean we don't know anything about them—often the title page, dedication or preface will indicate other titles that this author has published or their gender or their class. If an author is indicated in a way that genders them as female (whether it's because they have signed the book as “by a lady” or as “by the authoress of” another book), we include the title in the WPHP, even in the absence of any other information. In cases like this, when the author is identified as a woman but we don't know her name, we attach the “unknown” person record to the title in the contributor field.
- 00:09:05 Kate Moffatt
(co-host)
- The contributor field is one of two fields in the WPHP that deals with authorship—the other is the signed author field. While both capture authorship data, they are doing two very different things. The contributor field is where we attach person records to a title, and each person record is attached with a defining “role”, like editor, or engraver, or author. This is where we indicate who wrote a book even if that data is not actually visible on a print title—a great example of this would be Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, published anonymously in 1811.

- 00:09:39 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) Even though the first 1811 edition of the book itself does not indicate anywhere in its pages or on its title page, that the author is Jane Austen, we have still attached Jane Austen's person record to it, with the defining role of "Author," because we know she wrote it. It's worth noting that instead of giving her name, the title page reads, "Sense and Sensibility: a novel. In three volumes. By a lady." That "by a lady," as Kandice points out, is information about the author that is in the actual book, And we're interested in that! That's neat! and that's what the signed author field captures: how an author is presented on the book itself.
- 00:10:17 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) Whether it's by a phrase as anonymous as Austen's "by a lady," or something as explicit as "By Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough," the signed author field allows us to capture how the author is presented in print. This field can occasionally be, as you might guess, a little wacky—we recently found a book claiming to be by "Greg's Ghost", and we've no idea who Greg is—but it can also be incredibly rich: the signed author field can hold, alongside information about the author, information about other titles.
- 00:10:49 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) "But Kate," you say, "you just said that the signed author field holds information about the author. Why would it have information about titles?" Dear listener, what an excellent question. The answer is: we often have signed author fields that say, "By Mrs. So-and-So, author of Title A, Title B, and Title C." In fact, searching, in quotation marks, "by the author of" in the signed author field of the WPHP will bring up nearly 900 titles whose authors are presented that way on their title pages; if you search just "author of," in quotation marks, like it would appear if it was something saying "By Mrs. So-and-So, author of..." will bring up more than 2500 title records. So, listing titles as part of how you sign your name on a title page? Not in the least bit uncommon.
- 00:11:38 Kandice Sharren
(co-host) There are a few different reasons why publishers might have described authors in this way. If an author had already written a very successful book, a new title that indicates this might make a reader more likely to pick it up. However, it could also work the other way around; if the author had written other titles published by the same firm that hadn't sold yet, they might advertise those titles on the title page of a new work to get them moving off the shelves. While this "by the author of" formula sometimes named an individual author, as Kate indicated, it is also sometimes used without a name. And in these cases, authors become identifiable by the books that they lay claim to, rather than any kind of extratextual identity.

- 00:12:23 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And one of the really interesting things about having authors indicate their identity on the title page through their previous titles is that it starts to create chains. All of those works are now related to one another in print, and the information on one title page can inform the authorship of another. So, if some of the works in that list are anonymous, but others have the name of an author on their title page, for example, it usually follows that all of the books listed on the title page, after the “by the author of...”, are by the same person. But we’re not looking at one of those simple cut-and dry, super-easy-to-figure-out-type-of-books today, obviously. That would just be too easy [Kandice laughs].
- 00:13:03 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So one of the things that I find kind of frustrating in thinking about this is until the Raven and Garside bibliography that we used as a source in the WPHP, people just kind of accepted the “by the author of” statements fairly straightforwardly. And they were like, “yes, this EMF, or E.M. Foster woman published a whole bunch of books that are all kind of connected through this attribution chain.” And then Raven and Garside came along and they were like, “there’s no way one person could have written twenty novels in 20 years.” Or they were like, “it’s dubious.” Around twenty novels in 22 years is actually kind of reasonable, if you think about authors who write a book a year now.
- 00:13:59 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Well, yeah, I’m thinking about, I’m thinking about Elizabeth Genard, too. We only have a couple of her things in English, but in French she published over a hundred novels during her career, which was, I think 40 or 50 years long, which is insane [laughs]. But it happens.
- 00:14:17 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Absolutely [laughs]. And I think one of the things is that there are so many books that were kind of, well specifically in 1800, but it’s kind of near-ish the beginning of things. So I think it’s totally reasonable to think that this woman was just hanging out writing books. Write one, get it published. And then kind of kicked off.
- 00:14:44 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Attribution chains mean that when we are entering data, we can’t just pay attention to the book at hand in order to determine whether or not it belongs in the database. In the case of *The Woman of Colour* the gendered information is not on the title page of that particular book: its title page merely tells us that it is “by the author of ‘Light and Shade,’ ‘The Aunt and the Niece,’ ‘Ebersfield Abbey,’ &c.”

- 00:15:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, the title page of *Eversfield Abbey* tells us that it is “By the Authoress of The Aunt and the Niece,” which means that we have included it, and other titles attributed to the same author, in the WPHP, whether or not they specifically indicate female authorship on their title pages. Even more importantly, you have to look at all of the titles in the chain to really get a full picture of what is going on, authorship-wise.
- 00:15:38 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Although *The Aunt and the Niece* contains no information about its author at all, *Light and Shade* provides additional information, claiming to be “By the author of Federetta; Rebecca; Miriam; and Concealment, or the Cascade of Lantwarryhn. And that last word is Welsh and I am aware I probably said it wrong [both laugh], too much phlegm in my throat to try [laughs]. All four of these novels were published between 1799 and 1801, and have been attributed to Mrs. E.M. Foster, an author about whom little more is known than her name. Looking at these four novels more closely, though, potentially gives us a little bit more information about her.
- 00:16:19 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *Fedaretta* is a bit of a dead end: no known copies survive; basically, we know that it was published by Crosby and Letterman and that there was a French translation in 1803 that does survive. Doesn’t really give us a whole lot about E.M. Foster, though. *Rebecca* contains no author information on title page or in the other paratextual materials, but it concludes with the narrator commenting on her choice to include what she calls “the tender parts” at the behest of her friends; her final line says, “And, courteous readers, what else can be expected from an Old Maid?”
- 00:16:57 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This strategy of breaking the third wall to comment on her narrative choices, as well as this use of “Old Maid” persona persist throughout the attribution chain. So this isn’t just a one-time strategy. If this is in fact the same author in multiple books, she’s often claiming this kind of “Old Maid” status. If we look at *Miriam*, we learn titles of three more books to look at. So it says it’s “by the author of ‘Frederic & Caroline,’ ‘Rebecca,’ ‘Judith,’ &c.”

- 00:17:28 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And *Concealment* tells us that it is “by the Author of ‘Miriam,’ ‘Judith,’ ‘Fedaretta,’ &c.”. So it kind of links some of those titles more closely by kind of reinforcing their relationship. It also opens with an “Address to the Reader” that begins “The Authoress of the ensuing work begs to premise a few words as a sort of prologue to her tale.” So here we also have this kind of claim to feminine authorship in the prologue, even though none of these titles give us an author’s name, they do actually potentially tell us something about the author or at least about how this author wanted herself and her fiction to be perceived by readers.
- 00:18:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Tracing the attribution chain back from *The Woman of Colour*’s publication in 1808, we have nine novels linked together in the byline of each of these titles. In the years following the publication of *The Woman of Colour*, three more novels were published that name it on their title pages—*The Corinna of England*, *Black Rock House*, and *The Dead Letter Office*—which I still think is the coolest possible book name ever, I must read it—[Kandice laughs]
- 00:18:39 Kate Moffatt (co-host) but many of which were named on the title pages of subsequent novels as well. If we count all of the titles that have been linked in this way, including those that were published in the years after *The Woman of Colour*, that gives us 18 titles in total, published between 1799 and 1817. And there are an additional 3 titles dated between 1795 and 1800 that have also been attributed to Mrs. E.M. Foster by other sources; the authorship lines on their title pages all refer back to each other in a very tidy little feedback loop.
- 00:19:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Within that though, there’s actually kind of two attribution chains that are linked by this Mrs. E.M. Foster. So there’s a few of them that are almost their own little mini feedback loop that don’t branch out and attach to any of the others. But it seems that the attribution for E.M. Foster is fairly solid for that little cluster of—
- 00:19:39 Kate Moffatt (co-host) With those specific related—
- 00:19:41 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Three or four titles. Yeah. So, within the attribution chain that *The Woman of Colour* is connected to specifically, I think there’s 18 titles, but then there’s also these three other ones that aren’t actually connected, except E.M. Foster is connected to this one little cluster and then—
- 00:20:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right.
- 00:20:07 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Some of the ones in *The Woman of Colour* attribution chain. So it’s like—

00:20:11 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right, right.

00:20:12 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Anyway!

00:20:16 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And I guess there's—I was going to say there's two things there; I think it was Kate Ozment talked about it in our podcast episode in season, was that one? Season 1? Oh my gosh. And she was quoting somebody, but it's that attribution is sticky where once the attribution sticks, sometimes it just sticks. And it takes a lot more work to unstick it than it did to stick it in the first place. And the other is that I think it is so interesting because this is something we have to deal with—

00:20:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) in terms of trying to do our data entry on the WPHP, it's actually something we have to tackle. If we are working on an entry, like on a title record for a book, and then that book has six different titles listed as “by the author of title, title, title, title, title,” we'll go and we'll check and we'll see like, “okay, do we have these titles in the WPHP? Oh look, we don't, I'm going to add them.”

00:21:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And I'm going to assume that it's the same author as the one that was from the original record I was working on because that's just kind of the logical thing to do. And this really messes with that, I guess. I think, to be reasonable in our own expectations of our work, we have to do it that way. We can't spend weeks and months trying to track down who the author might actually be or put that attribution into question. But at the same time, this really does kind of illustrate how that can be sticky [laughs]. That can be kind of problematic in itself, you know?

00:21:40 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Well, and the way we've done it. Well, I think I was the one who did this, because I would've been the one like entering those titles back in the early days with the project, when I had to enter all of *The English Novel* titles [both laugh]. But I think it was something that I went back and forth on and I've gone back and changed a few times. So the way it is currently in the WPHP is that—it's weird because I actually don't really remember why this is the specific call. But I know up to the 1803 title *Light and Shade*—which I want to talk about more, because it's really, really weird—the E.M. Foster attribution is fairly set in stone, so—

00:22:36 Kate Moffatt (co-host) It's very strong. Interesting.

00:22:38 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. Yeah. So 1795, there's a book called *The Duke of Clarence* that is signed by EMF. And then that's the only one where any kind of name appears on the book itself.

00:22:54 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Is actually—right.

00:22:56 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. Although, I have read a few where there are interesting self identifications in the actual text itself, which I also want to come back to [laughs].

00:23:08 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting.

00:23:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But yeah. So between 1795 and 1803, those titles are mostly, I think fairly certainly attributed to this EMF or E.M. Foster.

00:23:20 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. And then beyond that, it gets more complicated. Less certain.

00:23:26 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The uncertainties of attribution surrounding E.M. Foster mean that we had to make some tough choices based on the information available in terms of how we entered these titles in the WPHP. For the purposes of clean and straightforward data entry, we attached E.M. Foster to the titles that Raven and Garside attribute to her in *The English Novel* and identify the other titles in the chain as being by an unknown author.

00:23:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, I personally feel that their bibliography doesn't provide clear evidence for disproving a chain of authorship here. Their rationale for believing not all of the titles are by the same author seems rooted in Peter Garside's claim that some publishers were driven "to boost a novel's credentials . . . [by] extending the list of titles 'by the author' beyond the bounds of veracity." So when I entered these titles way back in 2015, I used *The English Novel's* attribution. But, as you may be starting to suspect, I'm no longer really convinced that I made the right choice here.

00:24:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. So things get kind of fuzzy after *Light and Shade* in 1803. So I think all the ones up to 1803 we have in the WPHP is by E.M. Foster. And then after that, I think they're all anonymous, but because there's so many like the *Aunt—*

00:24:49 Kate Moffatt (co-host) *And the Niece.*

- 00:24:50 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *And the Niece*. Yeah. Or, sorry. *Eversfield Abbey*, I think, is listed as “by the authoress of two popular novels” or something. There’s something in there. The problems of going off memory! [Kate laughs] But there is something in there that kind of establishes a feminine authorship and that’s something that’s really consistent throughout, at least the ones that I’ve read.
- 00:25:18 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting.
- 00:25:19 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. So, basically there’s a point where the attribution gets fuzzy, but it’s still indicating female authorship in some way. So they’re all in the WPHP but after that point, they’re all listed as anonymous. And I don’t know how I feel about that choice.
- 00:25:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I was going to say, I’m looking at some of these entries as we talk about this. And it’s interesting because we don’t even indicate in the notes or anything—I almost feel like we should indicate in the notes somewhere that it is tangled up in this big attribution chain, which means that even though we’re fairly confident (we and x-y-z sources) that it is by Mrs. E.M. Foster that it is tangled up in this big attribution chain where that authorship does get kind of fuzzy at a certain point.
- 00:26:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And so how far back does that fuzziness potentially actually go? You know what I mean? I do almost wonder if we should be indicating somewhere in there that like this isn’t—because I think that’s the thing about data is sometimes if you present data as data, it becomes fact in a really interesting way.
- 00:26:35 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Okay. Sorry. I totally lied. *Eversfield Abbey*, I’m looking at this again now, is listed as “by the authoress of the ‘The Aunt and the Niece.’” So *The Aunt and the Niece* is the one that has no author information at all. *Eversfield Abbey* says “by the authoress of ‘The Aunt and the Niece.’”
- 00:26:53 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right now, tracing these attribution chains in the WPHP for unknown authors is possible, but a bit labour-intensive; if I have a title by an anonymous author and I want to know if that anonymous author published anything else, I can search the “signed author” field for the title that I already have, so that it will bring up any records where other bylines reference it. This strategy has some limitations. For example, if this was that author’s final title, you might not get any results.

- 00:27:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) You also need to be attentive to variant spellings: the title page of *The Woman of Colour* describes “Eversfield Abbey” as “Ebersfield Abbey” [Kandice laughs] and there are a few different spellings of *Fedaretta*. However, once you have found all of the titles in an attribution chain, you can start to explore the connections between the different titles and how they reference each other. Since scholarly interest in the authorship mystery around *The Woman of Colour* is what sent Kandice down this tangled path, she started by thinking about the titles referenced on the title page of *The Woman of Colour* and the titles that referenced it.
- 00:27:55 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Which I think really gets to how tangled It is. It's really hard when you're trying to track all of these things that are going back and forth between each other, referencing past things— it's impossible, you know what I mean? How do you visualize that in a way that's going to make sense and not just look like one of those crazy boards with the red string, you know? [laughs]
- 00:28:18 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I mean, I mean, that's really what this exercise feels a little bit [both laugh]. Basically, I think there's kind of two ways to use the information that's in the spreadsheet, which has at least helped me kind of count things and keep track, because when you're like, “well this one references this one, and this,” and it kind of becomes a chain, right? So you follow one to the next, but then it becomes really hard to figure out which ones get referenced the most.
- 00:28:48 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So it's helped me map that. I've kind of been thinking about this attribution chain in two ways. So one of them is thinking about it as degrees of separation from *The Woman of Colour*, so it kind of puts *The Woman of Colour* at the center and think, “okay. So how is it connected to all these different texts?” I'm thinking about it in terms of one degree of separation or two degrees of separation or three degrees of separation. And basically what I've done so far is I've read all the ones that are like one degree of separation. One degree of separation would be the novels that *The Woman of Colour* lists on its title page. So that would be *Light and Shade*, that 1803 novel.
- 00:29:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Like a really directly adjacent—yup.

- 00:29:40 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *The Aunt and the Niece* and *Eversfield Abbey*. So those are the ones that go before *The Woman of Colour*, that *The Woman of Colour* is saying “by the author of” these novels. And then there's the ones that reference *The Woman of Colour* on their title page. So the ones that come after. And that would be *The Corinna of England* in 1809, *Black Rock House* in 1810, and then *The Dead Letter Office*, which doesn't have a date on the title page, but I think is dated to about 1811—
- 00:30:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) *The Dead Letter Office*! What a great title!
- 00:30:20 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I know—actually Kate, so this one's the coolest one in the attribution chain I think that I've read so far.
- 00:30:28 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, I wanna read, I wanna read it. The title's fantastic! [both laugh]
- 00:30:33 Kandice Sharren (co-host) It's the only one, I think, that hasn't been digitized of those one-degree separation ones. So, I've read those six so far because I thought I would prioritize those and just see what the immediate connection is. But then the other way that I've been thinking about this is in terms of which ones are—I'm trying to think, I know that there's a word for this and it's really bothering me that I can't remember it—but places of convergence where they're novels that get referenced a lot in the chain.
- 00:31:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Those ones I think are really interesting. Because I feel like those ones are the ones that are in some way central. However, once I moved beyond that one degree of separation to consider the wider trends in the attribution chain, my attention was drawn to different novels than the ones we would look at, if we were considering *The Woman of Colour*, just kind of on its own. I found that not all of the novels that were referenced the most frequently on the title pages of other novels were particularly closely linked to *The Woman of Colour*, which led Kate to grill me about what it meant to place this particular novel at the center of the attribution chain and how doing so might bias us and the way we engage with the other novels.

- 00:31:56 Kandice Sharren (co-host) There are three titles in the attribution chain that get referenced five times on other title pages, and those ones are *Eversfield Abbey*—so the one that is published in 1806, two years before *The Woman of Colour* in 1808, and referenced on its title page—but then there's two that are really interesting for a reason we haven't talked about yet, and I haven't actually read them yet, but *Winter in Bath* and *The Banks Of Wye*. Those both get referenced five times on the title pages of other books in this chain. So even though they're not referenced on the title page of—
- 00:32:41 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And they're the ones—
- 00:32:41 Kandice Sharren (co-host) They're important in some way.
- 00:32:47 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And they're the ones that have the least amount of titles referenced on their title pages. *A Winter in Bath* just says it's by the author of two popular novels. Right? And then *The Banks Of Wye* just says it's by the author of *A Winter in Bath*. So they're kind of their own little bubble in terms of what they're actually referencing on their title pages, which is really interesting.
- 00:33:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I know obviously we're interested in the authorship of *The Woman of Colour* in particular—you've got this really fantastic, insane trope-filled-novel with the biracial heiress as its main character. And so finding out the authorship of that can definitely influence scholarship and research and reading of this work. And I think that's really interesting, but I do wonder what would happen if you were to take that out of the center and put a different book into the center?
- 00:33:40 Kate Moffatt (co-host) What would happen if you took something else from the attribution chain and put it in the middle? You know what I mean? Just because *The Woman of Colour* is currently our focus and our interest in this, and we're looking at everything as being like in a web around it. What if during the period there was one particular book in this attribution chain that was contemporaneous of the time, of the period, thought was at the center of this particular chain?
- 00:34:07 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Paying attention to the frequency with which titles are referenced on other title pages might be one other way to think about the probability of authorship. If *Eversfield Abbey*, *A Winter in Bath*, and *The Banks of Wye* each appear on the title pages of five other novels in the attribution chain, that might suggest a higher likelihood that these novels are all by the same author. Another three titles appear on other title pages four times, *Rebecca*, *Miriam*, and *The Aunt and the Niece*.

- 00:34:36 Kandice Sharren (co-host) By contrast, *The Woman of Colour* along with three other titles—*Judith, Light and Shade*, and *The Corinna of England*—appear on other title pages three times. The fact that all of these titles were referenced multiple times on the title pages of other novels, without anyone objecting, suggests that they might have shared an author. And, on that note, *A Winter in Bath* and *The Banks Of Wye* are interesting for one other reason. In 1807 publisher, John Fletcher Hughes released a novel titled *A Winter at Bath; or, Love as it May Be, and Friendship as it Ought to Be* “By the chaste and classical pen of Mrs. Bayfield.”
- 00:35:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Incredible. [laughs]
- 00:35:16 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This title similarity to *A Winter in Bath*, which was also published in 1807, led its publisher, Crosby and Co., to issue a notice of literary fraud on the verso of the title page of *The Banks Of the Wye*, decrying Hughes’s business practices, which involved altering the title of a novel several months previously announced for publication under the title of *Love as it May Be* only to *A Winter in Bath*, and which was done at the moment intended for the publication of B. Crosby and Co.’s work, with a view to profit by the popularity of their novel, and the considerable expense incurred by them in bringing the same into notice.
- 00:35:55 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The statement concludes by acknowledging the author of Hughes’s title, saying “The candid avowal which Crosby and Co. have received from Mrs. Bayfield, the authoress of ‘Love as it may Be,’ of the Title having been altered by the publishers without her knowledge or consent, also deserves their particular acknowledgements.”
- 00:36:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I love them all. I love every single person involved in this literary fraud. [laughs]
- 00:36:18 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This instance of literary fraud highlights that false claims by publishers weren’t necessarily so run-of-the-mill as to be ignored. Crosby and Co. felt a proprietary claim to the title *A Winter in Bath*, which led them to publicly object to Hughes’s attempt to steal their title [Kate laughs]. If the publishers of *The Woman of Colour* were falsely claiming that its author had previously published the Crosby title *Eversfield Abbey*, why would they not also object to that?

- 00:36:48 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The strange case of *A Winter in Bath* versus *A Winter at Bath* suggests that some publishers were attentive to the marketing strategies of other publishers and ready to push back if they felt them encroaching. Given that the attribution chain surrounding *The Woman of Colour* involves multiple publishers, it's not unlikely that at least one of them would have objected if another publisher was using one of their publications erroneously.
- 00:37:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Paying attention to which publishers published which novels in the chain can also help us understand why some titles were referenced more frequently than others, and how it might have formed part of a marketing strategy. As we mentioned earlier in the episode, bylines can promote or advertise other titles. A publisher could be inclined to use the byline to promote their own business by listing other titles by that anonymous author that they published, specifically. So, if there were different publishers popping up at various points in an attribution chain with *The Woman of Colour*, they might be more likely to reference their own titles on the title pages rather than those published by their competitors.
- 00:37:52 Kandice Sharren (co-host) There are five main publishers involved in this chain of attribution. The major one is the Minerva Press, which published the first novel attributed to E.M. Foster in 1795, *The Duke of Clarence*, and the final novel in the chain in 1817, titled *The Revealer of Secrets*.
- 00:38:09 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, good title.
- 00:38:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The Crosby firm (which has come up in many episodes so far and is perhaps most notable in literary history as the publisher who bought an early version of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and didn't publish it) published titles in this chain between 1799 and 1814. There are also three publishers who show up only once: Joseph Bell published *Jaqueline of Hainault* in 1798, the Robinson's published *Light and Shade* in 1803, and Black, Parry, and Kingsbury published *The Woman of Colour* in 1808. As we talked through the different publishers who were involved in publishing titles in this attribution chain, we came across some familiar firms that we have talked about before—and some new ones.

- 00:38:55 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I'm really glad we're doing this because it's forcing me to untangle some of the stuff I've been thinking about reading this, but basically it's interesting because most of the titles—hang on, I'm going to count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10—so there are 10 between 1795 and 1803. And of those, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7 are Minerva Press novels. One of them is a Benjamin Crosbys—I think at that stage it's Crosby Lettermans—
- 00:39:40 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh! That's Elizabeth Guenard. And I think she, and that was in 1803, too. So, that's funny.
- 00:39:49 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. No, that one is a 1799 title. And then the 1803s—there's also a Joseph Bell title, 1798. And then the 1803 title is published by the Robinsons. So then what happens with the one that's published in 1804, which is *The Aunt and the Niece*, is that one's also a Mineva Press title, but it somewhat unusually for this system of books, has absolutely no author information on the page at all.
- 00:40:33 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Like no “by the author of” or anything.
- 00:40:35 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah, so it's almost a really weird clean break. And that seems to be the point where people start to be like, “oh, maybe these aren't all the same author.” However, then we get in 1806 *Eversfield Abbey*, which is listed on *The Woman of Colour* title page with a misspelling of *Ebersfield Abbey*, so searching for the—
- 00:41:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I love a typo!
- 00:41:06 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I know! Those titles referenced most frequently—*Eversfield Abbey*, *A Winter in Bath*, and *The Banks of Wye*—were all published by Crosby and Co., and they were published relatively early on in this hypothetical author's relationship with the firm. So, it makes sense that they would appear on subsequent Crosby-published titles—and, in cases where they are referenced by titles published by other publishers, like the Minerva Press, it suggests that they may have been particularly popular or noteworthy in some way.
- 00:41:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Looking at publishers can tell us a lot about how a specific title was positioned in the literary marketplace, and tracing an author's movement between different publishers can suggest to us what their literary or commercial ambitions may have been. In the 1790s, a handful of authors—Ann Radcliffe among them—were able to use their successes with circulating library publishers to chart a career that saw them earning spectacular sums.

- 00:42:00 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Mrs. E.M. Foster—if she was, in fact, the author of all of these titles, followed a less straightforward trajectory. The most notable pattern for this attribution chain between 1795 and 1806 is the lateral movement between two circulating library publishers—the Minerva Press and Benjamin Crosby (who had various partnerships during this period). While the publication of *Light and Shade* with the more prestigious Robinson firm hints at higher ambitions, in this case they don't seem to have resulted in a sustained career outside of these lower-brow publishers.
- 00:42:32 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And, so, there's a couple waves in this potentially one author's career where she starts out publishing a lot with the Mineva Press. She kind of breaks away from the Mineva Press, publishes one novel with the Robinson firm, which is quite a bit more prestigious, goes back to the Minerva Press for *The Aunt and the Niece*, but then there's a whole chunk of books published by the Crosby firm between 1806 and *The Dead Letter Office* in 1811. And the first of those is *Eversfield Abbey*. The second is *Winter in Bath* and the third is *The Banks of Wye*. So what happens, I think with those, is that they're getting referenced a lot because she has then this cluster of other novels published by the same firm that they're kind of looking back to and being like those ones.
- 00:43:35 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. Well you think about it in terms of advertising, right? If a firm is publishing, they're like, "I want you to go read these other books by this author that I've published." You know what I mean? [laughs]
- 00:43:43 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah, exactly, exactly [laughs]. And then also kind of like pointing to one or two others, but then what's really interesting, I think about *The Woman of Colour* in this whole chain, is that it's the only book in the attribution chain published by Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, which is not a firm that published a ton of novels. [laughs]
- 00:44:09 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right! Interesting!
- 00:44:10 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We don't have a ton of books that they published in the WPHP, but I went digging around when I was writing my spotlight, trying to find out more about them, the Black in that might be Hannah Black. But I can't find out enough information to confirm. So, that's cool. I think I've got it as Hannah Black in the WPHP because the dates lined up and I was like, "it would be really cool if it was Hannah Black."
- 00:44:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) It would be really cool if it was Hannah Black.

00:44:40 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I know, but I don't know who Hannah Black is or anything.

00:44:43 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. I'm on it, don't worry, I'll look for you. [laughs]

00:44:45 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But they're also—thank you! [laughs] It's also a firm that, if you search for them or various iterations of them in the British Library Catalogue, they published a lot of various non-fiction things related to the East Indies. So there's definitely some kind of colonial theme going on. So, *The Woman of Colour* is published the same year as the *Banks of Wye*. And it's right in the middle of this kind of cluster of Crosby titles. But it's a different publisher, but it's also interesting because the books that it's referencing are kind of spread across a few different publishers, so we've got—

00:45:43 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting!

00:45:43 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *Light and Shade*, the author of *Light and Shade*, which is Robinson, *The Aunt and the Niece*, which is the Minerva Press, and *Eversfield Abbey*, which is Crosby.

00:45:54 Kate Moffatt (co-host) So interesting!

00:45:56 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. And then, but it's not referencing *A Winter in Bath*, which had just come out.

00:46:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I'm looking at the firm entry for Hannah Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, if it is Hannah Black, for the address they were at between 1808 and 1812. Alongside *The Woman of Colour*, in the titles that we have in the WPHP, are *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* by Hester Mulso Chapone, and *The British novelists; with an essay, and prefaces, biographical and critical* by Mrs. Barbauld. These are kind of like highfalutin things to be published alongside, if you know what I mean? [laughs]. These are engaging literary criticism and women's education and there's a translation by a woman in here as well.

00:46:47 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Looking at publishers can also help us understand how a given title functioned in relation to other titles. Elizabeth Neiman has talked about the authorial model of the Minerva Press as generic, which she describes like this: “these writers de-emphasize personality by linking their work to the codes and conventions of formula.” She sees Minerva authors “borrow[ing] popular literary conventions . . . [to] connect their writings to literary and philosophical texts.”

- 00:47:16 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, she also sees these writers as being in conversation with each other in ways that are additive rather than derivative; that is, by drawing on familiar tropes, they were able to modify them in order to comment on political and literary debates. While Neiman focuses on authors affiliated with the Minerva Press, which was certainly the most high-profile circulating library publisher in the 1790s and early 1800s, attribution chains like the one surrounding *The Woman of Colour* highlight how this borrowing of conventions transcends specific publishers.
- 00:47:49 Kandice Sharren (co-host) She actually applies this potential to *The Woman of Colour* herself, which she reads as an early example of a novel that puts “the conventions of popular romance, most notably the ‘masculine’ gothic, to the service of abolitionist and feminist arguments”—so even though *The Woman of Colour* was published by Black, Perry, and Kingsbury, whoever wrote it was engaged with the same tropes, plot structures, and conventions that shaped Minerva novels. As I started trying to make sense of this attribution chain, I became curious about the contents of these novels themselves.
- 00:48:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The profile for E.M. Foster in *Orlando* has notes about the plot points of some of the earlier novels in the attribution chain, but these mainly focus on those definitively attributed to E.M. Foster. The ones I was most curious about were those that were only a degree removed from *The Woman of Colour*—that is, those that are on the title page of *The Woman of Colour*, or that list *The Woman of Colour* on their title page. So, in true *WPHP Monthly Mercury* fashion, I sat down and started to read them [Kate laughs]. Slowly. Over many months. They are not very good [Kate laughs]. Okay. That might be a little unfair. They aren't exactly experimental works of literary genius. [laughs]
- 00:49:07 Kate Moffatt (co-host) So they're no *Three Monks!!!*, then, are they, Kandice? [laughs]

- 00:49:07 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Tragically, no. However, they are interesting to place in conversation with *The Woman of Colour*, and with each other, because there is a lot of overlap in certain features. At one stage, I tried making a kind of trope bingo card out of things that kept coming up in the novels [Kate laughs]—for example, secret marriages with women named Angelina, metacommentary by an author who self-identifies as an old maid, racially ambiguous West Indian characters, and settings in the southwest of England and Wales—but, honestly, it was too difficult to predict what might reappear in a subsequent novel. So, what this did show me though, that is in addition to the broad strokes tropes that Neiman identifies, these novels had some really, really specific things in common.
- 00:50:02 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But yeah, I basically made a list of the general tropes and themes that come up. Not necessarily in every single novel in the attribution chain, but that come up fairly consistently, and each novel kind of has at least one or two of them. And they're really weird things. So a lot of them have a setting either in Southwest England or Southern Wales. So it's a really interesting—
- 00:50:34 Kate Moffatt (co-host) That's very specific!
- 00:50:35 Kandice Sharren (co-host) —collection. Yeah. It's a very regional set of novels really focused on—they go outside of those regions, but *The Woman of Colour*, a large part of the action takes place in Devonshire and Wales; she ends up convalescing in a cottage in Wales for a while. But a lot of the other novels have characters who are either originally from there or a lot of the action takes place there. I think it's Devonshire, Bristol, Bath, and Monmouthshire, which is in Wales, I'm pretty sure.
- 00:51:13 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And, then, occasionally Gloucestershire, as well. So you get this cluster of counties that aren't—if you think about like Jane Austen novels, they all take place in home counties, like England, almost. And this is much more regional, but I think that also—I was reading recently and I actually hadn't realized this, in retrospect it's really obvious, but I always think of other major cities in England are Manchester and Northern industrial cities. But of course at the time that these novels were getting published—
- 00:51:55 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right! Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 00:51:57 Kandice Sharren (co-host) There wasn't that industrial thing happening yet. So, actually Bristol was the second largest city in Britain.

00:52:09 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. So that actually kind of made sense.

00:52:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So it's actually a major urban center. I think it's partly a major urban center because it's on the Southwest coast where ships can go to North America, to the Caribbean. So if you're thinking about the slave trade, and the shipment of goods, but also obviously people being captured and enslaved, that is part of that network of movement. There's also quite a lot of characters who go off to the West Indies or there's West Indian heiresses who show up or other West Indian characters.

00:52:56 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right! Interesting. So it really speaks to that particular form of movement being something that can happen more easily than if they were located in other places in England.

00:53:04 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. Yeah. So there's a hyper local element to a lot of the novels, but it's also a hyper local element that links them to global movement. The other thing I wanted to say about that too, is there's a lot of West Indian characters who crop up; a lot of them are just kind of like British landowners who also have properties somewhere in the Caribbean or whatever and are by implication, obviously, slaveholders or implicated in the slave trade. But I think this is something that's really important is that the Caribbean is never actually directly represented in any of the novels, even *The Woman of Colour*.

00:53:57 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting.

00:54:00 Kandice Sharren (co-host) It starts where she leaves—yeah. And, and it ends when she is going back, but you never actually get a direct representation of that. And it's the same thing in the other books. There are characters who come and go—some of them are really minor characters who just need to get written out. But for some novels it's a major plot point, but you never actually go there with them. So those are a couple of other things.

00:54:33 Kate Moffatt (co-host) My internet or your internet is not having a good time.

- 00:54:37 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) While assuming you can learn anything about an author by reading the contents of a fictional work is pretty ill-advised, the fact remains that when you bring the contents of an attribution chain into conversation with their hypothetical authorship, you inevitably start thinking about what kind of author might write very stereotypically negative portraits of racially ambiguous West Indian characters, on the one hand, but write very sympathetically about a definitely mixed race heroine, on the other.
- 00:55:05 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) It raises complicated questions about the relationship between authors and content that are the subject of debates within the publishing industry today, which is the whole push right now in publishing towards Own voices Literature, which is meant to be that you don't write from the perspective of someone that you're not, which I know is extremely contentious in some ways. There are a lot of people who are like, "in order to have a broad or diverse cast of characters in your work, you are inevitably going to be writing characters that you don't have, but at the same time, that representation of having an author who's autistic writing an autistic character, is an important representation issue as well."
- 00:55:14 Kate Moffatt
(co-host) I think it's really interesting that like these conversations we're having right now around Own Voices, that people are digging into and trying to trouble that representation that comes from people outside of certain marginalized groups. It's really interesting that it ties into a lot of what people are maybe interested in and why they're interested in it for this work as well.
- 00:56:14 Kandice Sharren
(co-host) Yeah. And I think if you read—I guess that goes back to that question of reading *The Woman of Colour* in isolation versus reading it alongside these other books in the attribution chain because I think if you read it in isolation, you're like, "wow, this author could be anybody." And if you read it within the context of the wider attribution chain and you take that chain seriously, it becomes—I don't want to say it's impossible to think that the writer could have been a person of colour because I still think that it's definitely possible.

- 00:56:50 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But it just becomes a much more conservative novel than it maybe would seem on first glance, which I think is interesting because I think it complicates how we understand conservative writing in the period in a really interesting way. Because I think what's fascinating about *The Woman of Colour* is that it's a very deeply sympathetic portrait of its main character, Olivia. And it really gets at some of the sort of subtle nuance of being a mixed race woman in a higher society in the early nineteenth century. It really actually does that really well. But, and I think this is something that Sara Salih has talked about in relation to it.
- 00:57:43 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Ultimately, [Olivia] leaves that society and it's partly because she finds out the man that she's married to was actually married to someone else first. And he thought through the machinations of his scheming sister-in-law and his brother who shuffled this woman out of the picture, he thought she was dead [laughs]. So, he marries Olivia, not telling her he's been married before, because it was a secret marriage.
- 00:58:19 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And then of course the scheming sister-in-law and brother who are deeply racist characters, they're super evil and they're super racist, bring the still-living wife and her daughter back into the picture and are like, "surprise!" So, the weird narrative compromise that comes out of this is Olivia decides that she's a widow. She gets to keep her fortune because basically she only, through her father's will, she only got this fortune if she married her white cousin. So she's being forced into this marriage with this man who she ends up being in love with.
- 00:59:01 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And she did, technically. Oh, that's really sad.
- 00:59:04 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah [both laugh]. And he's kind of a decent guy [laughs]. So it's this weird thing where everyone's being screwed over by these very materialistic, very—
- 00:59:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And it's like, you think about what that story is then—
- 00:59:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Very racist characters—
- 00:59:25 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Think about what that story is then saying, right. Which is that when she's in love with this decent guy, the happy ending is that she doesn't get to be with him. She goes back to Jamaica. Right? What is that saying?

- 00:59:34 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah, and she goes back to Jamaica. Yeah. And actually the other thing that happens is before she goes back to Jamaica, Mr. Honeywood comes back out of nowhere. He's like, "oh, my mother died. So sad. Do you want to marry me? I hear that things didn't work out for you" [Kate laughs]. And she says no, she rejects this. And she actually also quite likes him. So, she rejects marriage with someone else on the basis of—she's technically decided she's a widow and she's calling herself a widow, but the man she married is also still alive.
- 01:00:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. So she's stuck in this spot of being unable to live basically.
- 01:00:21 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But it kind of, so the novel presents a really sympathetic portrait of her, but also excludes her from the society ultimately.
- 01:00:28 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And takes away her choices. Right? If the whole point was to have her in this position where—because you could read that she's got her fortune, she's got her independence, but at the same time, she was forced into that too. You know what I mean? It was like she was forced into this marriage and then she was forced into this position of being independent and a widow and all choice then also removed from her if she's unable to move past that because she's a widow whose husband is still alive.
- 01:00:57 Kandice Sharren (co-host) As I said at one point during our conversation, maybe a little bit flippantly, I'm not sure whether being able to identify a named author in this case actually does very much to solve this mystery. If someone found the business records of Black, Parry, and Kingsbury and we found out that E.M. Foster was definitely the author of *The Woman of Colour*, that wouldn't tell us very much in terms of using the author's biography to anchor our reading of the text in some way. We know nothing about E.M. Foster to the point that she could very well be the mixed-race woman from the Caribbean that Lyndon Dominique has hypothesized wrote the novel.
- 01:01:37 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I do think that reading the other books in the attribution chain tells us something important—although I'm not sure that what it tells us is related to the author or her biography, or even that it offers an interpretive key to understanding the complexities of *The Woman of Colour*. Instead, I think it's interesting to think about these books as being in conversation with each other and exploring different elements of similar plots.
- 01:02:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And Kandice, I think we're out of time, we've barely talked about the actual novels themselves.

01:02:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I know! I had so many things to say about them too [both laugh]. But a lot of them don't make sense without all the attribution chain stuff. So we had to get through that first [laughs].

01:02:22 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Okay. So if you had to recommend one book in this attribution chain for our listeners to read, what book would it be?

01:02:31 Kandice Sharren (co-host) That's an interesting question because I think it depends on what it is that you want to explore about this attribution chain. If one of the things that you are really interested in is representations of West Indian characters, a novel like *Light and Shade*, where you have the heroine meeting and falling in love with a boy who is the heir to a west Indian fortune and then he goes off and marries this very racially ambiguous woman who's kind of a spendthrift and ruins him.

01:03:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And then both of them die and she adopts their child. *Light and Shade* is the one for you [laughs]. If you were interested in the side plot about the first wife of Olivia's husband, who he thinks is dead, but actually turns out to be alive and he's now committed bigamy, you might wanna go read *The Aunt and the Niece*, because that novel also has a woman named Angelina who secretly marries a wealthy man. And when he dies, nobody believes that they were actually married. So she is assumed to be his mistress.

01:03:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So the novel kind of focuses on her daughter; she doesn't know that her mother thinks she's illegitimate. So, if you're interested in that kind of plot point: *The Aunt and the Niece*. If the thing that really catches your fancy is this sort of meta-author commentary, I would actually really recommend the one that you love the title of: *The Dead Letter Office*. Because this has a really elaborate frame narrative of the woman who's kind of the narrator of the novel.

01:04:31 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh! Such a good title!

01:04:32 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The reason it's called *The Dead Letter Office* is because her nephew comes to visit her and he works in the post office and he has gathered together. He's collected all of these letters that couldn't be delivered for one reason or another that he thinks his aunt will find interesting. So they sit together. And they read these letters. And the first letter he shows her is one that she herself wrote to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, saying, "thank you for your positive review of my novel" [both laugh] and it's one of the novels in the attribution chain. It's a real novel.

01:05:10 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, wow. That's cool.

01:05:12 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But she has this whole kind of like—

01:05:13 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Okay, I have to read that one.

01:05:14 Kandice Sharren (co-host) an old maid persona. I actually had to sit and read it in the British library because it hasn't been digitized.

01:05:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh no!

01:05:22 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But it has this whole persona, of this old maid character that's kind of running throughout, but it's a very sort of more fully developed figure. And then there's also an inset shorter novel that I wonder if it's like one that was too short to publish as a standalone or something.

01:05:40 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I am so fascinated. And I stand by my habit of picking books based on spectacular titles because the *Three Monks!!!* did not let me down. And it doesn't sound like *The Dead Letter Office* will either.

01:05:52 Kandice Sharren (co-host) No.

01:05:53 Kate Moffatt (co-host) *Dead Letter Office? Dead Letter Society?*

01:05:54 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *Dead Letter Office.*


01:05:56 Kate Moffatt (co-host) *Dead Letter Office.* Fantastic. Absolutely fantastic.

01:05:59 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Because her nephew works in the dead letter office.

01:06:02 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh my gosh.

01:06:03 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. Anyway, so those are, those are some things to get you started if you were interested in exploring these truly bizarre novels that we didn't get a chance to really talk about. [laughs]

01:06:16 Kate Moffatt (co-host) In following Kandice down her absolute bonkers, in-progress, research hole right now. [both laugh]

01:06:16  [music playing]

01:06:32 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This has been the first episode of Season 3 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*! If you're interested in learning more about what we discussed today, we've compiled a list of suggestions for further reading and links to some relevant entries in the WPHP in a blog post that you can find at womensprinthistoryproject.com. You can also find us at @TheWPHP on twitter and on Instagram @womensprinthistoryproject.

01:06:59  [music playing]

01:07:10 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [outtakes, part 1] Oh yes, no.

01:07:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But there's a horse outside, but I don't think it'll make enough noise to do anything.

01:07:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [laughs] but there's the horse!

01:07:20 Both [outtakes, part 2] Music!

01:07:23 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [outtakes, part 3] Start the season by giving you all a brief glimpse into the behind-the- [ineligible]

01:07:27 Kandice Sharren (co-host) If an author hadn't read—blegh. And there's a French translation in 18—blegh.

01:07:32 Kate Moffatt (co-host) So, listing titles as part of—oh!

01:07:35 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But these mainly focus on those definitively—blegh. I leaned against the chair and it made a loud noise, so I'm going to do that last sentence again! [both laugh] I just got too busy in my movements!

01:07:50 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Too excited! [laughs]