



Angelaki >

Journal of the Theoretical Humanities

Volume 1, 1996 - Issue 2

40 Views | 0 CrossRef citations to date | 0 Altmetric

Original Articles

The Macaroni parson and the Marvellous boy: *Literature and forgery in the eighteenth century*

Paul Baines

Pages 95-112 | Published online: 04 Jun 2008

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259608571885>

Sample our
Language & Literature
Journals

>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

References

Citations

Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

We Care About Your Privacy

We and our 848 partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data. [Privacy Policy](#)

We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

List of Partners (vendors)

I Accept

Essential Only

Show Purpose



Readers of *The Westminster Gazette* of 4-8 February 1777 might have been intrigued to discover the following cryptic item tucked away in an apparently arbitrary stream of information on p.3: 'Last night the Rev. — — was committed to the Poultry Compter by the Right Ho. the Lord Mayor, for a capital forgery upon the E— of C—'. This tiny hint was the seed of a huge outpouring of newspaper (and other) print over the next six months. On p.4 enough hints were given to identify the clergyman in question (though no names were given) as Dr William Dodd, the fashionably sentimental preacher and supporter of good causes. By 10 February the papers had the whole story; he had been arrested at his home in London for the forgery of a bond to the value of £4,200 in the name of the Earl of Chesterfield. There were no headlines in eighteenth-century newspapers, and no illustrations; nonetheless this was a sensational event, or series of events; Dodd's imprisonment, trial and execution at Tyburn in the teeth of public opposition were a ready source of extraordinary domestic news to savour against the disturbing events in America.¹

But there were other, smaller events as well. Dodd was arrested on 7 February; on 8 February, *The Gazetteer* ran an advertisement for:

Poems, supposed to have been written at Bristol, by THOMAS ROWLEY, and others, in the 15th century. The greatest part now published from the most authentic copies, with an engraved specimen of one of the MSS.

This also was the herald of a fierce public discussion about forgery; another kind of authenticity, another kind of manuscript. Literature shadows history. The newspapers and periodicals of early 1777 treat the case of Dodd as a major theme,

paul baines

THE MACARONI PARSON AND THE MARVELLOUS BOY *literature and forgery in the eighteenth century*

but it is disconcertingly criss-crossed by reviews of Rowley, extracts from the poems and rumours of their connection with an obscure boy-poet called Chatterton.² To eighteenth-century scholars, these are two well-known cases, but they are not usually seen this close together; I do not think the coincidence has been noted before, and the newspapers themselves do not make any particular point of it. In terms of the minute particulars of concrete experience, there is some reason not to equate Dodd with Chatterton, and although I design to use these two cases to trace some of the cultural meanings of 'forgery', an initial conception of difference is essential as a marker in the processes to be discussed. The poems and documents which make up *Rowley* were reviewed, questioned, analysed, and finally reattributed as the work of their putative finder, Thomas Chatterton; but the literary system was much slower to estab-



Log in



Log in

Log in

Resto

Doctors content access for purchase made so quest


Purchase options *

Save for later

PDF download + Online access

- 48 hours access to article PDF & online version
- Article PDF can be downloaded
- Article PDF can be printed


USD 53.00

 Add to cart

Issue Purchase

- 30 days online access to complete issue
- Article PDFs can be downloaded
- Article PDFs can be printed

USD 248.00

 Add to cart

* Local tax will be added as applicable

Related Research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by



Information for

- Authors
- R&D professionals
- Editors
- Librarians
- Societies

Opportunities

- Reprints and e-prints
- Advertising solutions
- Accelerated publication
- Corporate access solutions

Open access


- Overview
- Open journals
- Open Select
- Dove Medical Press
- F1000Research

Help and information

- Help and contact
- Newsroom
- All journals
- Books

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

 Sign me up



✕