“As Fully Incomprehensible as the Northern Lights”: Literary Identities in The Adventures of an Author

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Abstract
This essay considers an anonymously-written and understudied novel, The Adventures of an Author (1767), as self-consciously reflecting the complexities and multiplicities of professional authorship in the mid-eighteenth century. Containing a vividly-realized fictive print society, this two-volume work revolves around the exploits of a writer-protagonist named Jack Atall who confusedly constructs his own literary autobiography. Investigating The Adventures of an Author as a comic negotiation of developing conceptions of authorship and the book trade, the novel is read as ironically underlining how discussions like Young’s Conjectures on Original Composition and Ralph’s Case of Authors fall short in defining and defending the professional author. It can be argued that Adventures represents the period’s conceptions of authorship as unstable, depicting the chaotic inclusivity of the Republic of Letters and the inability of authorial polemics to contain and control the operations of the literary marketplace.

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Heather Ladd (PhD, University of Toronto) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Lethbridge. Interested in comic representations of the literary marketplace, she is currently at work on an academic monograph, The Book Trade on the London Stage, 1690-1790. Recently, she contributed an entry on playwright Benjamin Hoadly to the Wiley Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660-1789 and a chapter on Charlotte Smith to Gender and Space in British Literature, 1660-1820 (Ashgate 2014). She has held library fellowships at the Chawton House Library and the Lewis Walpole Library.
The Northern Lights refers to one of the most amazing natural wonders of the world, the aurora borealis. These Latin words refer to Aurora, Latin for sunrise and the name of the Roman Goddess of the dawn, and Borealis, the Greek name for the north wind. They are called the 'northern lights' because they are a glowing, flickering display of colours most commonly seen in the northern hemisphere. What colour are the Northern Lights? The most common colour to see is fluorescent green, followed by orange and purple, and many shades of red, pink, blue and yellow. Seeing the Northern Lights in the darkness of the Icelandic countryside is sure to be a phenomenal experience. It might also be wise to try and avoid seeing them at Full Moon.

How do the Northern Lights happen? A thrilling adventure story, gripping history and fascinating study of the Scottish character, Kidnapped has lost none of its power. 25. Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K Jerome (1889). Jerome K Jerome’s accidental classic about messing about on the Thames remains a comic gem. This portrait of a day in the lives of three Dubliners remains a towering work, in its word play surpassing even Shakespeare. 47. Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis (1922). What it lacks in structure and guile, this enthralling take on 20s America makes up for in vivid satire and characterisation.