**Mark Vareschi, *Everywhere and Nowhere: Anonymity and Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. Pp. 222. $25. ISBN 9781517904074.**

Mark Vareschi's book employs a variety of tools and disciplines to consider how authorial anonymity sheds light on processes of mediation in the long eighteenth century. In an introductory chapter that is at once wide-ranging in its scholarship and forensically cohesive, Vareschi sets forth his study's main claims and supporting theory. Among the former is his finding – founded, with seeming unassailability, on quantitative analyses of the metadata from Eighteenth Century Collections Online's (ECCO's) database – that authorial anonymity in the period was not, as is often thought, remarkable and attributable to an unusual authorial desire to remain unknown. Rather, authorial anonymity was to some extent the default, particularly in the novel, such that there was often 'no action [taken] on the part of the author to publish anonymously, only inaction in not protesting or taking steps against it' (10). The study's focus on anonymity suggests how deeply embedded remains the author in our thoughts on literature ('Authorial attribution, it seems, is the necessary precondition for literary critical practice,' Vareschi notes (16)), even if we have long regarded that figure as a construct or as the product of discourses. The book highlights that conventional focus on the author in order to look beyond it to the 'radically mediated' nature of literary artifacts: 'The many hands and many things involved in the production, circulation, and reception of the literary text means necessarily that any single human actor can only be a single piece of a much larger assemblage' (24). Intention and agency are significant here, but they reside not in authorial motive (for Vareschi 'outside the text and largely inaccessible … to the critic' (27)) but in the actions of texts and media objects and their discernable effects in the world.

Following the introduction, Chapters 1 through 4 further the argument with detailed expositions of media objects – poems, plays, and novels – whose trajectories across the eighteenth century and beyond intersect variously with tacit anonymity (the default condition earlier in the century); with overt or explicit Anonymity (increasingly common, ECCO searches show, after 1770); and with retrospective authorial attribution which can obscure the anonymous state of a text in its early decades of publication. Chapter 1 considers the various media forms taken by two anonymous poems, 'Belinda' and 'The Beggar's Petition', which over the course of the century progress from anonymous to Anonymous, an 'expressly mediated status [that] serves as a reminder of the competing agents, both human and nonhuman, involved in literary production and representation' (63). Chapter 2 takes up the genre of drama, arguing that anonymity in the authorship of plays went unremarked by audiences until the 'dramatic catalogers of the Restoration and eighteenth century … [began] systematically cataloging printed anonymous plays as anonymous throughout the period' (66). Chapter 3 considers how the early nineteenth-century canonisation of Daniel Defoe as a novelist effectively erased the originally anonymous status of his novels and political pamphlets when published in the eighteenth century. Chapter 4 argues that the originally anonymous publication of Burney's *Evelina* and Scott's *Waverley* resists conventional interpretation based on authorial intention – even though those two authors offered explanations for their uses of anonymity.

These brief chapter summaries do not fully convey the riches on offer: examinations of varied media phenomena such as the hissing of audiences at theater performances, frontispiece portraits in poetic miscellanies, the visual schema of pages in catalogues of books and plays, and the typographical features, sizes and formats – even the 'smell of pages well thumbed' – of books. These material descriptions merge with scholarship from a range of disciplines, including book

history and bibliography, media theory, discourse studies, author studies, and twentieth-century critical theory. The book advances scholarly work published by Vareschi on anonymity and mediation in several essays over the last decade. If the body of the study seems at times to revert more frequently than is strictly necessary to undergirding theory – for example, to the argument previously developed in the introduction that authorial motive is unknowable and that intention inheres not in biographical figures who are antecedent to texts but in textual artifacts and media objects themselves and their effects upon the world – this is in part because the case studies that comprise the body are fascinating and cogent enough to seemingly obviate the need for reinforcement.

Although Vareschi closes with an epilogue that challenges the commonplace that anonymity is newly ubiquitous in the online-digital world, his argument for the ubiquity of authorial anonymity in the long eighteenth century – shedding light as it does on networks of non-human agents and processes of mediation – seems also relevant to a post-truth reality (video deep fakes and AI-generated profile photos produced in the service of alternative facts come to mind) that likely emerged as the book was in press.

*Gerald Egan*
*California State University, Long Beach*