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**Instructions for Authors**
We are delighted to present the latest issue of *Romantic Textualities*, after an extended hiatus of some three years. This is also the biggest issue we have published in the history of the journal, running to over 300 pages of essays, reviews and a report. Living in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have witnessed the many challenges and disruptions caused by the pandemic—and its impact on the usual business of academic research cannot be ignored. To that end, we sincerely hope that the present publication, prepared during these complicated times, offers some small relief in the reading.

Despite the hiatus in its publication of serialised issues, *Romantic Textualities* has nonetheless remained active online, presenting content on our blog, most notably through our ‘Teaching Romanticism’ series, edited by Daniel Cook. The past few years have seen a number of changes in the editorial team: last issue, we welcomed Maximiliaan van Woudenberg as journal co-editor; this issue, we are delighted to introduce Barbara Hughes-Moore as our new Reviews Editor. Barbara recently completed an interdisciplinary doctoral project at Cardiff University, which looked at problems of proof in *mens rea* through the literary figure of the double in gothic fiction. As part of our continuing plans to expand our online activities, we hope to expand our team further by appointing an Associate Editor and Social Media Editor in the coming months.

Returning to the present, we are pleased to publish a special issue on *The Minerva Press and the Literary Marketplace*, guest edited by Elizabeth Neiman and Christina Morin. *Romantic Textualities* has enjoyed a long, fruitful association with research into William Lane’s Minerva Press, whose heyday spanned the 1780s to the 1820s. Many of the journal’s early issues shared bibliographical research that emerged from collaborative projects between Cardiff and Paderborn Universities. These partnerships resulted in the publication of two bibliographies (*The English Novel, 1770–1829* [2000] and *1830–1836* [2003]) and a database (*British Fiction, 1800–1829* [2004]). As the most prolific publisher of fiction during the Romantic period, Minerva figured substantially in our research, demonstrating that the early history of the novel was very much the history of the Lane’s press. Our bibliographic updates were supplemented in *Romantic Textualities* by standalone essays and reports on the Minerva Press, but such items tended to be occasional pieces. So, it is with much satisfaction that we now present readers with an entire issue dedicated to Minerva and its contribution to the Romantic literary marketplace (see pp. 11–184).
The ongoing work of this issue’s guest editors has examined the Minerva Press and popular fiction during the Romantic era. As well as having published essays on women’s writing and Minerva in journals and book collections, Elizabeth has most recently published *Minerva’s Gothics: The Politics and Poetics of Romantic Exchange, 1780–1820* (University of Wales Press, 2020). Tina’s research interests centre on Romantic-era Irish gothic literature, book history and Irish women’s writing. She is the author of *Charles Maturin and the Haunting of Irish Romantic Fiction* (2011) and *The Gothic Novel in Ireland, c. 1760–1829* (2018), both of which were published by Manchester University Press. The current collection of essays on the Minerva Press extends their work in this area, and was specially commissioned for *Romantic Textualities*, with a call for papers issued in late 2017. For a fuller discussion of the Minerva Press and the essays, see Elizabeth and Tina’s introduction to the special issue on pp. 11–20.

In addition to the ten Minerva essays, Issue 23 includes four standalone articles. Angela Aliff’s ‘The “Dying Tale” as Epistemic Strategy in Hemans’s *Records of Woman*’ (pp. 185–199) addresses ways in which a study of early modern female writers of history can inform Felicia Hemans scholarship, particularly by drawing on Megan Matchinske’s work on the ‘dying-tale’ in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613). Aliff argues that Hemans similarly promotes the necessity of women acting to ensure successful political and personal endurance in her *Records of Woman* (1828), drawing on a multi-sensory approach to communication that relies especially on the auditory. Michael Falk’s ‘Sad Realities: The Romantic Tragedies of Charles Harpur’ (pp. 200–217) considers Australian poet Charles Harpur’s contribution to the development of Romantic tragedy, particularly through *The Bushrangers* (1835/53) and *King Saul* (c. 1838). Falk suggests that although Harper sought to distinguish his literary productions from more popular fare, while experiencing alienation from the popular theatre by a colonial context marked by censorship, snobbery and British cultural imports. In ‘The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer in the Nineteenth Century: Social Influences on Editorial Practices’ (pp. 218–236), Simone Celine Marshall compares features of the 1807 edition of Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess* with its predecessors. Marshall proposes that *The Book of the Duchess* offers a revealing case study of Georgian textual scholarship of a significant poem in Chaucer’s oeuvre, the authority of which has never been questioned. The final essay, Amy Milka’s ‘Political Animals: Dogs and the Discourse of Rights in Late Eighteenth-Century Print Culture’ (pp. 237–256) argues that during the political upheaval of the 1790s, the discourse of rights was mobilised to discuss the social, legal and political status of animals and humans. With dogs (in this case) being used as cyphers for their human owners, a variety of literary productions demonstrated the methods of social, legal and political resistance available to their readers.

The second section of this issue provides Update 7 (pp. 257–278) to two linked bibliographical projects, both of which share their origins with *Romantic Textualities* at Cardiff University’s Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Re-
search, as mentioned earlier: the second volume of *The English Novel, 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (OUP, 2000) and its online companion *The English Novel, 1830–1836: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in Britain and Ireland* (Cardiff and Paderborn Universities, 2003). The entries concern updated authorship attributions; the addition of new novels subsequently identified as suitable for inclusion in the bibliographical record; new information on surviving copies where none were previously located; as well as additional information about existing entries and more complex issues. The present report covers a period of over ten years since Update 6, spanning 2009 to 2020. It is hoped in the near future to provide a composite Update 8 incorporating material from all previous Updates, and marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the printed bibliography.

The final section of this issue comprises reviews of sixteen books on Romanticism, literature and print culture published between 2014 and 2018 (pp. 279–315). The titles examined cover a range of subjects, ranging from literature and science, to political radicalism and Welsh hymnody, from travel and topography to the popular reception of Austen to the contemporary networks traversed by Coleridge and Wordsworth.

Much is already in motion for our forthcoming issues. Issue 24 (Winter 2020) will focus on ‘Romantic Novels 1817 and 1818’, guest edited by Susan Civale and Claire Sheridan, and inspired by the Romantic Bicentenary seminar series that they co-hosted at the University of Greenwich in 2018–19. Following this, the theme of the Spring 2021 issue will be ‘Romanticism Goes to University’, emerging from a successful two-day symposium organised by Issue 25 editor, Andrew McInnes, at Edge Hill University in May 2018. In the longer term, we are also planning a special issue that looks at the theme of Romantic cosmopolitan networks, to be edited by Christopher Stampone, and a call for papers will shortly be issued for this. More generally, we welcome submissions; please visit our see our Instructions for Authors (pp. 325–326) for more information.

**Referring to this Article**

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**Date of acceptance:** 28 August 2020.
The April 1845 issue of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, an eminent women’s magazine published in Philadelphia between 1830 and 1878, contains a short story by ‘Miss Mary Davenant’ called ‘Helen Berkley; or, the Mercenary Marriage’. In it, the heroine’s potential lover is assessed by comparison to the hero of Regina Maria Roche’s 1796 Minerva Press novel, *The Children of the Abbey*: ‘But you know well enough that you never had such an admirer as he is; so handsome, so genteel—just like Lord Mortimer in the “Children of the Abbey”’. The reference is an intriguing one, suggesting not just the long-lasting and geographically far-reaching appeal of Roche’s most celebrated novel but also the similar persistence of the London-based Minerva Press itself. With modest origins in the publications of liveryman-turned-printer-and-bookseller William Lane (1738 or 1745/46–1814) in the 1770s and ‘80s, the Minerva Press was officially founded in 1790 and quickly established itself as Britain’s leading publisher of popular fiction. It enjoyed particular success amongst readers—and, correspondingly, attracted the special ire of critics—in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first few years of the nineteenth, by which point it was principally categorised and contemptuously dismissed as the purveyor of cheap, unoriginal and thoroughly forgettable circulating-library fictions. By 1845 and the publication of ‘Helen Berkley’, the Minerva Press had apparently been consigned to the annals of history (and bad literature): Lane himself had retired in 1809, handing the business on to his former apprentice Anthony King Newman (d. 1858), who began publishing with Lane in 1801. Under Newman’s guidance, the press began to focus more heavily on children’s literature and remainder publication and, in 1829, omitted ‘Minerva’ from its name altogether, possibly in recognition of its new specialisations and its inability to compete with now more prominent and respectable publishers of popular fiction.

Analysis of the cultural afterlives of Minerva Press novels via circulation evidence, reprint and translation history, and continued literary references such as that which appears in ‘Helen Berkley’ indicates the tenaciousness of Lane’s press and its productions. Long after it had ceased trading, ‘Helen Berkley’ tells us, the Minerva Press continued to exert a key influence through fictions and authors that remained household names across the world. Recent research has begun to recover Minerva’s legacy, working against the tendency of twentieth- and even twenty-first-century literary criticism to echo Romantic-era
assessments of Lane and his publications, and thereby dismiss Minerva novels more or less wholesale as formulaic and ephemeral fictions undeserving of serious scholarly attention. It is worth remembering, however, that those scholars who tracked the market’s influence on canonical Romanticism wrote Minerva back into literary history, even as they delegated the novels themselves to its margins. In putting together this special issue, we have reflected on our own recent contributions to Minerva scholarship, as well as on our confidence in the initial planning stages that we would solicit more than enough quality material for an exciting collection. In hindsight, it has become clear that our respective efforts to pose new questions of Minerva novels, as well as to think creatively about how best to analyse them, were neither singular nor unique. Rather, they demonstrate the fact that in the last decade or so, there has been ‘something in the air’, as it were, in British Romantic-era scholarship that has sparked interest in Minerva’s derided—because—derivative novels, including perhaps most notably reassessments of what these imitative novels enabled Romantic-era writers to say and to whom, as we address more fully in the next section.

Recovery Begun: The Minerva Press in Scholarship Today

Fuelled—in part—by an increasing drive to de-canonise and de-colonise Romantic literature, scholarly attention to the Minerva Press has intensified in the last ten years. Researchers have begun to interrogate contemporary critical responses to Minerva and reclaim not just prolific, best-selling authors such as Regina Maria Roche (1763/64–1845), Eliza Parsons (1739–1811), Helen Craik (1751–1825), Elizabeth Meeke (1761–1826?) and Catharine Selden (fl. 1797), or Minerva’s most popular works, such as The Children of the Abbey, but also scores of publications by lesser-known or anonymous authors that have since been consigned to ‘the slaughterhouse of literature’.

This new and enlivening work addresses the numerous and overlapping reasons for the usual scholarly disregard of Minerva writers. By interrogating why the critical commonplace that most Minerva novels are not generally worth reappraising has proven so persistent, such criticism probes the normative view of the gendered nature of Minerva authors and readers. It also explores Minerva genres, considering the press’s publication of works other than novels and, more particularly, the fiction for which it was most infamous: gothic romances. In related resistance to the typecasting of Minerva authors, genres and readers, this work investigates the hitherto unrecognised and unappreciated cultural and national diversity of Lane’s contributors. Moreover, attention to Lane’s pioneering business model and cultivation of a mass, global readership gestures toward the worldwide readership that Minerva authors enjoyed, not just in their own lifetimes, but for many decades after, as the case of ‘Helen Berkley’ so evocatively suggests.

It is worth pausing briefly on each of these areas of renewed scholarly attention so as to sketch the important work currently being done and to conjecture what remains to be explored, in part through the research presented in this special issue. The understanding of the Minerva Press as a principally
female publishing house, producing novels by women for an unthinking and undiscriminating circulating-library readership, is one first propounded by the Romantic-era periodical press. Lane himself became complicit in the view of his productions as by and for women in his 1798 Prospectus, which included an all-female list of ten ‘favourite’ Minerva authors. However, as Deborah Anne McLeod persuasively asserts, Lane was catering to a diverse audience comprised of men and women from many different walks of life. Equally, his apparent dedication to the female author signalled by his 1798 Prospectus and repeated in contemporary reviews is an incomplete reflection of his lists, a view constructed via the establishment of a false equivalency between female authorship and female readership. Romantic-era commentators also constructed a similar false equivalency between Minerva novels and the gothic, as exemplified by Wordsworth’s famous contrast between ‘genuine’ poetry and the day’s ‘frantic’ novels, and Minerva’s reputation for gothics helps to explain how and why the press was until recently so easily dismissed as a factory for imitative, sensationalised novels. It is, of course, worth noting that Romantic-era commentators were not entirely incorrect. Minerva did open doors for female writers, particularly during its zenith in the late 1790s and early 1800s, when it debuted more female authors than all other presses combined. Furthermore, many of these authors either marketed their work as ‘gothic’ or deployed recognisable gothic conventions, though as Hannah Doherty Hudson, Yael Shapira, Victoria Ravenwood and JoEllen DeLucia all vividly illustrate in this issue, often in ways that, to quote Hudson, ‘[reveal] genre itself as porous and protean rather than fixed, and constantly evolving in relation to past works and reader expectations’ (p. 151).

Attending to the particularities of gender and genre encourages recognition of other specifics as well. Rather than grouping all Minerva writers together as an indistinguishable subgroup of the London literary marketplace, researchers have begun paying greater attention to the individual histories and national affiliations of Minerva authors. Work by Jennie Batchelor, Edward Copeland and Cheryl Turner has delineated the oftentimes tragic personal circumstances in which Minerva authors worked and which imprint themselves on the pages of their novels, thus helping to restore these authors’ discrete identities and contexts. Christina Morin’s work on Roche, Selden, Henrietta Rouvière Mosse (d. 1835) and other Irish Minerva authors provides compelling evidence of the press’s importance to the development of Irish Romantic fiction. Similar work on the Scottish author Isabella Kelly (bap. 1759, d. 1857) by Tenille Nowak and Yael Shapira resists Kelly’s dismissal as just another Radcliffean imitator, recovering her importance to Minerva’s popular reputation—Kelly was included in the 1798 Prospectus as a favourite Minerva author—as well as the affecting conditions that underwrote much of her literary career. Other scholars have explored the significance of Minerva’s mass readership and circulation. For example, Eve Tavor Bannet has found that American publishers reprinted more Minerva novels than those by any other single British or European publisher in the early nineteenth century. Bannet weighs Minerva’s impact on American writers,
most notably Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), showing that when Brown exports gothic conventions popularised by Minerva, ‘these generic similarities [make] national differences in habits, manners, daily incidents, and sentiments all the more evident’.14

Particularities of place and context notwithstanding, most Minerva novels are formulaic and derivative. However, to see the creative and innovative potential of what has traditionally been taken as mere imitation, the fictions must be read and reappraised for—and not despite—their most formulaic conventions, as the writers in this issue all attest in various ways. These essays follow, in many ways, Elizabeth Neiman’s recent suggestion that ‘reading Minerva novels as exchangeable (but not interchangeable) nodes in a network illustrates that many period novelists do not see any necessary contradiction between imagination and freedom or imitation and constraint’. This understanding, in turn, ‘help[s] us see formulaic or “reproductive” novels differently and thereby expand[s] what we see and what we can say about authorship, then and now’.15

In her seminal 1939 history of the Press, Dorothy Blakey accepts Thomas Love Peacock’s verdict that Minerva novels were ‘“completely expurgated of all the higher qualities of mind”’. However, in adding that nineteenth-century writers like Peacock made Minerva novels ‘a symbol for popular fiction’, Blakey provides what half a century later was to be a tantalising inroad to new scholarship on the Press.16 As E. J. Clery, Deirdre Lynch and Michael Gamer all demonstrate in various ways, those critics who portrayed Minerva as a factory for imitative, exchangeable novels helped write the discursive formation of ‘high’ Romanticism and thus, in turn, persistent and often gendered binaries such as genius/hack, high/low, independent/servile and market-driven/self-originating.17 As we have already noted, derisive accounts of Minerva novels from the late eighteenth century onwards influence how the works are read and often determine whether they are read at all. In initiating this collection on Minerva and the marketplace, we hope not only to inspire continued research and scholarship on Minerva but also to put pressure on the way that Romantic definitions of authorship persist in scholarship, with the individually authored monograph valued over collaborative research or co-authored work, such as this Introduction. If humanities scholars have less reason to fear ‘being scooped’ than our colleagues in the sciences, institutional and professional pressures often ensure that we are not as open with each other as we might otherwise be about our own research and ensuing arguments. There are hundreds of Minerva novels and multiple methods to analyse them—qualitative and quantitative, bibliographic and biographical. That Minerva novels are now being reassessed in notably ‘unRomantic’ terms provides a special opportunity to reflect on the community and collaboration that engender new perspectives on literary history, and even new frameworks for analysis.

As we discuss in the next section, this collection of nine essays, several by well-seasoned scholars of Minerva or its novels, exemplifies how crucial collaboration is and will be for continued discovery. No one individual can say everything
about Minerva novels or practices, and complementary projects speak to each other and in ways that help to draw out further nuances in the novels and in the scholarship that until recently has delimited what could be seen and said about formulaic, market-driven novels.

New Directions: The Work of this Special Issue

While the essays in ‘The Minerva Press and the Literary Marketplace’ converse with each other in multiple and overlapping ways, we have divided them into three sections that illuminate exciting new inroads to scholarship on the Minerva Press. Each section revisits a key assumption that has traditionally hampered scholarship on Minerva and its output. Section i, ‘Minerva Genres’, illustrates the generic diversity of Lane’s publications. Joe Lines, for his part, explores Lane’s production of several ramble novels in the years preceding his adoption of the title ‘Minerva’. Contemporary critics generally treated ramble novels as a ‘masculine’ genre modelled after fictions by Fielding and Smollett, and works such as *The Adventures of Anthony Varnish* (1786) and *The Minor; or History of George O’Nial, Esq.* (1788 [1787]) suggest that Lane did not initially intend to market his press as ‘feminine’. Indeed, such novels invite not only a reconsideration of Lane’s publishing practices early in Minerva’s history but of the ramble novel itself, which, as Lines demonstrates, remained popular at least a decade longer than previously recognised. Moreover, in addressing works with specifically Irish authors and settings, Lines offers fresh insight into Lane’s encouragement of Irish literature at the close of the eighteenth century. Kurt Milberger also probes presumptions about Lane’s publishing practices, but in his case, by turning attention to the socialite Susannah Gunning (c. 1740–1800), whose five-volume novel *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792) was, and indeed still is, a well-known Minerva title. Gunning wrote both *Anecdotes* and its poetic companion piece, *Virginius and Virginia* (1792), as a thinly veiled account of the scandal that tore apart her family. Milberger interrogates Gunning’s choice to publish with Minerva in order to offer an exposition of the generic diversity of both Gunning’s career and Lane’s publishing lists. Victoria Ravenwood, in contrast, takes up two stock images of Romantic-era criticism of Minerva: the gothic romance and the naïve female reader. Ravenwood explores how novelists such as Anna Maria Mackenzie (fl. 1782–1809), E. M. Foster (fl. 1795–1817) and Agnes Musgrave (fl. 1795–1808) navigate between critics’ stated concern about female readers’ exposure to gothic violence, on the one hand, and their praise for edifying historical writing, on the other, by coining what she suggests was a new genre: ‘historical gothic fiction’. Such authors manipulated gothic themes and tropes in order to produce a more critic-friendly form of gothic that still indulged in the aesthetic and psychological extremes of its more suspect counterparts, even while, in some cases, using gothic conventions to reveal the true horrors of war to female readers.

Section ii, ‘Minerva Readers and Writers’, nuances the customary profiling of Lane’s authors and his target audience, beginning with a detailed look at
how Lane pursued and cultivated the stereotyped ‘ladylike’ reader and author. Jennie Batchelor explores the crossover between two apparently distinct worlds of Romantic-era publishing—the popular novel and the magazine—focusing attention on the hitherto undertheorised link between the Minerva Press and George Robinson’s *Lady’s Magazine; or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* (1770–1832). When Lane adopted the Minerva insignia, he borrowed directly from the *Lady’s Magazine* and poached its writers for his own lists. Even as Batchelor revisits the same stereotypical Minerva features that other essays in this issue resist, including sentimental/gothic novels and female authors, she counters the still-pervasive commonplace that Minerva authors are either lady-like amateurs or else hack writers only out for a profit. Charting the manner in which authors migrated between the *Lady’s Magazine* and Minerva, Batchelor eloquently sketches an ‘unRomantic’ model of authorship that reveals as much about Lane’s business strategies as it does about who wrote Minerva fictions and why. JoEllen DeLucia, in her turn, addresses the same two issues, in this case, by discussing the high rates of anonymous and pseudonymous publication amongst Minerva authors and the related issue of misattribution. Assessing two anonymous works linked by Lane in advertising to Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) in an attempt to cash in on her fame and later further misattributed to Mary Ann Radcliffe (c. 1764–c. 1810)—*The Fate of Velina de Guidova* (1790) and *Radzivil. A Romance* (1790)—DeLucia interrogates the phenomenon of what she calls ‘corporate Radcliffe’. This term refers to a networked sense of authorship whereby the affinities between authors and texts provide a much richer context in which to understand the impact and evolving reception of Minerva works in a manner that destabilises literary notions of canonicity and individual Romantic genius.

Radcliffe is generally presumed to have popularised a form that Minerva novelists then servilely copied. By contrast, in reading for a ‘corporate Radcliffe’, DeLucia reveals how Minerva’s wider network of novels recasts Radcliffe and her reputation in a new light. DeLucia’s contentions square with what Michael Gamer has recently taught us about canonical Romantic authors’ continued efforts to repackaging their work, but, in this case, to reveal, as DeLucia writes, ‘a form of authorship that embraces the ways novels travel through time, acquiring new attributions and associations with each edition, catalogue listing, review, scholarly essay and encyclopedia entry’ (p. 96). In his focus on the Minerva novels in James Hammond’s circulating library in Newport, Rhode Island, Eric Daffron also illustrates how Minerva novels were repackaged and experienced by later readers. As is often noted, Lane’s commercial concerns included increasing the reach and dissemination of his publications. Daffron’s concentration on a small population of readers in the early American republic paints an evocative picture of the transatlantic availability and durability of Minerva fictions and allows for a local and culturally specific interrogation of Minerva’s reception amongst a specific subgroup of the reading nation. In his attention to two paratexts—the first, Hammond’s catalogues, which market gothic conventions, and the second, readers’ annotations to the novels—Daffron
provides suggestive hints about how Hammond promoted novels to his readers and how readers themselves experienced them. That the Minerva novels in Hammond’s collection remained popular at the close of the nineteenth century indicates that readers bought into his marketing efforts, but often, as Daffron shows, while also appropriating these strategies for alternative ends, such as identifying and participating in a larger reading community.

Our final section, ‘Reading Minerva with New Methods’, reassesses Minerva’s reading communities, both contemporary and more modern-day. First, Megan Peiser analyses critical responses to Minerva, exploring their immediate cultural impact and demonstrating the ways in which late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century criticism persists in Romantic studies. Peiser’s contribution to this issue exemplifies the rich and stimulating possibilities afforded by quantitative analysis in the revaluation of Minerva’s reputation. Basing her research on data gleaned from the impressive open-access digital resource, *Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820*, Peiser tracks the regularity with which Minerva novels were reviewed in the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*, as well as the space devoted to such reviews. As she does so, she persuasively shows that the very reviews that condemned Minerva publications and contributed to their enduring reputation as paltry imitations helped to consolidate the Press’s contemporary success. Systematic analysis of these reviews, Peiser asserts, encourages not just a new, empirical approach to the Minerva Press but also a reflection on the processes of canonisation by which Minerva novels were—and continue to be—relegated to the margins of literary history.

Next, Hannah Doherty Hudson rethinks a central concept in such reviews: imitation. Demonstrating the different uses and understandings of imitation in the Romantic period, Hudson assesses Minerva authors’ conscious use of imitation in their novels. Far from a generalised indication of authorial laziness, haste or greed, imitation was frequently wielded by Minerva authors as a ‘practice’ that cannot be fully appreciated without a deep and expansive reading of Minerva novels. In showing that novelists treat imitation ‘as a kind of kinship among authors and a source of humorous familiarity for readers’ (p. 153), Hudson takes seriously what could be written off as inane or bad writing (for example, a novel that repeatedly references, of all things, potatoes), but with a light touch and without diminishing the economic struggles that many Minerva authors faced and that are showcased in their fiction. As such, she provides an eloquent model for how to focus in on individual novels while also illuminating larger patterns, an issue that Yael Shapira makes her explicit topic in her essay on the works of prolific Minerva author, Isabella Kelly, who is now remembered (when recollected at all) as a Radcliffean imitator. In assessing Kelly’s *The Ruins of Avondale Priory* (1796) in the larger context of her other output, Shapira ably illustrates the importance of recuperating Minerva novels traditionally branded as ersatz Radcliffean gothics in order to gain a rewardingly nuanced view of the vibrant and experimental nature of Minerva fictions and Romantic-era gothic more widely.
Shapira presumes that Minerva novels afford new perspectives on literary history, as do the other essays in this issue. In making the question of how scholars present these new perspectives her primary subject, Shapira raises questions about the kind of texts that our scholarly community is currently willing and able to accept as worth reading. This line of questioning is a fitting conclusion to our special issue of *Romantic Textualities*, which we hope will advance new scholarship on the Minerva Press and its role in the Romantic literary marketplace without leaving the impression that once Minerva novels are read carefully, there is no more to be said about them. This last point strikes us as central, considering that Minerva’s legacy persists today in binaries like high/low and literary/formulaic. Indeed, in the wake of recent scholarship of which this issue forms a part, it may no longer be possible for scholars to responsibly dismiss all Minerva novels as ‘imitative’. However, the extent to which scholars will still be reading and reassessing them ten or twenty years from now remains to be seen. Whether and how Minerva continues to be written back into literary history will likely be the true test of this special issue, which we hope will indeed spark further research questions, innovative methodological approaches and rewarding new collaborations.

**Notes**

1. Miss Mary Davenant, ‘Helen Berkley; or, the Mercenary Marriage’, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 30 (Apr 1845), 170–78 (p. 175).


20. DeLucia’s examples afford a glimpse of how Minerva authors might have interacted with translations. For discussion of translations as part of the novel market, see James Raven, ‘Historical Introduction: The Novel Comes of Age’, in Garside, Raven and Schöwerling, *English Novel*, 1, 15–121 (pp. 56–65). Raven also addresses the tendency of British novelists to feign translations from the German in light of market pressure for gothics, and names several Minerva titles as evidence (p. 62).

**Referring to this Article**


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**Date of acceptance:** 7 January 2019.
In 1784, William Lane included the following advertisement on the back page of one of his publications: ‘Wanted several Novels in manuscript for publishing the ensuing Season’. In 1790, he adopted the name of the Minerva Press for his Leadenhall Street business. In the intervening six years, Lane became London’s leading publisher of new fiction. This article focuses on novels issued under Lane’s name within this crucial period, in which the proportion of fiction within his overall output increased markedly, laying the foundations for his lasting success as a specialist publisher. The Minerva later became a byword for the inferior, formulaic and ephemeral in Romantic fiction, but any attempt to typify the output of such a prolific publishing business was always going to be simplistic. Deborah Anne McLeod decisively refutes the perception that Lane adhered to a trusted formula of ‘Gothic and sentimental romances’, finding ‘a previously unappreciated diversity’ of ‘sub-genre’ in Lane’s novels between 1790 and 1820. This conclusion is both reinforced and supplemented in the present essay through an emphasis on the novels Lane issued before he adopted the Minerva brand. Between 1780 and 1790, Lane published several works that we would now call ‘ramble novels’, and my study of these works sheds new light on the development of fictional styles and tastes in the early Romantic period. The Minerva Press is usually associated with female novelists and readers, and Lane’s choice of the figure of Minerva has been taken as proof of the way in which popular fictional styles such as the gothic were devalued through being gendered as women’s fare. However, Lane’s ramble novels complicate this picture and add to what we know about gendered understandings of genre in the Romantic period, because this style was instead seen as highly masculine, with the most archetypical examples featuring male heroes. Another observable feature of Lane’s novels in the 1780s is the frequency of Irish-authored or Irish-set texts, and this article will discuss shared themes in these works, through a case study of a now little-known ramble novel that uses Irish settings and characters, The Minor; or History of George O’Nial, Esq. (1786).

The term ‘ramble novel’ stems from the travel plots of such novels, as well as the use of the word ‘ramble’ in many titles. Existing studies have focused on the mid-eighteenth century, the period that saw the most acclaimed and influential examples of the subgenre. The success of Tobias Smollett’s The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748) and Henry Fielding’s The History of Tom Jones, a Found-
ling (1749) led to biographical ‘adventures’ or ‘histories’ such as The History of Will Ramble (1754) becoming a staple of the English fiction market. As early as 1751, an essay sometimes attributed to Francis Coventry identified a ‘new Sect of Biographers’ whose productions shared a characteristic realism, comic style and ‘Insight into Low-Life’. The ramble novel, then, was denoted by its ‘Low’ style of comedy, use of a peripatetic travel narrative and biographical focus on one person from early life to maturity. Simon Dickie’s recent work on ramble fiction has returned such texts to their place in eighteenth-century culture, highlighting the way in which their unfeeling and bawdy humour undercuts the era’s supposedly dominant sentimentalism. Dickie calls the ‘male-centered ramble novel’ ‘the most neglected subgenre of midcentury fiction’, highlighting the sheer number of such texts that appeared between 1750 and 1770. Dickie concludes that ‘in truth such texts are dead ends—without influence and stubbornly of their time [...] literary history left them behind’. Given that Dickie focuses on the years between 1750 and 1770, this verdict implies that ramble fiction was a mid-century fashion that was supplanted by newer genres. Similarly, critical accounts of the rise of the ‘novel of manners’ after Frances Burney’s Evelina (1778) and Cecilia (1782) have noticed a contemporaneous decline in ramble fiction. James Raven, for instance, identifies a ‘flock of imitators of Frances Burney’ between 1780 and 1792, and contrasts this publishing trend with a lessening of ‘admitted imitation of Fielding and Smollett’. But such chronologies of genre are belied by the fact that new ramble novels continued to be written and published into the 1790s, as my survey of publishing trends in the first section reveals. In fact, ramble novels constituted sound and profitable investments for Lane’s growing press.

Lane has been singled out as ‘among the major publishers that sponsored Irish authors’ in London, and Minerva would become an important outlet for Irish women novelists such as Regina Maria Roche (1763/64–1845) and Catharine Selden (fl. 1797). Indeed, his interest in Irish works and writers is observable before 1790. In 1780, Lane issued a translation of Mme de Lafayette’s The Princess of Cleves (1678) by the Irish playwright, novelist and critic Elizabeth Griffith (1727–93), who lived in London from 1764 onwards. Two novels by Elizabeth Sheridan (1754–92) that have latterly attracted critical interest also came from Lane’s press: The Fairy Ring, or Emeline, a Moral Tale (1782) and The Reconciliation (1783). The latter novel was previously published in Dublin as The Triumph of Prudence over Passion (1782); the title page of the London edition differed also in announcing itself as ‘An Hibernian Novel’ by ‘An Irish Lady’. Such marketing strategies sought to capitalise on wider trends, and Caroline Franklin has discerned a marked ‘regionalism’ and interest in Britain’s ‘Celtic fringes’ in the fiction of the 1780s. Ever observant of fashions, Lane issued novels that foregrounded Welsh settings before 1790, for instance Powis Castle, or Anecdotes of an Ancient Family (1788). Mariamne: Or, Irish Anecdotes, published with Minerva in 1793, was advertised as by the same author as Powis Castle. The ramble novel had proven a productive vehicle for Irish-focused stories, and Dickie notes that ‘[s]ome of the earliest Irish novels are exercises
in this genre’, instancing here William Chaigneau’s *The History of Jack Con-
nor* (1752). Later Irish ramble novels included Charles Johnston’s *The History 
of John Juniper* (1781) and *The Adventures of Anthony Varnish* (1786), usually 
also attributed to Johnston, and published by Lane. The tale of a young Irish 
servant who moves to London, *Anthony Varnish* foregrounds the status of Irish identity within wider geographies. Ian Campbell Ross calls the novel ‘a very early 
emigration narrative’, and Derek Hand notes its interest in the ‘confusion of the Anglo-Irish in England as Irish, highlighting their difficulty in differentiating 
themselves, or projecting a viable collective sense of identity’. Such scholarship 
testifies to the fact that Lane was publishing significant works of Irish fiction 
from an early point in his career. This article offers an examination of a hitherto unread work published by Lane that draws on the male-centred ramble narrative whilst taking a keen interest in Irish affairs. *The Minor* uses a conventional plot 
of travel and romantic intrigue, but is distinctive and striking in its political views. The novel advocates for the dismantling of the Penal Laws, enforced in the early eighteenth century to restrict the rights and socio-political influence of Catholics and Dissenters. The novel’s knowledge of Irish settings, cultural contexts and religious debates point to probable Irish authorship. My reading of the novel in the second section of this article will demonstrate that ramble fiction was capable of accommodating stories that were urgent and politically conscious, and reinforce the view of Lane as a publisher of innovative Irish fiction.

*The Ramble Novel after 1770: Endurance and Exhaustion*  
The increased volume of fiction issuing from Lane’s press after 1785 included several novels conforming to the ramble pattern. *Anthony Varnish* and *The Minor* were followed by Captain Nixon’s *The Ramble of Philo, and his Man Sturdy* (1788), the tale of an unworldly, sentimental country gentleman’s son who embarks on a tour through England. The anonymous *The Bastile: Or, History of Charles Townly, a Man of the World* (1789) in fact contains no mention of revolution in France, although the hero spends time in Paris. Townly is expelled from Oxford, falls into dissipation, is abandoned by friends and family, and journeys as far as Java before returning to England for a typical providential ending in which he gains both a fortune and his long-lost beloved, Caroline. Another ramble novel published by Lane was *The Man of Failing: A Tale* (1789), which concerns Abel Nelson’s romantic fortunes in his home city of Bristol and in London. The titular pun on Henry Mackenzie’s popular sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) sets up a portrait of a youth who is more fallible than Mackenzie’s ideal hero, Harley. Nelson and his lover Sophia Miller give way to ‘accidental temptations’ early in the narrative, yet it is stressed that his ‘Failing’ is excusable, as his ‘principles’ are not ‘vitiated with modern libertinism’. The heroine’s name nods to Sophia Western in *Tom Jones*, and more broadly, *The Man of Failing, The Ramble of Philo* and *Charles Townly* are characteristic of male-centred ramble fiction in their use of a roguish yet sympathetic hero who is rewarded by a concluding marriage.
The ramble novels published by Lane in the 1780s were marketed very much in the terms of the tradition, with titles featuring the names of heroes and the key terms ‘ramble’, ‘history’ or ‘adventures’. Reviewers were quick to note their imitativeness, with the Critical Review opening its account of Charles Townly thus: ‘The style and manner of this work are not unlike those of Roderick Random’. The same periodical said of The Man of Failing that ‘[t]he author’s manner resembles that of the unsuccessful imitators of Fielding’. The Monthly Review remarked of The Ramble of Philo that ‘to succeed in the line of writing, which he has here attempted, requires not only the pen but the judgment of a Fielding or a Le Sage’. Alain-René Lesage (1668–1747) was the celebrated French author of Gil Blas (1715–35), translated by Smollett into English in 1748. Ramble novels published by Lane were predictably also accused of moral licentiousness: the Monthly said of The Minor that ‘the Author has represented human nature in the most ugly and unseemly shapes’, whilst Anthony Varnish was ‘[m]ade up entirely of scenes of low life’. The predominant tone of exhaustion with which Lane’s ramble novels were received might imply that, by the 1780s, this style was viewed as somewhat tired.

The verdicts of metropolitan periodicals, of course, did not reflect popular taste, especially in a climate in which circulating libraries such as Lane’s had expanded the book-reading public. In the 1780s, all kinds of novels were still liable to meet with a negative reception, and, as Michael Gamer reminds us, ‘both the Monthly and Critical, as serious literary reviews, were generally unfriendly to fiction’. But despite the attitudes expressed in periodicals, new ramble novels continued to be written and published by Lane and others well into the 1790s. A number of novels appearing between 1770 and 1773 imply a popularity undiminished from the previous decade. Such titles, however, are scarce for the middle and later parts of the decade, which probably reflects general trends. The rate of publication of new novels fell from 39 in 1773 to yearly totals between 16 and 18 for the years from 1776 to 1779. Numbers were between 20 and 24 from 1780 to 1784, but then rose sharply to 47 in 1785; by 1789, the yearly rate was 71. The increasing health of the fiction market in the mid- to late 1780s was due in no small part to the activities of Lane at Leadenhall Street, where the production of novels rose from 3 in 1784 to 27 in 1790. For the years between 1784 and 1790, 102 novels with Lane imprints are listed by Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwerling. The texts which I have classified as ramble novels above make up slightly less than 5 per cent of this total; ramble fiction, then, was only ever a small part of the diverse range of texts found in Lane’s lists. Nevertheless, the fact that one publisher issued at least five such works in three years suggests the endurance of the style into the 1780s. The numbers provided by Garside, et al. give some basis for the contention that increased demand for new novels led to the male-centred ramble novel acquiring a new currency in this decade. Lane, whose press was so dynamic in these years, can be given some credit for the renewed popularity of the style.
Lane was not alone here, however; ramble fiction was very much part of the general upsurge of novels in the 1780s, in which a steady stream of new titles, complete with alliteratively named heroes in the manner of Smollett, ensured that such novels would not have seemed like risky investments for the publisher. Johnston’s *John Juniper* (1781) centres on a duplicitous hero, the son of a London-Irish publican, and combines the peripatetic, masculine novels of Smollett with the older tradition of criminal biography. Elizabeth Blower’s *George Bateman: A Novel* (1782) was acclaimed in the *European Magazine and London Review* as ‘a masterly imitation of *Tom Jones’*, language suggesting that ‘imitation’ could actually distinguish a novel. John Trusler’s *Modern Times, or the Adventures of Gabriel Outcast [...] In Imitation of Gil Blas* (1785) was conspicuously successful, going through five editions in London between 1785 and 1789, with a Dublin edition in 1785.

Lane’s publication of several male-centred ramble novels after 1785 can be further contextualised via an immensely popular serial publication that played an important part in shaping tastes. James Harrison’s *The Novelist’s Magazine* was a series of reprints of novels, appearing in twenty-three volumes between 1779 and 1788. In Gamer’s words, Harrison ‘almost single-handedly filled his country’s bookshops and circulating libraries with reprints of standard British fiction’. Indeed, Harrison can be compared to the entrepreneurial publisher-cum-librarian Lane in making fiction accessible to a broader geographical and social range of readers. Richard C. Taylor emphasises the affordability of Harrison’s volumes, at sixpence for an octavo. The *Novelist’s Magazine* was an early effort to formulate a canon of English novels, and favoured the ‘foreign or oriental tale’ and novels of ‘masculine adventure’. Indeed, Harrison’s series showed a marked and repeated preference for ramble fiction, republishing not only the well-respected *Roderick Random*, *Tom Jones* and *Gil Blas*, but the less well-known *Life and Adventures of Joe Thompson* by Edward Kimber (1751) and Robert Paltock’s *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751). The *Novelist’s Magazine* reinforced the visibility and prestige of the novel of masculine adventure between 1779 and 1788, boosting the appeal of the new examples issued by Lane. Harrison’s ambition to isolate and preserve the best of English fiction was not shared by Lane, but the two men’s publishing enterprises shared their accessibility, and Harrison’s consciousness of particular subgenres of novel, along with their prototypes and lineages, may also have been mirrored at Leadenhall Street. Lane’s output in the 1780s implies that similarity to recognised narrative patterns was seen as a virtue, by publishers and readers.

Despite Harrison’s efforts to raise the status of the novel of Smollett and Fielding, periodicals, especially the *Monthly and Critical*, sustained the attack on ramble novels as derivative and scurrilous. But around 1788, another criticism of ramble fiction began to appear: that it was dated or old-fashioned. One review of Anne Hughes’ *Henry and Isabella* (Lane, 1788) described it as a ‘novel of the Burney-school’:
The period of Evelina and Cecilia may be considered a new era in
the age of novels. The more laboured and intricate plots of Fielding,
the eccentric, and sometimes exaggerated characters of Smollett,
are rendered smoother by the polish of fashionable life. The following year, the same periodical wrote of *The Man of Failing*: ‘The
author’s manner is a little uncommon, in this age, and resembles that of the
unsuccessful imitators of Fielding’. Also published in 1789 was *The Life and
Adventures of Anthony Leger*, which the *English Review* called a ‘revival of the
old style of novel-writing, and much after the manner of Fielding’, though it
was nevertheless ‘full of incidents, many of them interesting and entertaining’.
This demonstrates that the view of ramble fiction as old-fashioned was not
restricted only to the *Monthly and Critical*, journals that disapproved of new
novels almost on principle. The ideas expressed in 1788 and 1789 that imitation
of Smollett and Fielding is an ‘old style of novel-writing’ are not paralleled in
earlier reviews, and are actually belied by the frequent appearance of novels in
this manner—new and reissued—in the 1780s. Possibly it was the very volume of
imitative novels that led critics to accuse the form of staleness, another barb to
be thrown at this resilient subgenre. Or such judgments may reflect the process
by which the reputation of newer novelists such as Burney came to rival that
of older authors. Calling time on ramble novels was possibly part of a broader
process by which other subgenres such as the novel of manners came to be seen
as fashion leaders in the market. In the late 1780s, then, periodical reviewers
came to differ from compilers such as Harrison in their low estimation of ramble
novels, thus revealing tensions in the formation of concepts of fictional genre
and prestige at the outset of the Romantic period.

Whilst new novels in the ramble style continued to divert readers after 1790,
Lane issued far fewer works of this kind after founding the Minerva. The Irish
author Maria Hunter’s *Fitzroy; or, Impulse of a Moment* (Lane, 1792) fits the
pattern, with its sympathetic hero, a high-spirited youth from Co. Tipperary,
and plot of travel and romantic intrigue. But after 1792, the only probable
ramble novel from Lane that I have been able to trace is Elizabeth Bonhote’s
*The Rambles of Mr Frankly* (1796), a reprint of a work first published in 1772.
The low numbers of works bearing the hallmarks of the ramble style are more
striking when we consider that Lane was publishing more books in the 1790s
than in the 1780s. Furthermore, the appearance of ramble titles from other
presses continued in the 1790s. It is possible that Lane also came to see the
ramble novel as outdated, although it is doubtful that he took much account
of the reviews of *Henry and Isabella or The Man of Failing*. What would have
carried more weight was the lack of a conspicuous best-seller among the ramble
novels he had published already. *Anthony Varnish* and *The Minor* both went
into second editions, but *The Ramble of Philo, Charles Townly and The Man of
Failing* were all issued only once by Lane. After 1790, Lane concentrated his efforts on the most fashionable and timely
currents in fiction, which did not include ramble novels. E. J. Clery gives a
convincing account of ‘the explosion of demand for terror fiction’ after the Revolution and subsequent ‘reign of terror’ that broke out in France.45 Such supernatural and gothic tales became more widely read than ever before, fuelled by the democratisation of access to prose fiction achieved by such entrepreneurs as Lane. But the dark tone and fantastical happenings of terror fiction could not be easily assimilated into the ramble novel, which relied on breezy comedy and a low, earthy realism set close to home. The Minerva brand itself foregrounded the goddess of wisdom as ‘a gracious compliment to the sex who would be expected to provide the most custom’.46 And, whilst women such as Hunter and Bonhote wrote and published ramble fiction, the form was stereotyped as masculine, owing to its bawdiness and the male heroes of the most popular examples. If Lane was targeting female readers, then novels that centred on the excitements and crises of young manhood would have made little sense as investments. In the nineteenth century, the Minerva Press eventually became most associated with gothic and sentimental romances. But nevertheless, paying closer attention to Lane’s publications in the 1780s reveals that the novel associated with Smollett and Fielding continued to be a respected and productive form in the late eighteenth century. And if we now overlook the early dismissals of reviews and read one of these forgotten novels in detail, the significance of the ramble novel to the history of Irish Romantic fiction can be realised.

Genre, Religion and Law in 1780s Irish Fiction: The Minor; or, History of George O’Nial

The Minor was first published by Lane in October 1786, according to advertisements, although no copy of this edition has survived.47 In April 1787, Lane published a further edition which was post-dated on its title page to 1788—to the annoyance of the Critical Review.48 Lane was particularly guilty among publishers of post-dating books in order to prolong the appearance of currency, as Nicholas Mason explains.49 On first appearance, The Minor is conventional enough in its narrative shape. George O’Nial grows up in Co. Tyrone, attends Trinity College Dublin and then spends several years in France before returning to Ireland. All the while, suspense is provided by the delay of his union with Charlotte Furlonge and by the prospect of the O’Nials losing their property, though the novel ends with marriage and George’s ascent to head of the family. The text is less usual, however, as a ramble novel that engages in an informed way with an Irish political climate through making an argument in favour of the reform of the Penal Laws. The Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 had granted rights of leasing, inheritance and landowning to Catholics, and though the concessions were only partial, their symbolic import in Ireland, where Catholics constituted the majority of the population, was sizeable. The Minor should be seen as part of the ongoing repeal campaign that was pursued through literary texts as well as the addresses published by the pro-reform Catholic Committee from the 1740s to the 1780s.50 One prominent advocate for the Catholic cause was the priest Arthur O’Leary (c. 1729–1802), author of Loyalty Asserted: Or, the New
Test Oath Vindicated (1776) and Essay on Toleration (1780), which called for freedom of worship for all confessions in Ireland. O’Leary’s views are implicitly supported in The Minor through the actions of one character, a priest with the significant name of Joseph O’Leary. By 1786, the public mood in Britain and Ireland had turned against Catholic Relief, and a need for subtlety around religious difference is implied by this disapproving comment from the Critical Review: ‘The author seems to design being witty, licentious, and irreligious’.

Reading eighteenth-century novels in their Irish literary contexts can complicate critical assumptions about the formulaic nature of popular fiction. George O’Nial might be read as a sentimental, kind-hearted protagonist in the style of Tom Jones, but that such a hero should be an Irishman was less usual in the fiction of the time. As in ramble novels such as The Man of Failing, George is placed in situations designed to test his morality but does not become a hardened rake. When he and his fellow students visit a Dublin brothel, they are scandalised to find two young women imprisoned in the cellar:

But what restored us to our senses, and produced that honest indignation which a sober Irishman ever feels at beholding scenes of villainy, was the discovery of two young females, whose ghastly visages bespoke souls weary of their wretched habitations.

George and friends ill-advisedly set fire to the brothel in retribution, but then deliver the ‘captives’ safely to their disconsolate parents and procure an ‘apothecaries recipe […] and likewise a safe lodging’ for a young man who has sustained a head wound amidst the chaos (1, 202). This, we learn, is Joseph O’Leary, a recently ordained priest who is on his way to study in Paris. During O’Nial’s travels in France, Father Joseph appears again, now destitute after failing to secure a college place. George once more aids Father Joseph, giving him money, in defiance of the objections of his page: ‘He is my countryman, I replied, and he is wretched’ (II, 101–03). Such scenes of poverty or female distress being relieved by male philanthropy were the stock-in-trade of sentimental fiction.

For Dickie, ramble novels are in opposition to the culture and values of sensibility, but this passage in George O’Nial implies that sentimental episodes could coexist with the adventure plot; Franklin argues that in the 1780s, the ‘novel of sensibility […] became absorbed into most types of prose fiction’. It is notable that in both scenes from the novel, George’s generosity is associated with his nationality; he feels as ‘a sober Irishman’ should at ‘villainy’, and claims national ties as reason enough to help Father Joseph. The gendering of nationality (‘Irishman’, ‘countryman’) is the clearest signal of the novel’s insistence that Irishmen can display gentlemanly virtues, registering a context in which fiction continued to retail stock xenophobic narratives about rogues and criminals coming from Ireland—seen for instance in Johnston’s John Juniper (1781). The fact that The Minor pointedly associates the Irishman with sentimental charity implies a continued need to refute such stereotypes of nationality and gender.

The Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 were hailed as auspicious landmarks for toleration, but by the time that The Minor was published, the prospect of further
concessions to the Penal Laws seemed remote. During the American War of Independence (1775–83), the enlisting of Irish Catholics into the British army became normalised. From 1779, Catholics were also serving in regiments of the Volunteers, a mainly Protestant militia intended to defend the country from invasion. In Sheridan’s *Triumph of Prudence over Passion* (reissued by Lane as *The Reconciliation*), the epistolary narrator is ‘delighted’ to witness a Volunteer demonstration in Dublin in November 1779, and declares herself ‘an enthusiast in the cause of Liberty and my country’. *The Minor* voices similar sentiments when George describes his home town of Dungannon as ‘less famous for the exploits of my ancestors, than for the resolutions there formed in the year of our Lord, 1782, by the volunteer army’ (II, 4). At their ‘famous’ Dungannon convention, the Volunteers issued ‘resolutions’ in favour of Irish legislative independence, a freedom that was granted later that same year. But the lack of developments in Catholic Relief between 1782 and the end of the decade illustrated the political gulf that still existed between Ireland’s governing establishment and its majority. The first Relief Acts were not sweeping, and altered rarely enforced laws such as the threat of life imprisonment for practising Catholic priests and schoolmasters. All the same, the fact that priests could now seek converts with impunity caused disquiet, and such insecurities would provide the impetus for the Gordon Riots of June 1780.

Restrictions on Catholics owning and inheriting land had long buttressed the dominance of the Anglo-Irish elite, and after the first concessions, most Anglicans feared further reforms in the key areas of land, voting or holding public office. In the year preceding the appearance of *The Minor*, the prospect of any further repeals of the Penal Laws worsened in reaction to an outbreak of agitation among rural labourers in Munster. The campaign of the so-called Rightboys was directed specifically against the system of tithe payments, but their ritualistic threats, evictions and violence were taken as motivated by inequities in landholding, provoking fears of insurrection. The priest Arthur O’Leary lived locally to the disturbances in the city of Cork, and was moved to publish addresses to the Rightboys in the *Cork Hibernian Chronicle* during February 1786. O’Leary called for the agitators to desist, but highlighted their poverty as a mitigating factor. This proved divisive, and attacks on O’Leary as a Rightboy sympathiser soon surfaced. Patrick Duigenan’s *An Address to the Nobility and Gentry of the Church of Ireland* (1786) claimed that Rightboyism had been ‘spirited up by agitating Fryars and Romish Missionaries, sent here for the purposes of sowing sedition’. It is more than possible that *The Minor* was written with a consciousness of this debate, which may have motivated the use of a priest character called O’Leary. If so, this would imply some access to Irish news and publishing on the part of the author, as O’Leary’s addresses to the Rightboys were not published in London until 1787. But more widely, the novel’s use of the name O’Leary is in keeping with its concern with the Penal Laws, as the character of Father Joseph comes to play a prominent role and enables the novel to address still-existing restrictions on Catholics in Ireland.
The connection made by conservative Irish Protestants such as Duigenan between Rightboy agitation and priestly influence makes the favourable depiction of Father Joseph in *The Minor* all the more timely. When this character reappears in France, his situation is the occasion for a plea by George on behalf of the priesthood:

> Heaven—here ended his pitiable tale; and much did it grieve me that some establishment was not formed in our country, wherein these poor fellows might be properly enlightened, and prepared for the arduous, and very important employment they assume: I am certain, said I, that the voice of toleration, which hath been unexpectedly heard in our country, will not forbear her heavenly accents, until a remedy shall be applied to your sufferings. (ii, 100–01)

George continues, ‘our country is oft-times tardy in its measures, I mean in those of a praise-worthy nature’, expressing his fear that Father Joseph ‘might, for aught that I can see, starve before the wished-for reformation may take place’ (ii, 101). The novel calls attention to the lack of an ‘establishment’ for Catholic ecclesiastical training in Ireland, a situation which led aspiring priests to study at ‘Irish colleges’ in European Catholic countries in the years before the founding of St Patrick’s College Maynooth in 1795. Father Joseph’s destination, the Collège des Lombards in Paris, was founded in the 1670s. The prospect of a college in Ireland was debated in the 1780s, and was supported by prominent Anglican churchmen because it would lessen French influence on Irish priests. In the novel, however, support of a college in Ireland does not stem from Protestant distrust of France, but from sympathy towards clerical students forced to leave their home country. A pamphlet of 1786 written in the voice of ‘the Peasantry of Ireland’ argued in similar terms: ‘we wish that our clergy were bred at home, where they would conceive a reverence for the glorious fabric of our constitution, and that they were not to be sent abroad to subsist on the benevolence of foreign establishments’. The pamphlet’s concern for trainee priests is shared by *The Minor*. The conventional sentimental scene of destitution and almsgiving between George and Father Joseph is thus transformed into a pointed political statement.

*The Minor* goes against the prevailing view among the Irish political elite and more conservative Anglicans by encouraging further concessions to the Penal Laws. It also takes a more progressive stance than contemporary examples of Irish fiction. In *John Juniper*, for instance, the gallery of Irish migrants in London includes a priest who was trained in France and then ‘sent upon the Mission to England; where he piously exerted all his abilities to abuse the religion and laws of the country, the latter of which had been not long before relaxed in favour of such ungrateful vagrants.’ Here, the priest is a threat to the English nation in his ‘Mission’ to win converts, and is viewed in terms of the concessions of 1778. The theme of Irish migration in *John Juniper* is shared by many of the ramble novels considered here, and both *The Minor* and *Anthony Varnish* utilise the
device of a meeting between two Irish characters abroad. The Irish servant Varnish travels to London, where he hears the tale of a former soldier, ‘from a reputable family in the north of Ireland’, returned from fighting in America. The first-person narrator ‘sympathised with his misfortunes, and begged to know if I could serve him, before I recollected I had not even the power to assist myself.’ This scene illustrates the distinction between the affluent George and the poor servant Varnish. Contrarily, in *The Minor*, the fellowship between George and Father Joseph proves enduring, as the priest accompanies George back to Ireland and assumes an important role at the novel’s end.

On the return of the O’Nials to their house in Tyrone, Father Joseph is elevated to ‘the desirable station of a Parish Priest’ by the sudden death of the previous incumbent, Father Lazarus. He is thus in the position to officiate at the wedding of George and Charlotte:

> The sensations inspired by my long-loved Charlotte predominated—I could no longer refrain—and a late act of parliament making valid the marriages of the romish-clergy, we agreed that father Joseph [...] should perform the ceremony. (II, 234)

Ramble novels conventionally ended with a wedding, but the emphasis on the cleric’s role here is more distinctive. Father Joseph’s elevation confirms the significance of the Catholic priesthood in the text, symbolising their acceptance into wider Irish society. He is precipitated into the ‘station’ after the death of Father Lazarus and also of George’s Presbyterian tutor, the Reverend Jeremiah Plodder, who is initially sought to perform the marriage. This chain of events makes the choice of a Catholic minister seem simply fortuitous. Such last-minute plot twists are suggestive of the unusual and controversial nature of such an ending. The reference to ‘a late act of parliament making valid the marriages of the romish-clergy’ glances towards the wider legal situation. Though marriages between Catholics conducted by ordained priests were valid under civil law, it was a capital offence under the Penal Laws for a Catholic to officiate at a marriage at which one or both parties were Protestant. The punishment was revised to imprisonment and a fine in 1793. It is thus deducible that the marriage of George and Charlotte involves at least one Protestant partner. Though the religion of George’s thinly characterised bride is left unclear, his own background is plural, his father being native Irish and presumably of Catholic extraction, and his mother the Presbyterian daughter of a ‘Scotch laird’ (I, 22). The couple, then, should be taken as Protestant or mixed, and so their marriage by Father Joseph would have been illegal at the time. The ‘late act of parliament’ referred to, therefore, is a fantasy of the novel, which runs ahead of the actual situation in 1786 to imagine future freedoms. In this way, *The Minor* engages with the campaign for reform by pinpointing areas of the Penal Laws that were still in need of redress. Moreover, it imbues conventional aspects of the ramble novel such as the marriage with a distinctive political purpose.

The novel’s representation of Irish society through the microcosm of the O’Nial family is reminiscent of the ideals of tolerance offered in the writing
of Arthur O’Leary. O’Leary’s *Essay on Toleration* argues for the principle of freedom of worship not through explicit discussion of the Penal Laws, but through wide-ranging disquisitions on the error of religious bias in the legal sphere, supported by examples from states in which different sects are accorded equal privileges. But in the following, O’Leary has Ireland, with its Anglican, Dissenting and Catholic communities, particularly in mind:

What are we to say when numbers of sects get footing in a state? Let the door of toleration be thrown open to them all, and not one of them be exposed as a butt to all the rest. Mutual hatred will relax, and the common occupations and pleasures of life, will succeed. The *Essay* stays cautiously away from the most vociferously defended aspects of the Penal Laws, the bans on voting and holding public office. Nevertheless, O’Leary’s vision of a multi-faith society chimes with the novel’s representation of Irish society, with differing religions making up the central group of characters. The O’Nial family are ministered to by the zealous, Aberdeen-educated Reverend Plodder and the Catholic Father Joseph; the ‘eternal bickering about points of faith’ maintained by the two churchmen is humorously represented and does not lead to serious discord (11, 138). George’s pride in his Gaelic roots is seen when he declares himself ‘the lineal descendent of the great Earl of Tyrone’ to an acquaintance in London (11, 194). However, George also studies at the traditionally Anglican Trinity College Dublin, and on a trip to Oxford observes ‘how much England has been enlightened since the reformation; for you see her modern buildings are more for use than superstition’ (11, 77). Despite the presence of characters such as Father Joseph, limitations still attached to the representation of Catholicism, and the hero seemingly must conform to the Established Church. In its references to legal reform, the novel concentrates on the freedom of the clergy, rather than voicing more radical discontent around land ownership or political representation. But the overall representation of religion in the text emphasises inclusivity. In its representation of the Irish family as a composite of coexisting faiths, *The Minor* draws upon a contemporary Irish discourse of religious toleration advocated most prominently by Arthur O’Leary.

**Conclusion**

Reading London-published ramble fiction in an Irish context enables a positive reassessment of seemingly formulaic generic elements. The marriage of George and Charlotte in *The Minor* is the fully expected resolution to the ramble plot, but also a further chance to press the cause of Catholic Relief. George O’Nial is the stock virtuous hero, but also a mouthpiece for political critique, whilst Father Joseph is an object of sentimental charity and also the representative of a class that was contemporaneously vilified, the Catholic priesthood. The narrative of international travel in *The Minor*, also typical of ramble fiction, is used to highlight the injustices of emigration for Irish clerical students. The novel’s readers in England—and indeed its London publisher—might not have registered these political resonances within the novel, but a fuller knowledge
of its Irish historical context gives us, in turn, an expanded sense of the scope of late eighteenth-century fiction. Sentimental fiction in the 1780s showed an increased tendency to expose the origins of suffering in larger social and political issues such as slavery. In a ramble novel such as *The Minor*, we can observe a similar tendency to highlight the legal realities that shaped and restricted the lives of Irish Catholics in particular.

Ramble novels were very much part of the general mainstream of fiction publishing in the 1780s, despite the usual association of this subgenre with the middle of the century. The narrative pattern of novels such as *Anthony Varnish* and *The Minor* was enduringly popular and would have been familiar to an experienced fiction publisher such as Lane. Reviews began to describe the style as dated only in 1788, a decade after *Evelina*, and forty years after *Roderick Random*. At this point, ramble fiction was still an important aspect of Lane’s fiction output, but in the subsequent decade the press, now branded as Minerva, concentrated on fashionable gothic and supernatural fiction. With hindsight, Lane’s issuing of ramble fictions such as *The Minor* can be seen as evidence of experimentation with a range of products that preceded the development of particular, signature strengths in the 1790s. In the case of this publisher, the ramble novel ceded ground to subgenres associated with female authors and readers. More widely, further research into genre and gender in Romantic fiction is required to test this conclusion, and its correlation with the period boundary of 1789. As the novels of the 1780s remind us, fictional subgenres do not supersede one another in neat, sequential fashion: they endure, coexist and recombine. Future research should take account of the longevity of ramble fiction, seen in novels such as *The Minor* and *Anthony Varnish*, which in various ways look forward to the Irish fiction of the Romantic period.

The Irish novels issued by Lane in the 1780s picked up on wider fashions for regional and Celtic settings in fiction. Both *The Minor* and Sheridan’s *The Reconciliation*, published by Lane as ‘An Hibernian Novel’, suggest that topicality and a tendency towards political asides were ‘Irish’ elements that London readers found attractive. The recent editors of a 2011 edition of Sheridan’s novel draw attention to its ‘distinctive political views that link the state of the Irish nation quite closely to the position of its women’. Sheridan’s epistolary correspondents declare their support for the patriotic causes of the day: free trade and legislative independence. But despite the novel’s radical politics of female and national self-determination, it is silent on the issue of the Penal Laws, and denounces Catholic France and Spain for their ‘superstition’, ‘religious phrenzy’ and unnatural abundance of convents. Even in a context of increasingly patriotic Irish fiction, the reformist sentiments expressed in *The Minor* were unusual and advanced. The depiction of the priest as a mobile criminal in *John Juniper* is more typical of the intolerance that was deeply ingrained even as the Penal Laws began to be revised. In contrast, *The Minor* makes the Irish priest central to its plot and ends with a wedding that validates the place of Catholic ritual in daily communal life.
The Minor demonstrates a capacity to represent a larger social or national collective that is not often seen in ramble fiction. Contemporary texts such as John Juniper and Anthony Varnish centre on unrooted, mobile individuals, both orphans; Juniper never actually sets foot in Ireland, whilst Varnish remains in London at the novel’s close. The representation of a multi-confessional Irish community in The Minor is more similar to the Romantic national tale, exemplified by the works of Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson after 1800. These Irish novelists present ‘a differentiated and stratified society’ in which ‘land, house, and family come to serve as a microcosm of the national culture’. The embryonic presence of these qualities in The Minor imbues the ramble mode with new scope and depth. Christina Morin has argued that the Minerva gothic novels of Roche, Selden and others ‘reposition[ed] Ireland as central to a developing Atlantic economy by way of the movements of its people, literature and culture’, and are thus comparable to the national tale. Early Irish ramble fictions such as The Minor and Anthony Varnish would bear further comparison with the several Minerva novels that feature masculine travel and diasporic kinships between Ireland and Europe, such as Maria Julia Young’s Rose-Mount Castle; or, False Report (1798), Roche’s The Discarded Son; or, Haunt of the Banditti (1807), Henrietta Rouviere Mosse’s The Old Irish Baronet; or, Manners of my Country (1808) and The Soldier of Pennaflor: Or, a Season in Ireland. A Tale of the Eighteenth Century (1810). It can be concluded that Lane began publishing significant Irish fiction in the years between 1784 and 1790; and these novels, like the later Minerva productions, were dismissed primarily due to their generic hallmarks, being seen as morally ‘low’, dated, or unoriginal. The prestige of narrative patterns such as the masculine ramble plot fluctuated as the Romantic period wore on; but Irish fiction would remain a long-term and productive interest for this London publisher.

Notes
1. The Correspondents, an Original Novel; in a Series of Letters (1775; London: Becket & Lane, 1784), [p. 2 of 2].
14. Elizabeth Sheridan, *The Triumph of Prudence over Passion*, ed. by Aileen Douglas and Ian Campbell Ross (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), pp. 27–30. The changes to the title page of the London edition could well have been the publisher's work. As McLeod astutely points out, 'given that [Lane's] almost legendary business acumen was founded on an ability to accurately assess and exploit public taste—it is difficult to imagine that he did not have a hand in choosing the titles of the works he published’ (*Minerva Press*, p. 94).
20. *Memoirs of Charles Townly*, 3 vols (Dublin: Grierson, 1789). The Lane edition was unavailable to consult.
27. See Francis Fleming, *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures, the Perils and Critical Escapes of Timothy Ginnadrake*, 3 vols (Bath: For the Author, 1770–71); [Herbert Lawrence?], *The Contemplative Man. Or the History of Christopher Crab, Esq; of North Wales*, 2 vols (London: Whiston, 1771); Elizabeth Bonhote, *The Rambles of Mr Frankly*, 2 vols (London: Becket & DeHondt, 1772); *The Rake: Or, the Adventures of Tom Wildman*, 2 vols (London: Williams, 1773); John Carter, *The Scotch Parents: Or, the Remarkable Case of John Ramble* (London: All the Booksellers, 1773). My main sources for finding relevant novels have been the bibliographies by Garside, Raven and Schöwerling; Loeber and Loeber; Blakey; and McLeod. Periodical reviews have been used to corroborate these lists. In *Cruelty and Laughter*, Dickie distinguishes several different types of ramble novel, including ‘male-centered’ works (p. 253), ‘comic novels about women’ (p. 256), ‘comic “histories” of public figures’ (p. 259) and ‘slum comedy’ (p. 261). I have restricted my investigation to the first category, not only because Lane’s press issued several such narratives, but because these works were clearly seen as conforming to a pattern, in reviews and in the already noted conventions of titling.


29. For yearly totals, see Garside, Raven and Schöwerling, ‘Index of Booksellers and Printers’, *English Novel*, 1, 848–59 (p. 855).


40. *The Life and Adventures of Anthony Leger, Esq; or, the Man of Shifts*, 3 vols (London: Wilkins, 1789); *English Review*, 14 (Sept 1789), 228.


42. McLeod gives a total of 402 works between 1790 and 1799, of which 244 were novels, compared to 131 works of any genre between 1780 and 1789 (*‘Minerva Press’, pp. 48–49).

For the 1789 2nd edn of *Varnish*, see *English Review*, 14 (Dec 1789), 471. On *The Minor*, see notes 47 and 48, below.


46. Ibid., p. 137.

47. ‘The Minor, 2 Vols. 6s Lane’—see ‘Catalogue of New Publications’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 56.4 (Oct 1786), 84.

48. ‘On this day, the first of April, 1787, we peruse a book of 1788’, *Critical Review*, 63 (Apr 1787), 307–08.


52. *Critical Review*, 63 (Apr 1787), 308.

53. *The Minor; or, History of George O’Nial, Esq.*, 2 vols (London: Lane, 1788 [1787]), i, 199. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.


64. Arthur O’Leary, *A Defence of the Conduct and Writings of the Rev. Arthur O’Leary, during the Late Disturbances in Munster* (London: Keating, 1787), pp. 143–71. Duigenan’s address, with its attacks on O’Leary, was published in London in 1786,
but seemingly not until the winter. See *Critical Review*, 63 (Mar 1787), 234–35; and Kelly, ‘Wild Capuchin of Cork’, p. 57.


67. A *Congratulatory Address to His Majesty, from the Peasantry of Ireland, Vulgarly Denominated White Boys, or, Right Boys* (Dublin: Byrne, 1786), p. 15.


71. The ending of *The Minor* is thus comparable to that of another Irish novel, *The History of Mr Charles Fitzgerald and Miss Sarah Stapleton* (1770). Ian Campbell Ross argues that this novel parodies the eighteenth-century marriage plot from a Catholic perspective. See Ross, “‘Damn these printers ... By heaven, I’ll cut Hoey’s throat”: The History of Mr Charles Fitzgerald and Miss Sarah Stapleton (1770), a Catholic Novel in Eighteenth-Century Ireland’, *Irish University Review*, 48.2 (Oct 2018), 250–64 <https://doi.org/10.3366/iur.2018.0353>.


75. Ibid., p. 161.


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**Date of acceptance:** 8 January 2019.
'The first impression, you, yourself, will buy'
The Gunninghiad, *Virginius and Virginia* and the Art of Scandal at the Minerva Press

*Kurt Edward Milberger*

‘Still, independence is my noble plan’: The Works of Susannah Gunning

In 1792, the careers of the extraordinary printer, publisher and proprietor of circulating libraries William Lane and the famous novelist and infamous socialite Susannah Gunning, née Minifie (1739/40–1800) crossed trajectories in a blaze of scandal, fiction and poetry. The collision resulted in the printing of Gunning’s five-volume novel *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792) and its poetic companion volume *Virginius and Virginia. A Poem, in Six Parts. From the Roman History* (1792) at Lane’s Minerva Press.¹ When these two works appeared, Gunning found herself at the tail end of a scandal so omnipresent about town that Horace Walpole dubbed it ‘The Gunninghiad’ and explained that ‘a million of false readings there will be’ of its events.² Someone, the public discovered, had forged letters from the Duke of Marlborough rejecting the notion of a marriage between Gunning’s daughter, Elizabeth Gunning (1769–1823), and the Duke’s son, George Spencer-Churchill, the Marquess of Blandford. These letters, the story goes, were actually intended to encourage the amorous attentions of another noble son, George Campbell, the Marquess of Lorn, by demonstrating the high demand for Elizabeth’s middling hand and nonexistent dowry. Marlborough denied knowledge of any arrangement and refuted his reputed authorship of the letters. Who actually wrote them remains a subject of debate. Perhaps Elizabeth wrote them herself, hoping to attract the young man she preferred. Perhaps Susannah and her sister Margaret, both novelists with extensive epistolary experience, concocted the scheme to help Elizabeth make a match as successful as her father’s famous Gunning sisters had made. Perhaps her father, the perpetually cash-strapped Major General John Gunning, forged the letters to avoid the financial burden of Elizabeth’s dowry. Narratives of the scandal also feature associates of General Gunning’s, called the Bowens, who purportedly either aided him in composing the letters or served as intermediaries for Susannah, Margaret and Elizabeth to deliver letters they themselves had forged.

In any case, the scandal ended with General Gunning’s determination that Elizabeth and Susannah produced the letters, and he cast them both out of his...
house to fend for themselves against the public and the satirists before he fled England to avoid his own punishment for ‘criminal conversation’ with another man’s wife. The archive of the Gunninghiad reports a violent pamphlet war, including sworn affidavits from Susannah and her daughter; a hundreds-of-pages-long *Letter from Mrs Gunning, Addressed to his Grace the Duke of Argyll* [George Campbell’s father] (1791); *A Statement of Facts, in Answer to Mrs Gunning’s Letter*, by Captain Bowen (1791); and *A Narrative of the Incidents which Form the Mystery, in the Family of General Gunning* (1791), which attempts to make some retrospective sense of the entire affair. James Gillray (1756–1815) viciously illustrated the whole in a series of three caricatures. The most striking of these, *The Siege of Blenheim, or the New System of Gunning Discovered* (1791), features a handsome Elizabeth astride a cannon as her mother launches scads of paper at Blenheim. Marlborough blasts the crew with faeces, liquid and solid, directly from his exposed buttocks hung out the palace’s window as General Gunning sneaks away. When the dust settled, Susannah Gunning returned to literary writing with renewed zeal, a practice she had begun as a youth but from which she largely abstained during her marriage. To herald her ambitious return to literary writing, Gunning turned to the Minerva Press, where she exploited the firm’s willingness to print and publicise a variety of works to produce two literary depictions of the scandal. In the *Anecdotes* and *V＆V*, Gunning reconstructs and validates her identity as a literary writer as she wrests control of the scandal narrative back from her enemies, the satirists and the scandal press.

Those who remember Gunning’s writing today are likely to know her novels, such as *Barford Abbey* (1768), *Coombe Wood* (1783) or the *Anecdotes*, which eighteenth-century critics neglected, at best, and subjected to vitriol, at worst. Despite her popular successes as a novelist,3 Gunning’s career garnered only such notices as would result in her dismissal from the canon of English women novelists even as critics worked to reconstitute that body of literature. As Janet Todd has it, Gunning’s novels amount to ‘Tissues of clichés and influences, artificial in language and characterisation’.4 *Orlando*, the database of *Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*, describes Gunning ‘as a mediocre sentimental novelist: snobbish, stylistically over-elaborate [...] addressing the reader with girlish coyness’, suggesting that even her later ‘more confident’ work remains ‘marred by over-writing’.5 Contemporary critics were far less kind to *V＆V*, her only published poem. In the *Critical Review*, Gunning was advised ‘to rest her literary fame on the basis of that credit, whatever it be, which she has acquired as a novelist [sic]. Her poetical abilities, if we may judge by this production, will never entitle her to any exalted seat among the favourites of the Muses’.6 The *English Review* put it more bluntly: ‘We are sorry [...] to say that the muses seem not to have inspired Mrs. Gunning. The story is ill told, the language by no means poetic, and the thoughts often puerile. We enter into no particular analysis of the poem.’7 Consequently, *V＆V* almost never appears in later assessments of Gunning’s life or work as anything other than the briefest
mention, and critics leave the impression that the poem had no special role in Gunning's life or literary career.

Critics have largely contented themselves with classifying Gunning's works as sentimental, or even simply 'epistolary'. In much the same way that generic labels have been used to pigeonhole the Minerva Press, Gunning's literary output has been reduced to clichéd dismissals. According to Pam Perkins's entry in *The Literary Encyclopedia*, the early novels are 'filled with melodrama, high emotion, and lengthy declarations of fine feeling'. For Bridget G. MacCarthy, the early novels are 'poor in construction and unduly sentimental'. For Thomas O. Beebee, Gunning is simply 'a prolific author of epistolary fictions'. This manner of reducing Gunning's output to a handy critical label obscures a complex and interconnected series of writing and publishing activities and papers over the nuances of her career. The epistolary label, especially, makes it easier to write about Gunning and her work, but it has two rather stark drawbacks. First, it offers an inaccurate and limited way to classify Gunning's production. Second, it remains a subtle critical sneer against the lowbrow, used to replace 'sentimental novelist' which her first critics employed to dismiss her work but serving the same function. Critics need not take Gunning's fiction seriously or consider it or read it at all, the label says, because it can be neatly categorised as 'epistolary fiction', the metadata appropriately tagged, and the nuances conveniently overlooked. In this case, the label also has the advantage of buttressing interest in the Gunninghiad while condemning Gunning's part in it: she wrote novels made of letters and then got caught up in a scandal over forged letters! How delicious! Dismissive and salacious assumptions like these, however, remain inaccurate ways of talking about both Gunning's literary career and her involvement in the scandal.

Contrary to the critical history, Gunning's literary output cannot be neatly described by any familiar generic terms. In her youth, along with her sister Margaret, Susannah Minifie produced at least three novels, *The Histories of Lady Frances S——*, *and Lady Caroline S——* (1763), *The Pictire* (1766) and *The Hermit* (1769). She followed these early works with *Barford Abbey* (1768), *The Cottage* (1775) and two more novels published in the 1780s, *The Count of Poland* (1780) and *Coombe Wood* (1783). These four novels are typically attributed to Susannah alone, but some critics speculate that Margaret Minifie might have also had a hand in them. Regardless, thanks in part to Susannah Minifie's marriage to Major General John Gunning in 1768 and the scandal that consumed her energy in the late 1780s, she did not publish another work of fiction for almost ten years. Gunning's early publications in collaboration with her sister Margaret and later novels published 'By a Lady' but attributed to her make it difficult to draw an accurate picture of her bibliography, but Gunning's early novels are not strictly epistolary in style. Gunning was involved in the production of at least fourteen literary works, excluding publications to do with the scandal, such as her *Letter to Argyll*. Of these fourteen, three were certainly written in collaboration with Margaret. Two of those three novels, incidentally, include
narrators rather than epistolary mechanisms. *The Histories* is the only of the three completely comported in letters. Excluding those works, however, and assuming that the remaining works (such as *Barford Abbey*, which was published without a clear attribution of authorship) were indeed produced by Gunning alone, as has been the critical consensus, portrays an equally complicated picture of a prolific career dedicated to exploring the uses and limits of literary writing.

Of the eleven remaining works, one is *V&V*, a poem in six books—clearly not an epistolary novel. Another, a French novel translated with ‘Alterations and Additions’ titled *Love at First Sight*, can also be left out of the count of Gunning’s single-authored output. That leaves nine novels. Of those, *The Heir Apparent* (1802), which was published posthumously with revisions by her daughter Elizabeth Gunning, can also be excluded (*The Heir Apparent* is not epistolary and even in the unlikely scenario that Elizabeth changed the structure prior to publication, as a co-authored novel it can be left out here). That leaves eight novels authored by Gunning, and, of those eight, exactly half are epistolary: *Barford Abbey*, *The Cottage*, *Coombe Wood* and *Memoirs of Mary* (1793). The remaining four works—*Family Pictures* (1764), the *Anecdotes*, *Delves, a Welch Tale* (1796) and *Fashionable Involvements* (1800)—include first-person narration, third-person reportage and, in the case of *Delves*, literary elements lifted directly from the theatre. Gunning’s most experimental fiction, *Delves* includes many playful chapters and much direct dialogue: the second chapter, for example, is titled, ‘Much to be expressed in a short soliloquy’.

So, half of Gunning’s single-authored works fall neatly into the epistolary genre, and the other half, especially those produced after 1790, employ a variety of other literary techniques. Return these works into context with the collaborations with Margaret and Gunning’s other publications, and only 38 per cent of Gunning’s literary output can be neatly called ‘epistolary’. Instead emerges an author who had a particularly rich epistolary period spanning 1763–80, but who was also writing non-epistolary fiction during that time. Further, beginning with her work with the Minerva Press, Gunning’s literary output also changed dramatically, producing more non-epistolary fiction than epistolary, the poem and *Delves*, with its theatrical resonances. She also produced the work ‘from the French’ in this later period. This body of work might well deserve criticism, even dismissal, in its bid for status as high literature, but it cannot be easily accounted for by resorting to assumptions about genre or formal markers, be they epistolary, sentimental or poetic. To do so obscures both Gunning’s authorial impulses and the character of literary publishing in the late eighteenth century. For, Lane’s Minerva Press encouraged and facilitated the very cross-genre publication practices that allowed Gunning to push against the rigid boundaries of the epistolary genre with which she had been associated in her youth.

Nicholas Mason claims that Gunning’s Minerva publications ‘capitalized on the high-society author’s widely reported separation from her husband’, but to call the Gunninghiad scandal merely ‘widely reported’ or even simply the story of a marital squabble proves a remarkable understatement. Other
The first impression, you, yourself, will buy’

... scholarship on the Minerva Press tends to focus on what Mason calls Lane’s 'shameless commingling of the worlds of publicity and literature' to drive the sales of Minerva books. The details of the Gunninghiad were certainly salacious, but commingling them with literature did more for Gunning’s writing career than drive sales. Publishing with Minerva allowed Gunning to employ a notion of authorship that she could use to wrest control of the public narrative of the Gunninghiad back from the critics and satirists. Even as the only poem in the bibliography of a fiction writer, V&V reveals the extensive degree to which Gunning worked with the Minerva Press to construct herself as a literary author, how she manipulated Lane’s system of publishing and publicity to generate a version of herself as an author in charge of her own story. The Minerva Press, in fact, provided an essential outlet for Gunning’s return to artistic literature, driving her renewed popularity as a writer of fiction and facilitating her bold foray into the poetic genre. Lane’s publication practices proved conducive to Gunning’s experiments in storytelling as both sought to capitalise on the attention generated by the Gunninghiad for their own reasons.

The Printing Poulterer at the Sign of Minerva

Already the proprietor of a newspaper called The Star and Evening Advertiser, Lane began using the Minerva imprint in 1790 as he approached the pinnacle of his publishing career. Until then, Lane had published widely in a variety of genres, including songs, fairy tales and instruction books alongside novels, but the end of the eighteenth century witnessed the explosion of novel publications with which the Minerva imprint became synonymous. As Deborah Anne McLeod reports, in total, ‘73% of the works published by Minerva Press were novels. The lowest percentage is found in the 1790s when novels made up 61% of the total production; this ratio increased to 82% between 1800 and 1809, then decreased to 79% between 1810 and 1820.’ By some estimates, Lane produced one quarter and maybe as much as one third of the new novels published in England in the thirty years between 1790 and 1820. As Hannah Doherty explains, Lane produced ‘more than five times as many [novels] as any other single publisher during that time period’.

In the oft-repeated narrative, Minerva purveyed lurid gothic, supernatural and sentimental novels written in reductive imitation or even outright plagiarism of other readily available books. Hack writers, many of them women who published anonymously, worked to formulae to churn out lowbrow fiction that critics dismissed and scorned or enshrined as examples of what not to read and how not to write. Even Dorothy Blakey, the Minerva’s greatest twentieth-century historian, concedes that ‘the works issued by the Minerva Press are, as Peacock declared them to be, “completely expurgated of all the higher qualities of mind”’. As McLeod summarises, ‘the standard critical position has been that the bulk of the press’s productions are inferior formulaic novels pandering to the underdeveloped tastes of a predominantly female readership.’ Of course, Minerva Press developed this reputation in the eighteenth century when crit-
ics were rather less delicate in their assessments than contemporary scholars: the *Critical Review* classed a typical Minerva novel ‘one of the overflowings of dissipated brains, with which circulating libraries abound: in truth, it is some of the vilest trash, in every respect, that probably ever disgraced their shelves’.20

Recent scholarship has worked to overturn these assumptions. Elizabeth Neiman argues that dismissing Minerva novels as simply formulaic or conventional obscures the subtle ways Minerva writers used ‘derivative themes […] to respond to Romantic-era debates, most importantly […] Romantic definitions of authorship and literature’.21 In other words, Minerva authors employed generic tropes to enter the same discussions about gender, authorship and the literary as this period’s canonical authors. Others have pointed out the truly innovative character of the Minerva imprint. E. J. Clery, for example, contends that Lane used the imprint to ‘enhance the sense of a unified corporate style’, which ‘guaranteed a dependable commodity to the regular consumer, regardless of individual authorship’.22 According to Christopher Skelton-Foord, this unified branding, brought to fruition in the eighteenth century’s circulating libraries, even contributes to ‘the democratisation of the novel-reading habit’.23 But perhaps the most extensive revisionary account comes from McLeod’s dissertation ‘The Minerva Press’. Employing a quantitative method to examine 1636 Minerva titles, McLeod explodes the conventional stereotypes at the heart of writing about Lane’s press. No more can scholars afford to generalise about the enormous quantity of Minerva novels and summarily dismiss them as cloying productions of unskilled feminine writers aimed at fainting female readers; instead, as McLeod argues, Minerva authors ‘maneuvered skillfully in order to engage the reader’s attention and were particularly proficient at manipulating gender stereotypes’.24 McLeod’s work especially illuminates the true character of Minerva’s publishing programme. Instead of a predictable series of generic publications, McLeod uncovers ‘a previously unappreciated diversity both in genre and subgenre. The Minerva Press produced many works other than novels and many types of novels other than gothic and sentimental romances’.25

Rather than a hack publisher churning out more of the same, Lane proves an irrepressible eighteenth-century entrepreneur, building diverse lists to maximise his works’ market and cultural appeal while pioneering the novel imprint to brand the press’s work in particular genres. From this perspective, the two works Gunning published at the Minerva Press reveal how Lane’s diverse interests and energetic promotional practices facilitated the career of one of the late eighteenth century’s underappreciated authors. This mutually beneficial relationship between a cunning publisher and an ambitious author complicates notions of authorship, publishing and literature at the dawn of the Romantic period. Critics have left the relationship between Lane’s behaviour as a publisher and the work of the writers he published largely unremarked, but Gunning’s publications show an intimate association between Lane’s publishing programme and the works he published. In the paratexts of *V&V*, Gunning constructs an authorial persona that directly confronts the marketplace and the
hash of gossip called the Gunninghiad with the complications of allegory and fiction. She employs this authorial persona in an attempt to both reconfigure and transcend the scandal, offering last words on her role in it and laying the groundwork for her next steps as an author. In the wake of the scandal, Lane’s publishing programme and publicity practices allowed Gunning to use her newfound infamy to return to literary publishing and extend the scope of career.

As a commercial venture, Minerva attempted a wide variety of projects. Even in its earliest days, confined to the corner of his father’s poultry shop, Lane’s business, like that of other eighteenth-century publishers, was always a multimedia affair. According to the ‘Biographical Memoirs of William Lane, Esq.’, Lane offered not only books but also ‘pamphlets, songs, and prints, strung with pins in a row’.26 The memoir continues, ‘In fact, feathers and physic, rabbit skins and divinity, giblets and law, poultry, poetry and history (food for the body and the mind) were so blended together, that it was difficult to distinguish the firm or stable of the house’.27 In other words, before adopting the Minerva imprint and ‘very properly defin[ing] himself as a Manufacturer of Novels’, Lane published in many different genres, just as he dealt in a variety of commercial products.28 Of course, Lane was hardly alone in distributing a variety of ephemera alongside the books he published. English publishers from William Caxton to Edmund Curll and Jacob Tonson always worked in multiple forms to maximise their reach and profitability. If Minerva is unique among eighteenth-century publishers, it is rather less for the diversity of what Lane published than for the success of the Minerva brand, which led to a history of thinking of the press as primarily a publisher of novels, thus obscuring the full extent of its output.

Indeed, Lane found success in diversity, and Minerva’s authors were free to play with publishing in a variety of genres and to break with the conventions of the genres they chose. Insofar as adhering to generic conventions or expectations helped authors produce grist for Minerva’s mill, it did so in a permissive context, within a publishing atmosphere as amenable to the gizzards of law as to the plumes of poetry. As a printer, a publisher, a bookseller and—perhaps first and foremost—a proprietor of circulating libraries, Lane’s interest in literature was intimately tied to the marketplace. He published what he hoped the market would reward. In his day, as in our own, fickle market interests demanded constant adjustments from those seeking profit. So, like any content provider of the twenty-first century offering e-books alongside tweets and streamed videos, Lane approached the market with a variety of schemes. Making reliable investments in the form of generic novels, compilations and books of instruction that fit into clear niches and addressed easily recognisable needs, Lane also ventured beyond the immediately familiar in an attempt to appeal to new tastes and predict new desires. The novel, after all, demands a vibrant blend of familiarity and novelty to keep consumers excited enough to keep buying, borrowing and reading.

Lane’s publishing practices produced a wide variety of Minerva products, both original to the press and reproduced from other sources. The novels them-
selves occupy a notable mix of genres, ranging from social novels like *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786) and *Susanna, or Traits of a Modern Miss* (1795) to gothics like *Count Roderick’s Castle* (1794) and *The Animated Skeleton* (1798). But, in addition to novels, Lane published compendiums, such as *The Ladies Museum* (1773) and *The British Songster [...] A Choice Collection of Comic and Entertaining Songs* (1800) and several collections of fairy tales including the *Persian Tales, or the Thousand and One Days* (1800), which says nothing of the miscellanies, such as *Historical and Entertaining Anecdotes* (1776) or *Wits Museum* (1780?); the travel, military and shipwreck writing, such as *Travels through the Interior Parts of America* (1789), *A Circumstantial Narrative of the Loss of the Halsewell (East-Indiaman)* (1786) and *The Soldier’s Companion* (1803?); the collections of poetry like *The Parnassium* (1775); or the many sets of sermons and hymnals in Lane’s list. Lane even stamped the Minerva imprint upon *A Succinct Account of All the Religions* (1791). Minerva, in short, did not hesitate to seek new ways to appeal to its audiences, even as Lane characterised himself as a manufacturer of novels. He also encouraged authors to bring a wide variety of works to his press—what he calls in *An Address to the Public, on Circulating Libraries*, the various productions of their ‘eminent Talents’.

Lane issued this pamphlet specifically to describe and defend his practice of establishing circulating libraries featuring a broad range of titles appealing to a variety of needs and interests. Circulating libraries, he explained, should be ‘Nurseries of Entertainment, of Arts, and of Science’, and in order for the publishing projects that support them to have the widest possible reach and influence, they must contain multitudes (p. 3). The *Address* functions as both an advertisement for Lane’s circulating libraries and an acquisitions organ for the Minerva Press. In it, Lane encourages potential authors to bring him work from a variety of fields:

*To render my own Engagements the most complete, Authors are respectfully urged to offer their Productions, where eminent Talents will be liberally, though proportionably, encouraged, from their earliest Dawn to their meridian Splendor.* (p. 2)

That final, beautiful phrase, ‘from their earliest Dawn to their meridian Splendor’, implies a whole career approach to working with authors, who Lane urged to exercise their personal talents. Encouraging them in whatever work they might choose, Lane presents himself as willing to entertain any potential publications that would help realise the universal spread of the ‘Literary Museums’ he called circulating libraries (p. 1). Lane’s *Address to the Public* describes his press’s mission not by singling out any one particular genre of work but rather by emphasising the press’s plasticity, its willingness and ability to acquire, encourage and produce quality work. And, barring his own imprint on the books, Lane offered Minerva as a sort of service printer to anyone with a book they would like to bring to market:

*Such as chuse to print on their own account, will find, at the Minerva, Attention superior to common Presses; where Paper, Types, and*
Accuracy will combine in Displaying their Abilities to uncommon Advantage: — And the Public at large, in every Species of Printing, will experience Dispatch and Elegance united. (p. 3)

Gunning’s work at the Minerva Press, then, proves typical of the institution, but not for its rigid adherence to conventionality. Instead, Gunning’s late career work fit into Lane’s scheme to publish projects ‘in every Species of Printing’ that would bring audiences a wide variety of entertainments, arts and sciences. Further, Lane’s offer of Minerva as a service printer allowed Gunning to use the press to publish *V&V*, the back pages of which Lane coopted to promote the second edition of the *Anecdotes*. Several other examples of the press facilitating authorship in this way appear among Lane’s lists. Whereas many of Lane’s authors, such as Mary Charlton (fl. 1794–1824) or Helen Craik (1751–1825), produced works which were relatively generically consistent, others, such as Elizabeth Meeke (1761–1826?) and Pigault-Lebrun (1753–1835), worked in a variety of genres. Lane’s later Prospectus of 1798 re-emphasises this open attitude in its account of ‘Conduct respecting Literary Subjects’:

Authors may be assured, that Manuscripts committed to the care of this Office, shall be paid all due attention to; and it is presumed, the Works which have been printed and published from the Minerva Press, will announce the Spirit with which the Undertaking is conducted; and as such, Genius and Taste will find no less Fidelity in ushering their Productions to the World, than Encouragement and Advantage in their literary pursuits.

It has been easy to dip into the catalogue of Minerva novels and to recognise their generic markers, formulaic quality and even their fitness for Lane’s circulating-library model, but, as Neiman has pointed out, assuming a regularity imposed by generic formulae leads to overlooking how writers innovate within formal constraints. Genre writers push the boundaries of given forms, often subverting expectations, sometimes adapting recognisable tropes to new advantage, and sometimes producing new works in different genres. Thinking of ‘genre fiction’ as a kind of formulaic pap obscures the real extent of the Minerva’s reach and influence, focuses the conversation about literature broadly on certain types of novels specifically and erects a formal prison around many Minerva authors, including Gunning, who worked in and around formal constraints in their literary pursuits. In Gunning’s case, Minerva’s programme helped her to construct a powerful version of authorship with a public and commercial bent, a notion of literary authorship that might challenge satiric caricatures with literary acumen.

Just as Lane printed and published a variety of different kinds of works to squeeze the most value out of commercial and circulating-library markets, so too did he innovate in advertising those works, a practice he employed to a remarkable degree upon the 1792 works of Susannah Gunning. A famous example of Lane’s marketing genius appears in the somewhat later *Publishers Advertisement of 1794*. As Michael Sadleir argues, this pamphlet ‘shows an enterprise and an elaboration of publicity-method which are astonishing for
their period’. Two parts comprise the pamphlet A Tale Addressed to the Novel Readers of the Present Times and a list of texts ‘JUST PUBLISHED’ beneath the device of the Minerva Press. The pamphlet crafts a narrative out of the titles and incidents from Minerva Press books on offer in the accompanying list of texts. For example, the list of just published texts includes ‘Weird Sisters, 3 vols. 12mo. Price 9s. sewed (by the author of A Butler’s Diary. 1794)’. Some incidents akin to those in that novel appear in the narrative advertisement as a vision of Lady ‘ELLEN, COUNTESS OF CASTLE HOWELL’. Ellen is herself the subject of ‘Ellen, Countess of Castle Howell, 4 vols. 12 mo. 12s. sewed (by Mrs. Bennet. 1794)’, which also appears on the list of just published works. In the description of the Countess’s vision we learn

One evening [on a walk] she perceived, coming from the side of a rivulet, three figures in female attire: As they advanced towards her, she found they were the three WEIRD SISTERS, who then cautioned her with these solemn words, ‘Lady, beware———’ ‘Of what?’ exclaimed Ellen. ‘Of your visit to the Castle to-morrow.’ With these mysterious words they disappeared.

Sadleir describes the ‘handling of punctuation and capital letters’ as ‘highly unorthodox and the results from the point of view of literary quality ludicrous in the extreme’, but the unorthodox use of capital letters and punctuation actually constitutes a rather ingenious device whereby the reader of the advertisement can track the interesting portions of the text to the relevant books offered by the just published list. The advertisement attempts to provide readers with an approximation of the experiences they can expect from the novels offered. Sadleir points out how astonishing this variety of print devices is ‘for their period’, but he misses something of the nuance and excitement conveyed by the pamphlet and its place in Lane’s publishing practice. Not only was this advertisement designed to raise awareness of Minerva books, it also served as an entertainment in its own right. Lane used the same technique to turn the entertaining V&V into an advertisement for Gunning’s Delborough, and he used other advertising techniques as well, as discussed in more detail below.

Recent work by Megan Peiser reveals another of Lane’s publication habits that played to Gunning’s advantage in the literary marketplace: extensive advertising campaigns to position the work in front of potential readers. Peiser’s quantitative analysis of 1639 book reviews collected in her Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820 (a collection of reviews of novels published in the Critical Review and the Monthly Review) demonstrates the extent of Lane’s publicity practices. Unlike other publishers who might have sought to produce fewer works of greater quality, Lane assaulted the marketplace with an enormous number of books, making his publishing activities impossible for reviews to neglect. Peiser states: ‘Novels in our modern canon, like those of Frances Burney or Jane Austen, received more pages of review, and reviews in the prominent front section of the Review periodical (rather than relegated to the Monthly Catalogue), but Lane was most visible in terms of volume’. Lane, in other words, managed to turn re-
view periodicals into catalogues for the work of his press, inundating them with a huge number of new works, which they dutifully announced and sometimes reviewed. Peiser argues that, especially outside of the metropolis, many readers depended upon reviews to determine which volumes to take out of their local circulating library: ‘And where novel reviews were concerned, Lane was easy to see in their pages [...] A reader of Review periodicals would reliably run into a review of one of Lane’s works every month’. In this way, Lane exploited the review periodicals in the same way that he used advertisements in *The Star*: filling their pages with announcements of Minerva publications simply by generating so much new work, and, in so doing, keeping Minerva on the minds of readers.

Lane pulled out all the stops when it came to advertising Gunning’s twin publications. Blakey contends:

*No other novel of 1792 published at the Minerva was brought so prominently to public notice as *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*. Mrs. Gunning’s private affairs were undoubtedly responsible for much of the interest in it, and no doubt too, many who hastened to order their first impression read *Gunning for Delborough* in the title.*

The first two volumes, at least, must have proven a bit of a disappointment, with their tardiness in addressing anything remotely resembling the events of the Gunninghiad. In the ‘Advertisement to the Public’, which prefaces the *Anecdotes*, Gunning asserts that she began the work well before the scandal erupted, but the third volume includes a remarkably familiar narrative involving a forged letter scheme, a marriageable young lady and a duke called Angrave (Argyle?). Two years before the *Tale Addressed to the Novel Readers of the Present Times*, Lane and Gunning exploited similar marketing techniques to promote and supplement the publication of the *Anecdotes*. Aided by Lane’s publicity, Gunning began challenging readers to reconsider the scandal from different perspectives, as becomes clear from the novel’s retelling of the scandal narrative from a coy, sympathetic point of view in the *Anecdotes* and in the allegorical reframing of *V&V*.

Rather than a key to the *Anecdotes*, Gunning provides another literary response to the Gunninghiad in *V&V*, which Lane printed for her, leaving his name off the title page, rather than imprinting for himself. This slim volume, evidence of Gunning’s poetic ambitions, followed on the models of several canonical authors in reviving a popular story from Livy. It also served as an advertisement for the second edition of the *Anecdotes*, stoking the public lust for yet more material to do with the scandal and seriously exploring allegorical depictions of the Gunning family in literature. According to an advertisement printed at the back of *V&V*: ‘So rapid has been the Demand for this much-approved Novel [*Anecdotes*] that the First Edition was sold in a few Days’ (see Figure 1, overleaf). The poem/pamphlet, then, served as only one part of a publishing event. Using the techniques of advertising to capitalise on the public’s interest in the scandal and Gunning’s writing about it, Lane and Gunning did not produce additional scandal-writing, such as her *Letter*, but multiple attempts
to make literature out of her life experiences, to construct and deploy a specifically commercial notion of literary authorship on her behalf. Playing with what Michael Gamer identifies as ‘the relation between self-commodification and self-canonization’, Gunning’s work with Lane traded on the notorious affairs of her life in an attempt to capitalise on the trauma and simultaneously install herself in the English literary tradition.\footnote{45}

In addition to this back-page advertisement in \textit{V\&V}, Lane promoted the \textit{Anecdotes} no less than a dozen times in \textit{The Star and Evening Advertiser}. This series of advertisements, which Blakey suggests probably comprised more ads
than have been preserved or archived, includes several reports on the demand for the novel during its printing but prior to its publication. In March, 1792, Lane described the demand for the book as ‘so great, that the first impression is nearly subscribed for amongst the Trade—such Ladies and Gentlemen, therefore, as request this Novel, will be early in their directions to the Booksellers, that they may not be disappointed.’ The advertisements, frequently repeated throughout the month of March, indicate an ever-increasing demand for the forthcoming novel and supply instructions for how to obtain the work in the event of its selling out from a list of ‘over thirty booksellers […] together with eight circulating libraries, which would also stock the novel.’ But the series took a dramatic turn at the end of the month when Lane printed an advertisement responding to ‘a most invidious, false report’ that Gunning was not, in fact, the author of the Anecdotes:

In confutation to such base reports, any person who doubts the authenticity, may, on application at the Printing-Office, Leadenhall-street, see the original copy, in the hand-writing of Mrs. Gunning, or be further satisfied by the public avowal of that Lady. Accompanying Lane’s guarantee of her authorship, the advertisement also includes a series of twenty-four signatures from employees at the press and others willing to attest that the Anecdotes were, in fact, ‘the Production and Writing of MRS. GUNNING.’ This bid to establish Gunning’s authorship of the Anecdotes was certainly an attempt to verify the work as an official part of the Gunninghiad’s growing bibliography, but it also solidified Gunning’s return to writing as an author of literary works, a role she consciously embraced and defended in the paratext of V&V.

The considerable public notice Lane generated by advertising in The Star and the simultaneous printing of V&V traded on Gunning’s famous name. Edward Jacobs suggests that circulating libraries, generally, and the Minerva Press, in particular, ‘powerfully constructed femininity as an “author function” for fiction’ in this period. For Jacobs, a major factor in how circulating libraries such as Lane’s contributed to constructing the feminine author function derives from the practice of anonymously publishing writing supposedly done by women. Jacobs, however, points out that many of the anonymous fictions written by ‘a lady’ could well have been written by anyone, even a man. For Gunning, attaching her name to her literary works with impunity helped capitalise on her infamy in the marketplace and exert authorial control over the public narrative of her life. The feminine author function Jacobs describes must be complicated by powerful attempts like Gunning’s to write against the increasingly mainstream literary culture of feminine anonymity.

Gunning’s literary works refashion the many millions of interpretations of the Gunninghiad scandal Walpole had predicted in 1791. Refracting some ideas in the Anecdotes and complicating the character of the major players in V&V, Gunning produced a literary interpretation of the Gunninghiad that she signed with her own name, thus working to erase the epithet of famous socialite and
replace it with that of accomplished author. Publishing Gunning’s literary works, Lane certainly contributed to another aspect of the high visibility of feminine authorship. The scandal gave Lane every reason to expose (and then verify by way of signatories) this particular author. The *Anecdotes* and *V&V*, though, were the genuine works of a female author; one who had contributed to a major fracas about the veracity of women’s writing generally speaking and one whose literary ambition compelled her to attempt to enter the ranks of earlier English writers, as well as a host of late eighteenth-century Romantics, including Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who adapted the ancient story of Lucius Verginius and his daughter Virginia.

*I’ve felt your arrows! You shall feel my dart!*: Gunning’s Literature at Minerva

No one in the eighteenth century or since has revered Gunning as a poet, but in *V&V* she calls on literary artistry to complicate the received narrative of the Gunninghiad and exert her authority as a participant in the scandal’s events. Gunning’s entire oeuvre—ranging from the works produced in partnership with her sister through the rhetorical works of the scandal years, the realistic novels and *V&V*—reveals a writer setting her pen to a variety of forms in search of those that fit her evolving needs. As with other writers in this period, Gunning’s novels, particularly the *Anecdotes*, intersperse narration with poems supposedly authored by the characters, songs, excerpts of other texts and, indeed, the occasional letter, all of which offered her opportunities to hone her skill in a variety of forms. The *Anecdotes* includes tropes associated with sentimental fiction, but, chapter by chapter, it uses those techniques to heighten the reader’s emotional experience ‘to represent the complicated feelings of amazement, grief, anger, horror, love and compassion that divide the soul, and [agonise] the countenance’. When it came to depicting elements reminiscent of the Gunninghiad, Gunning used the *Anecdotes* to consider how a woman in her position might employ writing to structure her character, affect perceptions of herself and steer the course of events in the world.

The *Anecdotes* locates these considerations in the character of Selina Dangle, an infamous socialite. Like Gunning, herself, Lady Selina Dangle even has a sister named Margaret. Throughout the course of the novel, Lady Selina engages in a variety of epistolary matchmaking schemes, placing, at one point, an anonymous tip about the novel’s main character Colonel Fairfax’s affections in the gossip papers and obtaining pirated seals of the house of Angrave at another. In the novel’s third volume, together with a Madame Villeroy, who imitates a man’s handwriting, Lady Selina composes a forged letter from the Duke of Angrave designed to prevent an ill-fated match. ‘Audacious wretch!’ the feigned Duke thunders in the letter, ‘would nothing satisfy thy diabolical ambition, but to connect thy obscurity with the honors of my princely house? ’ (III, 75) As Lady Selina and Madame Villeroy scheme to prevent the marriage, Madame Villeroy explains how she had earlier employed anonymous letters to help Lady
Selina’s sister secure her marriage. ‘Anonymous letters’, she explains, ‘might be made very useful on particular occasions’ (iii, 56):

When any of her friends were going to be married, and she thought the husband was either too good or too bad for her friend, she and I together, for the joke [sic] sake, would cook up a letter, to assure the lady, it was a match of conveniency on the gentleman’s part, and that the writer had himself heard Lord such a one, or Mr. such a one (according to the distinction of the person concerned) turn into ridicule the ceremony of marriage, and not only that, but even her Ladyship, or Miss such a one, to whom he had the honor of communicating this friendly intelligence, had been ridiculed by the same party on more occasions than one. (iii, 58–59)

‘Delightful!’ Lady Selina responds, and, indeed, the whole scene transpires in an air of delicious gossip and fashionable fun; but, lurking behind the screen, Margaret’s ‘plebian marriage’ serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of a bad match (iii, 54). Writing anonymous letters in the *Anecdotes* provides the circle of otherwise disempowered women with a means to shift the balance of power and to exert some control over their relationships, to do to relationships at the private level what novels might to do them at the public. Employing the tools of the sentimental novel, Gunning reanimates the scandal that wracked her own family life to explore the events from yet another angle, one that complicates her participation in the affair by considering the kinds of events that might drive women like Selina Dangle or Elizabeth Gunning to write for their futures.

Gunning explicitly announces her desire to use writing in this way in the paratext of *V&V*. Her only poem has generic ancestors in the heroic poems of Pope and Dryden and few poetic compatriots in Minerva’s lists. *V&V* revives a familiar tale from the Roman historian Livy. Joining the ranks of works by the likes of Geoffrey Chaucer and the playwrights John Webster and Thomas Heywood by adapting the tale, Gunning crafts an allegory of the Gunninghiad. In Livy, the Roman centurion Lucius Virginius stabs his daughter Virginia to death before the Shrine of Venus Cloacina to protect her honour after she had been granted to the consul Appius Claudius Crassus. Gunning celebrates Virginius, explaining, ‘You’ll call him murd’rer, cry your blood runs cold: | Quite, in another light his deeds I see’.

In Gunning’s version of the story, a series of legal deceptions places Virginia in Appius’s power, and she blesses ‘the parental stroke’ that rescues her from his ravaging. Gunning’s verse is serviceable, if lacklustre, but she tells the story with skill and tact, weaving complicated elements into a powerful denouement. The poem abounds in meditations on the relationship between private and public, as well as who has the authority to act from which motivations. But, throughout, Gunning emphasises literature’s power to make the private public and hints at its ability to correct the public record:

Thou, canst not say my muse, or nature tell,
Why, in those hearts, where love, and peace should dwell,
The seeds of hate, and envy, should be sown?
How quickly thriven, and how rapid grown!
Nature, her little errors, may conceal,
But, come my muse, and greater, crimes reveal,
Enormous, crimes! assist me to display,
Whilst, lesser vices, shun the glare of day. (*V&V*, 12)

It is tempting to read Virginius as an allegorical depiction of John Gunning, who dashed his own daughter’s hopes for a fortuitous marriage, but it is more likely that he stands for Susannah Gunning herself: the author of Virginia’s fate who, perversely, protects her from Appius’s assault. Whereas Gunning had used her *Letter* to the Duke of Argyle to attempt to vindicate herself and her daughter, accusing her husband and the Bowens of committing the forgery scheme, *V&V* recafts the actors in the Gunningiad in historical garb and provides an allegorical drama that complements the narrative of the scandal. In *V&V*, a caring father risks his life and sacrifices his daughter to vindicate her according to the rules of a brutal society. During the Gunninghiad, rather than defending his daughter, Gunning’s husband crept off, after an affair with another woman. Left in his place, Susannah substitutes her pen for Virginius’s blade. She sacrifices Elizabeth’s social standing—associated with her husband’s name—to protect her daughter from charges of deceit.

That Susannah Gunning saw the poem as a means of establishing her literary authority and exercising her right to proffer a lens for interpreting the Gunninghiad’s events appears clearly in the paratext. As she writes in the ‘Dedication, to Supreme Fashion’:

I’m independent of your words and looks;
You independent! don’t you sell your books?
I answer yes, I sell them if I can,
Still, independence, is my noble plan.
A landlord I, at will, a tenant you,
The estate’s my own, it’s produce all my due;ß
Take it, or leave it, I am not afraid,
That tho’ you murmur, rents will still be paid;
Nay, I expect, however you may shy,
The first impression, you, yourself, will buy,
For your own sake, I mean, I want no prop,
But look straight forward, to a second crop,
A third, a fourth, a fifth, I see you start,
I’ve felt your arrows! you shall feel my dart!
And should I, ever reassume my pen,
Which, that I shall, is more than nine, to ten,
’Tis not impossible, that I might make,
Some other strictures, just for fashion’s sake.
Madam, you may, or you may not believe,
That, calm and fearless, I dare, take my leave;
Falshood, has ever been allied to shame,
I write but truth, and sign it with my name. (V&V, xiii–ix)
Everything about this passage reveals a skillful and competent writer engaging the literary marketplace from a position of authority. Gunning declares herself independent of fashion, of critics, of strictures that would dictate the manner of her publications, even of the need to sell her works. Instead, she appears as an independent author, ‘calm and fearless’ in her pursuit of the truth through literature and confident of her ability to stake her own claim to literary fortune. In some editions of the text, these lines were followed by a signature, authenticating their authorship and recalling Lane’s assurances that Gunning had, in fact, written the Anecdotes (Figure 2, below).

DEDICATION

For your own sake, I mean, I want no prop,
But look slant forward, to a second crop,
A third, a fourth, a fifth, I see you start,
I’ve felt your arrows! you shall feel my dart!
And should I, ever reassume my pen,
Which, that I shall, is more than nine, to ten,
’Tis not impossible, that I might make,
Some other strictures, just for fashion’s sake.
Madam, you may, or you may not believe,
That, calm and fearless, I dare, take my leave;
Falshood, has ever been allied to shame,
I write but truth, and sign it with my name.

S. Gunning

FIG. 2. SUSANNAH GUNNING’S ‘SIGNATURE’ AFFIXED TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE DEDICATION TO VIRGINIUS AND VIRGINIA (1782).

With her signature, Gunning cements the relationship between her attempt at poetic writing and the innovative publicity practices of William Lane’s Minerva Press. In her bid for literary authority to recast the events of the Gunninghiad,
Gunning took advantage of Lane’s willingness to print and publish a wide variety of literary works as well as his revolutionary publicity techniques. In exchange, Minerva’s influential imprint afforded Gunning a unique opportunity to extend her literary ambitions and to fight back against a public that had condemned her and her daughter to a *fame* worse than death.

**Notes**

I owe many thanks to Margaret Anne Doody who sparked my interest in Susannah Gunning and the scandal surrounding her life and writing career. The research that resulted in this article would not have happened without her encouragement, direction and conversation, and anything enlightening about this article merely reflects her brilliance. Errors, omissions and misinterpretations remain my own. I would also like to express my gratitude to Elizabeth Neiman and Christlina Morin for including this essay in their special issue and for their patient guidance and excellent feedback in developing this piece. Finally, my thanks to the anonymous peer reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

3. Betty A. Schellenberg provides this account of the relative success of Susannah Minifie’s early publications in collaboration with her sister:
   the Minifies are run-of-the-mill imitators of the latest in generic trends, neither innovators nor even the best imitators, but also not unskilled or unscrupulous copyists. At no point are they seen as setting a trend or as improving upon a precursor, but they are relatively effective practitioners of an increasingly recognizable set of genre conventions. Although [their fictions] are regularly commented on in the reviews, and to a lesser extent, by contemporary lay readers [...] no commentator speaks of the fictions of [...] the Minifies as making a contribution to the republic of letters.—*The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 136–40 (p. 139).
‘THE FIRST IMPRESSION, YOU, YOURSELF, WILL BUY’

13. Mason, Literary Advertising, p. 120.
27. Ibid., p. 2749.
28. Ibid., p. 2751.
29. William Lane, An Address to the Public, on Circulating Libraries (London: [Lane], 1795), p. 2. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.
30. Both Neiman and McLeod discuss the generous fictional depictions of Lane, which emphasised the ease of working with him and his enthusiasm for authors.

31. Charlton’s eleven works for Minerva include *The Pirate of Naples* (1801), *The Philosophic Kidnapper* (1805) and *The Rake and the Misanthrope* (1804). Kraik’s five novels for Minerva include *Julia de St Pierre* (1796), *Henry of Northumberland* (1800), *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800) and *Stella of the North* (1802).

32. Meeke’s twenty-eight novels with Minerva range from *The Abbey of Clugny* (1795) through *Which Is the Man?* (1801) to *The Spanish Campaign* (1815). Pigault-Lebrun, the pseudonym of Guillaume-Charles-Antoine Pigault de l’Espinoy (1753–1835), produced nine novels for Minerva, among them *My Uncle Thomas* (1801) and *The History of a Dog* (1804).


34. Quotations from this pamphlet refer to the reprint in Michael Sadleir, “Minerva Press” Publicity: A Publisher’s Advertisement of 1794’, *The Library*, 2nd ser., 21 (1940), 207–15 <https://doi.org/10.1093/library/s4-XXI.2.207>.

35. Ibid., p. 207.


37. Ibid., p. 212.

38. Ibid., pp. 208 and 212.


40. Ibid., p. 208.


42. Ibid., paras 6 and 8 of 14.


44. Blakey demonstrates that using ‘the blank leaves at the end of his books to bring new novels to the attention of his readers’ was Lane’s common practice; she continues, ‘he seems to have taken considerable trouble in the setting of these advertisements, a number of which are carefully laid out, with ingenious spacing and rules, after the fashion of a title-page’ (ibid., p. 101). Indeed, the end leaf advertisement for the *Anecdotes* in *V&V* approximates the former’s title page quite nicely.


48. Ibid., p. 99.


50. Ibid.


52. Ibid., p. 9.


**Referring to this Article**


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**Date of acceptance:** 8 January 2019.
Despite the success enjoyed by the Minerva Press in its time—evident in the fact its works were widely circulated and read by many—critics derided the publishing house and its proprietor, William Lane. Along with representing Lane as only capable of publishing throwaway literature, critics also portrayed his press as proliferating a violent breed of gothic novel thought to have a corrupting effect on its readers, especially young women. For some commentators, reading in general ‘was dangerous because it could distract from domestic duties or transgress the limits of a private sphere’. Most notably, it was the gothic novel, with its ‘cast of extreme characters, unnatural settings and perverse plots’, that ‘played a significant part in late eighteenth-century debates over the moral dangers of reading’. However, writers at the Minerva Press had their own ideas about how their texts should be interpreted, wanting both to respond to public tastes for the popular gothic and to frame their works as beneficial. Picking up on the fact that ‘women had long been encouraged to eschew reading romances and novels in favour of reading histories’, since they were ‘thought to offer more suitable models of virtue to imitate and vices to avoid’, this essay explores the ways in which Minerva authors exploited histories to shape their own ‘historical gothic’ mode, thereby allowing them to write violent gothic novels yet avoid the opprobrium of their numerous critics.

Montague Summers may have coined the phrase ‘historical gothic’ in The Gothic Quest (1969), but Minerva writer Anna Maria Mackenzie (fl. 1782–1809) revealed her reasons for characterising her gothic works as ‘historic’ or ‘historical’ much earlier than this. She argued that her own use of the gothic, founded ‘upon historical facts’ and with subjects chosen ‘for instruction’s sake’, offered sufficient portrayals of ‘virtue’, alongside the ‘bold and horrible images’ prerequisite to the genre, that her readers would be inspired to emulate the good rather than the bad. Mackenzie was no stranger to the negative perception held by critics of gothic works since her novel The Neapolitan (1796) was lambasted for its ‘detached scenes of horror, cruelty, and revenge’, its ‘disgusting if not unnatural horrors’ and its ability to harrow the reader ‘almost to phrensy’—all of which left one reviewer with feelings of ‘loathing and disgust’ towards the
female author and her work. Likewise, other female Minerva writers such as Eliza Parsons were criticised for their ‘common error’ in employing ‘horror [...] crowded upon horror’, until the sympathy of the reader is exhausted by excessive ‘faintings, death, and madness’. Effectively, Mackenzie manipulates the popular critical reception of novels and novel reading as corrupt, so as to avoid critique of her own work. In her discussion of the revolt against novels and their injurious effects on female readers, Jacqueline Pearson has illuminated how the eighteenth century saw ‘the rise of history as a discipline’, with the topic taking a ‘central role’ in women’s education, as well as enjoying considerable status generally. Critics of the novel turned instead to recommending histories, with the likes of Hannah More, Sarah Green and Sarah Pennington championing the virtues of ‘fact, and not wit’, as well as the ‘instructions only truth can give’, and declaring the ‘plain and unornamented narrative’ of histories far more suitable for female readers since they could not possibly ‘mislead the judgement’ or ‘inflame the passions’. For women, then, the function of history was primarily moral: it provided examples of virtue from which to learn, as opposed to examples of vice found in the novel. Thus, reasoned Mackenzie, the historical gothic was a way for writers to ‘escape the censure’ ordinarily attracted by the genre, instead allowing them to put forward works with which ‘ladies’ might be ‘interested and improved, without being terrified’ (i, x and xv). Explicitly then, Mackenzie had a female audience in mind, and felt the need to defend her work in terms of its beneficial effect on this group. The result of Mackenzie’s efforts to keep readers ‘interested and improved’ can be seen in her particular blend of historical details and sensationalised scenes of gothic violence for which the Minerva Press was to become famed, the combination of which saw the ‘virtues’ of one outweighing the ‘vices’ of the other.

This article argues that what Minerva authors were doing was combining gothic sensationalism with historical fact, thereby allowing Lane’s press to gain popularity by catering to the fashion for violent gothic novels while simultaneously responding to rhetoric about the corrupting influence of such violence on female readers. Three novels will be discussed in particular: Anna Maria Mackenzie’s *Danish Massacre, an Historic Fact* (1791); E. M. Foster’s *The Duke of Clarence. An Historical Novel* (1795) and Agnes Musgrave’s *Edmund of the Forest. An Historical Novel* (1795). While other scholars have discussed these works as they illustrate women’s historical writing, a fresh approach is provided when considering them as products of female historical gothic writing. As I argue, the selected novels adopt the tropes of historical fiction and yet contain scenes of violence which seem far more gothic than historical. Many have argued that the gothic has always been historical in the sense that eighteenth-century writers understood the term to mean a very particular relationship to the past. For example, Christina Morin draws attention to the fact that contemporary perceptions of the genre suggest it was ‘evocative of the past, its people, and its traditions’, thereby implying an ‘overlap of historical and gothic literary modes’. My distinction in this essay is between what is actual historical fact,
and what are sensationalised horrors presented for the attention of the female reader—both of which were employed by Lane’s writers in order to ‘feed the demand of an undisciplined yet ever-expanding reading public’. As we will also see, these Minerva novelists used popular conventions coined by other authors, such as Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole, albeit in a different way, thereby exemplifying Elizabeth Neiman’s statement that Minerva authors were making ‘constant and subtle modifications on and infractions to popular formulas’. Moreover, given that the gothic novel was to become less popular with readers and critics alike toward the end of the eighteenth century and historical fiction more popular in the nineteenth, this essay also suggests that the historical gothic can be seen to bridge the gaps between these two genres, with late eighteenth-century gothic writers basing their stories on historical events and settings, and nineteenth-century historical writers going on to adopt the tropes of the popular gothic.

Anna Maria Mackenzie published sixteen novels between 1782 and 1809, many ‘based on Historical Fact’ and most of them published by Lane at the Minerva Press. Her career exemplifies almost every trend of the period: she began with epistolary works before moving to third-person narratives; from contemporary settings she moved to the historical, and finally, to the gothic and then horror fiction. However, combining the historical facts surrounding a series of eleventh-century Danish invasions with the gothic elements of violence and the supernatural, it is Mackenzie’s *Danish Massacre* that best represents her own brand of historical gothic novel. It opens with an epigraph, intended to suggest its theme, from an English Restoration play, *Venice Preserv’d: or, a Plot Discovered* (1682), by Thomas Otway:

> Think thou already hear’sht the dying screams  
> Of harmless infants,
> Think thou seest their sad distracted mothers  
> Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity.

> Behold the furious and unpitying soldier  
> Pulling his reeking dagger from the bosoms  
> Of gasping wretches; death in ev’ry quarter,  
> With all that sad disorder can produce,  
> To make a spectacle of horror.  

Otway’s play was considered one of the most significant tragedies of the English stage in its time, enjoying revivals until the 1830s and making it likely therefore that Mackenzie’s readers would have been familiar with the work. Despite claiming in *Mysteries Elucidated* her desire to write ‘for instruction’s sake’, with the intention of leaving female readers ‘interested and improved, without being terrified’, Mackenzie here warns that her work will in fact contain such ‘spectacle[s] of horror’ as the ‘dying screams | of harmless infants’, ‘sad and distracted mothers’ and ‘furious and unpitying soldier[s]’. Her historical gothic novel is thus filled with shocking scenes of violence (such as the murder
of three young children in front of their agonised mother) and horror (in her gratuitous depictions of death on the battlefield) bound to terrify. Such violent subject matter seems contradictory to the writer’s proposed aim, particularly as it is weighted heavily against the female reader, singling out ‘mothers’ and those with ‘infants’, and suggests that Mackenzie embraces what was popular at her time of writing.

Following an epigraph that promises violent delights, Danish Massacre opens, as is typical of the genre, with an example of the Radcliffean ‘explained supernatural’: in a framing narrative, an elderly man and his son are out walking in the Welsh hills and from nowhere hear a ‘deep and awful groan’ (1, 8–9). Despite being ‘almost frantic with fear’, they advance, all the while speculating that this ‘strange phenomenon’ is the sound of a ‘vapour of the earth’ and that they approach ‘the resort of evil spirits’ (1, 10). The supposed supernatural is swiftly explained, however, as they happen upon ‘the emaciated figure of a man apparently lifeless’ (1, 12). This figure is revealed to be the wicked and treacherous Duke of Mercia, who gives the old man and his son a manuscript that—much in the style of Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764)—is supposedly the novel itself. Like Walpole, when Mackenzie uses the trope of the ‘found narrative’ she panders to the mid-eighteenth-century fad for medieval antiquity despite glaring fictionality. However, she identifies her novel as ‘historical’ and not, like Walpole, ‘gothic’. Like Walpole, Mackenzie frees herself of her authorial responsibility, but her use of the trope suggests that this supposedly ‘found narrative’ contains the true and unornamented events of the past, possibly to deflect any untoward criticism that might otherwise be levelled at her.

Similarly, in her preface to Corfe Castle; or, Historic Traicts (1793), a novel that fictionalises the same Danish invasion as Mackenzie’s Danish Massacre but published two years later, Anna Millikin calls ‘the cold and historic facts which form its basis’ the only thing recommending her novel ‘to the notice of the world’. Millikin relies heavily on popular gothic tropes, beginning with her choice of titles; still she chooses to signal her novel as ‘historic’ through its subtitle. This signalling implies that authors such as Mackenzie and Millikin were aware of the transgressive plot content of their works and therefore use the term ‘historic’ as a form of defence and/or disguise. From this, their comparable reliance on historical fact as a cover for their violent gothic novels, along with the fact that Danish Massacre and Corfe Castle are written in similar modes, on the same obscure invasion, and targeted at the same readers, one might conjecture the influence of Mackenzie’s historical gothic mode on writers both within and outside of the Minerva Press.

Mackenzie’s own historical gothic describes the reign of King Ethelred of England (AD 978–1016), for whom the chief problem was an ongoing conflict with the Danes. After several decades of relative peace, Danish raids on English territory began in earnest in the 980s, leading to what became known as the ‘St Brice’s Day Massacre’, when on 13 November 1002 Ethelred ordered the slaughter of all Danish men in England. Mackenzie’s Danish Massacre is based
on the ‘historic fact’ surrounding this event and consequently does not make frequent use of gothic conventions such as the supernatural (explained or otherwise), instead generating feelings of terror and horror in its reader through depictions of ‘diabolical impiety’, ‘barbarous cruelty’ and the ‘horrors of war’ (1, 19, 24 and 30–1).

Mackenzie uses ‘terror’ and ‘horror’ interchangeably—where typically the former is thought to draw the reader in and the latter to repel them—and yet her ‘horrors’ seem decidedly gothic, and moreover purposely targeted at a female reader: for example, in one scene a helpless infant is torn from its agonising mother and brandished aloft upon a bloody spear; other ‘horrible’ images are also presented to the female ‘imagination’, such as the ‘mangled limbs of [a woman’s] beloved children wantonly scattered upon the field of battle by a barbarous foe’ (1, 68). Equally, Mackenzie’s male characters (most of whom are soldiers) are glorified through depictions of their barbaric violence, with one carrying ‘a drawn sword in one hand, in the other a lady’, and another proudly bearing ‘his armour, deeply indented with various cuts, and disfigured with blood and dust’ (1, 65 and 137). While these may be accurate and unfiltered portrayals of the horrors of war, we are reminded by the writer that such scenes are nonetheless ‘calculated to agonise the feelings of a woman’, and that the female characters are made to feel ‘apprehensions so poignant, sorrow so excessive, [and] fatigues so inimical to virgin delicacy’ (ii, 127 and 168). The emphasis then lies not so much in the depictions of the men themselves, nor on the horrors of war from an historical perspective, but rather in the effects they have on the women around them—Mackenzie’s female characters, and by extension her female readers, are ‘agonise[d]’ by these brutish displays of masculinity, all of which are intrinsically linked to violence (mostly against women and children), as well as being made to feel ‘apprehension’, ‘sorrow’ and ‘fatigue’ by the ‘horrors’ with which the writer assaults them.

Although the novel begins with the wicked and treacherous Duke of Mercia and is punctuated throughout with portrayals of the cruelty of his soldiers, a central figure is a Danish woman, Athela, whose family he has persecuted. Athela’s suffering serves to highlight the Duke’s ruthless treatment of the Danes and culminates with the novel’s conclusion when, after her husband’s death, she appeals to King Ethelred and his men for ‘justice’ (1, 223). However, the ‘widowed mother’ and her children, rather than being objects of pity to the Duke, become instead ‘the affecting objects’ of the Duke’s ‘unprecedented hatred’ (ii, 220 and 223). In the bloody scene that follows—reminiscent of the violent epigraph from Otway’s *Venice Preserv’ d*—Athela is forced to watch as her children are murdered by the Duke of Mercia.

The Duke is first described in the ‘atrocious act’ of killing ‘the sweet Adelina’, Athela’s daughter: he ‘darted forwards’ and ‘fixed his eye upon her like the vulture intent on his prey’ (11, 221, 224 and 225–26). The use of simile here to portray the Duke as a carrion-eating creature suggests the predatory, vampiric position of men—a larger theme addressed by Mackenzie, who repeatedly offers
examples of the ruthlessness of men at war. In this instance, the Duke’s cruelty is further heightened by Mackenzie’s use of a male narrator to relay the scene: ‘a warrior’, he admits he is so ‘inured to deeds of death’ that he is ‘unequal’ to the task of describing them (ii, 226). As a result, he deliberately neglects to mention any ‘explicit’ details, and instead tells the reader/listener how the Duke ‘seiz[ed] those beauteous locks that adorned [Adelina’s] ivory neck’ (ii, 226). This male narrator’s fixation on Adelina’s beauty eroticises the scene of her death; he highlights the attractiveness of her hair, the fair white colour of her skin and the delicacy of her neck, and in doing so implies the fragility of the female form while also reducing Adelina to nothing more than an image of beauty and femininity even in her final moments.

Despite Athela’s harrowing cries of ‘spare my child’ and ‘save my Adelina’, the ‘fatal blow’ is delivered and readers are left with the tragic depiction of a mother’s grief (ii, 226–27):

The business of death was not complete; the innocent children ran back to their mother, who was now in a state of furious insanity—she started up, let fall her precious burthen who had just then resigned her breath, and putting them behind her, fixed her hands in her own dishevelled locks, and looking wildly around [...] and tearing off large ringlets of her hair, she threw them on the ground, practising various acts of madness. (ii, 229–30)

In the emotional aftermath of her daughter’s death, Athela’s feelings are denied by the male narrator, with her expressions of heartache dismissed as ‘insanity’ and ‘madness’ and her behaviour likened to that of a ‘wild’ animal. While the Duke takes a ‘malignant pleasure’ in thus ‘contemplating her sorrows’, King Ethelred demands that someone ‘bear her off’ since he ‘cannot look upon her grief’ (ii, 229–30). As the onlooking men do nothing, the reader is ‘suffered to wait the issue of this horrid tragedy’ (ii, 228). After murdering Adelina, the Duke turns on Athela’s two remaining children, a son and second daughter, before finally finishing his slaughter with the mother herself.

The massacre of Athela and her children, with which Mackenzie’s aptly named historical gothic novel concludes, is intended to affect all those who read it, as is suggested through the rhetorical question posed by the novel’s unnamed narrator: ‘Who but [the Duke] could behold them unmoved!’ (ii, 222). This question suggests that an emotional response is expected of readers, and two models are arguably provided: first, the male witness to Adelina’s death who cannot bring himself to describe the scene to its full extent and the King who cannot bear witness to the women affected as a result; and, second, the novel’s unnamed narrator, who expresses feelings of empathy for the sufferer. Although we are ultimately spared the ‘explicit’ scenes of bloody violence of which critics of the Minerva Press and its gothic novels seemed so afraid, what we are left with instead is a frightening glimpse into the horrors of war and the world of men: a world where women, even in death, are either reduced to those traits found most desirable by men or simply removed from sight (ii, 226). In this way,
Mackenzie can be seen to use the historical gothic to compose a different sort of gothic novel from the ones novelists like her were said to write. Rather than employing the gothic genre to write of ghosts and ghouls, or even to excuse her use of the supernatural, she utilises in particular the trope of sensationalised violence in order to contribute to historical discussions about war and its impact on women and children—she departs from her own argument on the use of history as the safeguarding of propriety to illustrate scenes of war, grief and loss that are calculated in such a way as to truly horrify women, and surely that is a far more terrifying picture for female readers of Minerva Press texts than the vice and superstition feared by critics.

The second writer to be examined here for her use of the historical gothic mode is E. M. Foster (fl. 1795–1817), a ‘shadowy figure’ about whom little is known, although she features on Peter Garside’s list of the most productive authors for producing ten novels (totalling twenty-five volumes) between 1795 and 1803.16 Foster’s *The Duke of Clarence. An Historical Novel* is similar to Mackenzie’s earlier work in that it likewise features violent and bloody battles, and centres itself on the feelings of its female characters. In its opening lines, Foster sets the historic scene: it is ‘the year 1422, about a twelvemonth after the decease of our fifth Henry’, as well as establishing the theme of war with a story from the protagonist’s adoptive father, the Baron de Clifford:

> Edgar took great delight in hearing the histories and atchievements [sic] of great warriors. To these he would listen, with the most unfeigned attention; and, whilst the Baron would fight over the battles of his youth, his countenance would become animated; his young heart would beat high, with youthful ardour and impatience, to become an actor in those scenes of glory! whilst the Baroness, with her eyes filled with love, and female softness, would shudder at the dangers, her lord had encountered; and, pressing to her maternal bosom the young Elfrida, would inwardly rejoice, that her sex exempted her from such dangers.17

Just as in *Danish Massacre*, the sentiment conveyed is that war is no place for women; as we see above, even the simple act of telling tales relating to the theme of historical violence impinges on the Baroness’s ‘female softness’. In this sense, the act of recounting violent historical events is represented as comparable to enacting actual violence upon women, forcing them to encounter the horrors of the battlefield in imagination if not in actuality. Although they do not necessarily travel to scenes of battle, warfare is brought to them and their domestic surroundings, so that the Baroness feels the need to protect her young daughter even within the safe confines of the home.

Other examples of violence in *Duke of Clarence* that are heightened through sensationalism and seem to target the female reader include Foster’s description of the Hundred Years War (1337–1453), which serves as the historical setting for the novel. An older Edgar takes part in these scenes, realising his aspirations of ‘glory!’ from boyhood by perpetrating such ‘horrid violence’ as ‘[cleaving]
the head of the Scottish general in sunder’ (I, 108–09). Nonetheless, the male protagonist finds he is not immune to reciprocal acts of violence, receiving a dreadful blow ‘which almost crushed to atoms his uplifted arm’ (I, 108). Likewise, the Earl of Salisbury, along whose side Edgar fights, is mortally wounded by a cannon ball, much to the ‘infinite grief and horror’ of all those who bear witness to what remains of his ‘mangled corpse’ (I, 133–34). Finally, once the fighting is over, the English soldiers, ‘meeting with the corpse of the Viscount of Narbonne, they hung it upon a gibbet, from the contempt they felt for his crimes’ (I, 110). Later on, the female narrator reflects upon these ‘horrors’ and the ‘horrid descriptions’ thereof, feeling their victory is in fact ‘small compensation for the blood of so many heroes, which had been shed!’ (II, 77 and 226–27). The real ‘cruelty’ of war, she laments, is that it allows men ‘to commit the most horrid depredations, on a harmless people!’ and is ‘the cause of rendering fatherless a numerous family,—of widowing a doating wife,—of bereaving of its only hope a fond parent’ (II, 77–78 and 210). History tells us that men fight, incur horrid injuries and perhaps die, but it is the ‘widow and orphan’ left behind who suffer most, with war leaving them ‘a prey to poverty, and sorrow!’ (II, 201). Such reflections act to feminise the experience of war, reading deeds of violence through the impact they have on the home and family. Furthermore, the female narrator views the wounds inflicted on men at war as tantamount to wounds on herself, as they cast a threat to her position in society as imagined through the roles of wife, mother and child. Here the notion of history, specifically in Foster’s novel the period of the Hundred Years War, is given a secondary role to the overarching experience of loss and violence, which can likewise be felt by the reader of any period. Moreover, this presents a connection between Minerva authors and other Romantic women writers who were likewise using gothic conventions so as to enter into contemporary debate about war and how it was represented.18 In this sense, the historical is gothicised so as to include experiences not represented in routine history, with the feelings of terror and horror as experienced by the women and children left behind prioritised over the factuality of the battles fought.

Alongside the historical theme of war, *Duke of Clarence* is peppered throughout with gothic conventions. For example, in the relationship that develops between the Baron’s two children, Elfrida and Edgar, Foster introduces the theme of incest, and it is this ‘fatal passion’ that propels the plotline of the novel (I, 56). She also incorporates the supernatural, such as ghosts. In addition to such supernatural sightings, both Edgar and Elfrida suffer from violent visions of their own or the other’s death: Elfrida imagines the ‘variety of horrors’ that might befall her lover in his absence, such as his being ‘dashed against a rock’ at sea, and left a ‘mangled frame’ to die in a ‘watery grave, in the unfathomable deep!’ (I, 253). Meanwhile, Edgar dreams of the moment they will be reunited, only to awake to find ‘an armed hand plung[ing] a dagger in his breast’ (II, 79). Horrors such as these, both real and imagined, are found throughout *Duke of Clarence*. The supernatural threat is never fully dismissed, presumably leaving
the reader to wonder whether the ghostly sightings are real, and rendering the novel more gothic than historical by calling into question the factuality of Foster’s writing. In this way, Foster’s historical gothic reads differently than Mackenzie’s *Danish Massacre*, which follows Radcliffe’s model of the ‘explained supernatural’ by only hinting at ghosts. Perhaps consequently, a critic for the *Monthly Review* disputed Foster’s historical foundation, claiming that *Duke of Clarence* had ‘slender title to the character of an historical novel’.¹⁹ Still, other critics overlooked Foster’s gothic conventions, as evident by this glowing recommendation in the *English Review*:

The novel exhibits a good picture of ancient times and manners, and, in not a few instances, abounds with pathetic and interesting events. The language is easy and elegant. The story is too complicated for us to give an account of it, as it would take up more space than is allotted to productions of this kind; but we recommend it as well calculated to amuse a leisure hour, without either endangering the morals or offending the eye of the reader.²⁰

Although this is a very typical kind of statement in the reviews, and notwithstanding that it is the view of only one person and could well have been a ‘puff piece’, it is interesting to note that the novel is praised in particular for not ‘endangering the morals or offending the eye of the reader’. Anna Maria Mackenzie likewise praises the novel in her Preface to *Mysteries Elucidated*, citing the ‘success’ of Foster’s work as ‘prov[ing] the utility’ of the ‘historical Gothic’ mode (1, x). Mackenzie’s use of the noun ‘utility’ here reinforces the belief held by critics that historical works were beneficial—their ‘utility’ being that they provided an education to women novel readers above that to be gleaned from other circulating-library fiction at that time. It seems then that *The Duke of Clarence* was able to pass as ‘exhibit[ing] a good picture of ancient times and manners’, as these reviews focus on its supposed historical accuracy, and the extent to which it conveys some kind of useful lesson about the past, rather than on its gothic obscenity.

Further examples of the historical gothic, as the mode was repeatedly employed and shaped by writers at the Minerva Press, include the works of Agnes Musgrave (*fl.* 1795–1808). Though little is known about the author herself, we do know that she ‘was popular in her own day on the strength of more than one historical novel and others of contemporary life’, with her first and best-known work, *Cicely; or, the Rose of Raby* (1795), quickly becoming a Minerva best-seller and enjoying reprints up to 1874.²¹ Musgrave went on to publish another two novels with Lane’s press, *Edmund of the Forest. An Historical Novel* and *The Solemn Injunction* (1798), and though all three novels mentioned here contain both gothic and historical elements, this combination is most striking in her second published work.

Despite its claiming to be ‘an Historical Novel’, *Edmund of the Forest* is in fact an extravagant gothic tale set in medieval Scotland and featuring mouldering buildings, supernatural incidents, mysterious characters and vague historicism.
In an introduction, Musgrave excuses her ‘marvellous’ writing and ‘giddy flights of imagination’ by attributing them to history, as she declares the story is not her own, but rather is derived from an external source—in this case ‘from letters’. Like other female authors at the Minerva Press, including Mackenzie and Foster, Musgrave draws on the ‘historical’ to justify or disguise her gothic plot. As mentioned, these Minerva novelists follow Walpole’s example of the ‘found manuscript’ but in their case, to reconcile their sensationalist combination of gothic and historical elements. Musgrave goes on further to argue that since she ‘claim[s] not merit’, she does not ‘deserve censure,’ thereby reinforcing my argument that the ‘historical’ subtitle was used as a cover for the gothic and its violent and sensationalist plotlines which might otherwise have drawn criticism. Musgrave does however admit to finding ‘some difficulty in connecting the story without adding to it’, thus justifying her ‘dividing it into chapters, and affixing to each a motto applicable to the subject’. The use of chapter ‘mottoes’, or epigraphs as we now refer to them, is a technique employed by others and which would go on to be used in the historical novels of the nineteenth century, but for Musgrave they retain their early moralising function, not only connecting her work to that of more notable writers, but also commenting upon the narrative through the use of familiar quotations and lending it credibility. Finally, the writer asks that her readers be ‘aware that we are now free from the shackles of superstition’, but to remember that ‘such a period existed’ when this was not the case, and thus ‘not to condemn Edmund too hastily’. In this way, Musgrave guides her readers as to how her writing should be interpreted: this, she says, is a tale of historical fact and should be taken as such, though she also pre-empts and aims to deflect the criticism of her detractors by reminding them that she cannot be blamed for the superstitious beliefs of former times.

Musgrave’s novel is set around the same time period as Foster’s *Duke of Clarence* and yet the events of the Wars of the Roses (1455–87) are secondary to the supernatural incidents with which the story is concerned. Edmund is the eponymous ‘hero of the tale’, and readers are presented with his journey from forest to castle to seek his destiny. Along the way, he encounters witches in ‘possession of spells and charms’; suffers from terrifying visions, such as his being ‘sacrifice[d]’ by ‘fantastic form[s]’ or ‘pressed’ to the ‘bosom’ of ‘a lifeless corpse’; and is ‘haunted’ throughout by ‘apparition[s]’, ‘phantom[s]’, ‘unquiet spirits’ and ‘beings of another world’. In particular, the inclusion of witches is notable as, like Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606), it pays homage to the King of Scotland’s own superstitious beliefs. When travelling through the forest, Edmund and the King discover ‘three hags’, one of whom ‘touched the arm of the intrepid youth with her wand, and the dagger dropped from his hand, which was suddenly benumbed’.

Musgrave does not simply hint at the supernatural, nor does she rely on the ‘explained supernatural’, but rather her historical gothic narrative brings its characters face-to-face with what they fear most, and in this description, it appears that the witches are real. Following this scene, there is a note from the
‘editor’, in which Musgrave, ‘afraid of incurring the laugh of ridicule’, excuses her own writing of such ‘horrors’ by again attributing them to ‘history’—specifically, ‘the history of James the Third of Scotland’ (1, 190). She reasons therefore that it would have been wrong to exclude such supernatural horrors as witches from her novel simply because contemporary readers would have been unlikely to credit them. A notice in the *Critical Review* focuses heavily on this scene, as well as on Musgrave’s reliance on gothic tropes more generally, and is dismissive of the novel’s historical accuracy as a result:

The story is supposed to have happened in the reign of James III of Scotland; and the agency of witchcraft is introduced in compliment to that monarch’s credulity. [...] The scene is, indeed, a copy from Macbeth’s visit to the witches; but it wants the additional charm of Shakespeare’s genius. With such helps as witches, ghosts, caverns, and ruined castles, we should be too scrupulous in expecting probability: but there are bounds even to fiction.23

Unlike *Cicely, Edmund of the Forest* did not go on to a second edition, though it appeared in French in 1798/99 and an extract entitled ‘The Adventures James III of Scotland had with the weird Sisters’ was published in *Gothic Stories* (1799). That more than one reprinting of this collection appeared in the early nineteenth century implies some success, as well as suggesting that it was for its gothic horrors, and not its historical authenticity, that audiences read the excerpt from Musgrave’s work. As Frederick S. Frank further brings to light, the novel’s ‘extensions of Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* also furnished [Ann] Ker with material for her forest-to-castle plot in *Edric the Forester; or, The Mysteries of the Haunted Chamber*, so while *Edmund of the Forest* itself may not have been reprinted in English, still its influence persists.24

Such supernatural content is evidently central to Musgrave’s historical gothic romance, and yet even she calls its veracity into question by portraying her protagonist as someone prone to fancy as a result of his own ‘horrid’ reading. Musgrave dedicates one entire chapter to the content of Edmund’s reading; one night, he takes up ‘the book he had been reading the preceding evening, began where he had left off, and found the story proceeded thus’ (11, 101). The ‘strange and romantic’ story that is subsequently narrated has all the marks of an historical gothic novel. Following the tale of two brothers forced to seek shelter in a dreary castle, it is filled with violence: ‘bloody marks’, ‘crimson stains’ and ‘a superb chamber, whose floor was slippery with blood’ (11, 104); the suggestion of ‘murder’ (11, 105); and the supernatural: ‘they observed somewhat glitter on the first landing, Egbert stopped, it was a sword, firmly grasped in a hand devoid of flesh, nought remaining but the bones, which, as he touched, gently pressed his fingers, then fell and left the weapon in his grasp’ (11, 103–04). And finally, as the brothers delve deeper into the castle and its mysteries, the chapter draws to a frightening close: ‘hark! that groan. It was deep and deadly, yet they saw not whence it proceeded, but fresh horrors were prepared for them; for casting their eyes on the bed, they saw a human body whose—’ (11, 109). Here, Edmund is so
overcome with disgust that he actually ‘threw the book from him with violence’, and vehemently denounces the habit of reading horrid novels, declaring he ‘will read no further’ since such works are surely crafted more to ‘alarm than amuse’ (II, 110). The damage is already done however, as the result of ‘his fancy, heated by reading’ is that ‘strange visions flitted through his brain, and phantoms of murdered strangers haunted his slumbers’, a recurring event throughout the novel (II, 111–12). The inclusion of this chapter, and Edmund’s subsequent reaction to his reading, suggests that Musgrave was familiar not only with the tropes of the gothic novel, but also with the popular critical view of such texts. Her own historical gothic work is not all that different from Edmund’s (since both employ the supernatural alongside sensationalised scenes of violence) and so her metareference to novel reading here suggests that Minerva authors were aware of the criticism attracted by the genre, and thus sought to circumvent it while still writing popular gothic tales. It also offers some explanation as to why she was so keen for her works to be viewed as ‘historical’ rather than purely gothic.

Supernatural elements aside, as my examples have illustrated, Minerva authors’ use of gothic violence was not simply to entertain, but also to portray the horrors of war and its impact on women and the domestic space. Indeed, as Anne H. Stevens argues of Edmund of the Forest, the overarching purpose of Musgrave’s novel is that it ‘emphasises the costs of civil conflict’. Thus much the same as in both Mackenzie’s Danish Massacre and Foster’s Duke of Clarence, Musgrave’s historical gothic work brings to light the acute cost of violent historical warfare for those left behind, with the novel’s most affecting passages being those that immediately represent the cost of war to the domestic, the familiar and the personal—namely, women left bereaved of fathers, husbands, brothers and children. At one point, the narrator refers to the Wars of the Roses as those ‘fatal wars which have destroyed, and swept away whole families’, highlighting the fact that the domestic front was not immune from violence, unrest and the effects of conflict (II, 63). The novel, like many others of this period, makes clear that war was an insistent presence in the lives and writing of women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Likewise, the male characters (and perhaps readers along with them) come to realise the futility of such events, as one laments: ‘how anxiously do we anticipate the age, the hour, which gives us to scenes of action; ah! those scenes so wished, what bring they to view but inquietude and misery’ (II, 10). Musgrave’s protagonist Edmund is much like Edgar in Foster’s Duke of Clarence, as he too ‘spends his childhood ‘fired at the idea of glory, for from father Lawrence he had oft heard of battles and sieges, and hoped, young as he was, to signalise himself’ (I, 17). However, upon joining the army of Queen Margaret and at the battle of Wakefield, Edmund ‘shrunk with horror as he viewed the carnage of the day, and wept the untimely fate’ of those soldiers fallen around him, as well as feeling ‘revolted from the dire scenes of blood and devastation he had witnessed’ (I, 18). Later, ‘another bloody engagement ensued’, which further highlights the violent nature of war, as the stream of the River Wharf becomes ‘choaked by the dead bodies, [and] ran red
with blood for some succeeding days’ (i, 19). The most obvious cost of war is the loss of human life, the ‘cruelty’ of which causes Edmund to question: ‘why did I listen with greedy ear to the tales you told of heroic deeds, of the gay and courtly scenes you hand mingled in?’ (i, 20). These thoughts on the part of the protagonist demonstrate a preoccupation with the physicality of war, while simultaneously critiquing the abstract concepts used to justify military engagements. Moreover, Edmund considers the wider impact of war as he comes to pass over a country ‘that bore the marks of constant warfare to which it was exposed’, the land, he finds, is ‘almost destitute of inhabitants’, such is the loss of life, and the once ‘fertile lands of England’ are left carrying nothing but the marks of ‘ruin, terror, and desolation’ (i, 73). Stevens has highlighted how, ‘as Britain stood on the brink of civil war and faced the threat of invasion from abroad, stories about earlier periods of civil conflict appealed to British readers’. In this way, historical gothic novels such as this one allowed readers to explore conflict, and the feelings of loss that resulted, without necessarily having to experience them at first hand. This was particularly the case for women readers, as previously explored in *Danish Massacre* and *Duke of Clarence*, who would not have had to fight, but who would have been left to suffer the loss of their children and/or the men on whom they depended.

Taken together, the use of historical facts alongside gothic tropes in Minerva Press works allows for a confident evaluation of the formation of an historical gothic mode. As this essay has argued, the novels of Mackenzie, Foster and Musgrave offer paradigmatic examples of how late eighteenth-century writers combined violent gothic sensationalism with historical manners, characters and events, in order to supposedly benefit their readers while avoiding critics’ censure. In addition to this, at a time when historical writing was not showcasing the horrors of war that women were experiencing, the use of gothic conventions when writing of historical conflicts allowed women writers to give their own perspective on the horrors of war and what this looked like for them. Sir Walter Scott later took pains to distance his work from early examples of historical fiction such as these, wanting to cleanse prose fiction of its ‘horrid’ (that is, gothic) sensationalism. Scott’s choice to prioritise the historical over the gothic elements of the genre, as employed by preceding writers, could be seen to enact an erasure of the important breakthrough they achieved in forming a medium for the discussion of violence and women’s experience thereof. And yet, just as these late eighteenth-century writers used historical settings to position their violent narratives, so too did historical writers of the nineteenth century employ sensationalist gothic tropes to add flavour to their antiquarian works. Even Scott’s own narrative about the innovativeness of his historical fiction—one largely bought into by subsequent criticism—is now recognised as suspect, as is the neat division of gothic and historical forms/modes in the Romantic period. In this way, the historical gothic mode as employed by Lane’s writers can be seen to bridge the gap between the two genres that writers like Scott sought to create. The formation and use of an historical gothic mode by Minerva writers
thus adds to our understanding of the historical novel and its development in the late eighteenth century.

Ultimately, what the novels explored and analysed here all share is their use of the historical gothic mode, combining the fact and realism of the historical novel with the sensationalism of the popular gothic, in order to cater to the late eighteenth-century fashion for ‘horrid’ novels, while defending against the opprobrium typically met by the genre. By flavouring the most fantastic sensationalism with frequent dashes of realism, these historical gothic novels are set apart from other works of their time (as well as from later historical works) by the use of violence, with the mode allowing writers at the Minerva Press to present popular gothic horrors under the guise of accurate and informative historical fiction. In her Preface to *Mysteries Elucidated*, Mackenzie shares the belief that ‘historical anecdotes are the most proper vehicles for the elucidation of mysteries’ (1, xiii). This statement suggests that while ‘historical’ settings are the vehicles inside which her novels can take place, the driving force is actually a violent gothic mystery, complete with a host of supernatural passengers. Though Mackenzie’s didactic theorising on the nature of ‘licentious novel[s]’ and how to write instead ‘for instruction’s sake’ may seem at odds with the violent scenes depicted in her own works, such as in *Danish Massacre*, her use of the historical gothic mode was ‘received with much favour’, with her novels considered to be ‘of a species somewhat superior to the generality of the fongous [sic] productions of that literary hot-bed’ (referring to the Minerva Press), and her name even appearing in Lane’s Prospectus of 1798 under the heading of ‘particular and favourite Authors’. As explored here, the historical gothic mode as conceived by Mackenzie thus went on to be adopted by later Minerva writers and into the nineteenth century, ultimately testifying to its success and value as a subgenre of the gothic. Moreover, that its tropes, modes and writing styles continued to be used leaves us with an understanding of the lasting influence of the Minerva Press, even as the gothic (and the press itself) became less popular.

**Notes**


5. Anna Maria Mackenzie, *Mysteries Elucidated, a Novel*, 3 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1795), 1, ix, xi and xiv. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.
6. Review of Anna Maria Mackenzie’s *The Neapolitan; or, the Test of Integrity* (1796), *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 21 (Oct 1797), 229–30.


9. Qtd in ibid., p. 50.


26. Ibid.

Referring to this Article

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Date of acceptance: 8 February 2019.
The trials of aspiring author Miss Mortimer, a minor character in the anonymous *The Follies of St James’s Street* (1789), have sparked enduring scholarly interest despite the best efforts of the *Critical Review*, and several of its brethren, to damn the novel ‘to oblivion’. The ‘Printers and Publishers’ chapter of the novel offers a rare instance not just of a novelist in the text, but also of a novelist dealing with a publisher of novels in a work of eighteenth-century fiction. That publisher is the ‘polite’ and ‘liberal’ William Lane, who published *Follies* a year before adopting the Minerva brand. Lane’s brief interactions with Miss Mortimer are commonly read as a revealing ‘portrait’, if not of the still enigmatic publisher himself, then of the commercial savvy and brazenly self-promotional strategies that made his publishing house so successful. Little more than an eighteenth-century advertorial for Lane’s business, this interlude sees Miss Mortimer abandon her aspirations for the ‘pecuniary advantages’ enjoyed by the ‘excellent author of Evelina’ after an unnamed publisher rejects her manuscript, only for her to travel to ‘Paternoster-row’, where ‘magazines’ and ‘reviews’ are the ‘fort’, and where she is ‘equally unsuccessful’ in placing her fiction. Nonetheless, her journey to the Row bears fruit in the form of helpful advice: “go to Leadenhall Street”, strangers there tell her. Miss Mortimer obeys by ‘instinct’ and is rewarded by a meeting with Lane that results in a sale of copyright. Subsequent paragraphs underline the ‘free, generous and encouraging’ manner of the Leadenhall Street publisher, and elaborate on the sense of ‘public spirit’ that drove his literary ventures by way of puffing references to four of his recently published works.

A suggestive blurring of fact and fiction, this episode epitomises several of the challenges familiar to anyone researching the Minerva Press. Without a publisher archive, and given the obscurity of many of the authors who wrote (often, like that of *Follies*, anonymously or pseudonymously) for Lane and A. K. Newman (Lane’s partner and eventual successor, fl. 1801–1858), attempts to understand the Minerva’s day-to-day operation require us to work deductively and sceptically with scraps of evidence, including: shreds of biographical information; surviving catalogues and advertisements; scattered letters; personal anecdotes; prefaces to and episodes in novels; and the Reviews and their dismissals of the ‘pernicious’ trash ‘that load the shelves of a circulating library’. Since the publication of Dorothy Blakey’s *The Minerva Press* (1939), much of the still
small body of scholarship on the publishing house has sought to interrogate and correct the myths about its readers, writers and publications perpetuated by the Reviews and, in some cases, by Lane and Newman themselves. This essay challenges these myths further by taking its cue from an unacknowledged lead in Miss Mortimer’s trials: the undocumented relationship between Minerva and the magazines that were the ‘fort’ of Paternoster Row. I turn to one of the Row’s most successful ventures, George Robinson’s *Lady’s Magazine; or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* (1770–1832), to uncover the rich connection between the periodical press and Minerva that, once visible, refocuses our understanding of the magazine and Lane’s and Newman’s publishing practices and ambitions.

If we follow Nicholas Mason’s lead in reading this passage from *Follies* as an example of ‘hucksterism’ on Lane’s part, then the novel’s allusion to Row magazines is among its shrewdest strategies. Attempts to undermine the appeal of periodical publishing appear elsewhere in the Minerva catalogue, most notably in Mary Charlton’s *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799), in which another minor character submits a poorly written sonnet to the *Lady’s Magazine* in the hopes that it will appear alongside similarly ‘sublime’, but in reality inferior, ‘effusions’ on trivial subjects. In *Follies*, as in *Rosella*, allusion to the *Magazine* allows the Minerva author to confront and displace prejudices against the lowbrow, popular literary output with which Lane’s imprint was becoming synonymous. After being denied, first, the ‘advantages’ of an *Evelina* (1778), and then the more modest achievement of magazine serialisation, Miss Mortimer is compelled to make the short journey eastwards across the city from the Row to Leadenhall Street. Yet what might be interpreted as a regressive move is portrayed as an ‘advantageous’ one that results in a swift publication at a fair price before a large audience among whom ‘Novels [...] are universally read and esteemed’ (11, 18–19). If, as Blakey suggests, the experience of Miss Mortimer signals a general ‘policy’ on Lane’s part ‘to attract young and timid writers’, then it reads also as a concerted effort to poach aspiring and established fiction writers for magazines for his catalogue. Lane’s strategy, as we will see, was not without success, although writers who left the magazine for Minerva did not necessarily make a permanent break.

The rivalry implied here between magazines, particularly the *Lady’s Magazine*, and Minerva was so acute because the affinities between them ran so deep and wide. Both metaphorically worshipped the same goddess (pictorially represented in the magazine’s frontispieces and linguistically in the Minerva imprint) and both privileged women writers and female readers even while counting many men among their authors and purchasers. Minerva novels featured in the *Lady’s Magazine* and some of the magazine’s fiction found an afterlife in Minerva reprints. This collective body of work evidences numerous shared thematic preoccupations (particularly around questions of gender, work, money and inheritance), and much of it occupied a mutually antagonistic stance in relation to increasingly normative notions of the literary and of professional authorship that, as Clifford Siskin has demonstrated, consolidated at the turn
of the nineteenth century. Finally, the *Lady's Magazine* and the Press shared a number of authors and cultivated similar publishing cultures and communities.

That such connections have not been scrutinised is surprising given the un-cannily similar ways in which both the *Lady's Magazine* and Minerva productions have been long and damagingly aligned with the feminine, the derivative, the ephemeral and the amateur. Close attention to the unacknowledged points of contact outlined in this essay is multiply illuminating, I argue, not least because they force us to challenge these enduring but misleading associations. Tracing connections between the magazine and Minerva also sharpens our understanding of the writing cultures that these rival, yet also strangely collusive, publishing outlets promoted. The picture that emerges is unRomantic in several senses. Most obviously, it is one that brings into focus a group of extremely popular, often economically vulnerable yet endlessly resourceful, writers who have been all but overlooked in Romantic literary history. The authorial types these writers represent and the kinds of work they produced—magazine contributions and circulating library novels—fail to subscribe to the conventional hierarchies of authorship, genius, gender and genre that were formalised in the Romantic period itself. At precisely the moment that literature and authorship were being professionalised and normalised around these hierarchies, the *Lady's Magazine* and Minerva presented aspiring authors with competing, but complementary, mass-media outlets that were eagerly exploited by hundreds of Romantic-era writers. Scrutinising these opportunities—how they were presented and by whom, and on what terms they were seized—dispels myths about the periodical and the Minerva Press and enables us to uncover alternative, yet ubiquitous, stories of authorship in the Romantic period that merit the telling precisely because they recalibrate our sense of this analytic category.

**Worshipping at the Foot of the Same Goddess**

Although explicit connections between the *Lady's Magazine* and the Minerva Press have not yet been uncovered, it is striking how frequently suspected continuities between them are registered in extant scholarship. In a brief discussion of Lane's periodical and occasional publications, for instance, Blakey speculates that his *Pleasing and Polite Instructor* (1786) was likely inspired by two former publications: *The Polite Instructor* (1761), published by T. Becket, and *The Pleasing Instructor* (1770), published by George Robinson and John Roberts, the business partners who bought the right to publish the *Lady's Magazine* in the spring of 1771. A more suggestive connection is drawn by Alison Adburgham, who notes that ‘it was about the time when the *Lady's Magazine* was founded [in 1770] that the owner of the Minerva Press [...] started his first circulating library’. Adburgham stops short of implying a causal relationship between these initiatives, except to identity both as evidence of a concerted rise in publications ‘for women and by women’ in the century’s final decades. Edward Copeland has similarly identified both *Lady's Magazine* and Minerva fiction as participating in a larger conversation about women’s economic position and anxieties,
although from different vantage points. The only explicit connection made between the magazine and the press, to my knowledge, concerns the ubiquitous Minerva novelist, translator and half-sister of Frances Burney, ‘Mrs Meeke’, who is frequently identified, following a lead in the Corvey catalogue, as the author of the first three parts of the *Lady’s Magazine* serial, ‘The Monks and the Robbers’ (1794–1805). The still frequently repeated attribution is spurious; yet along with the observations of Blakey, Adburgham and Copeland, it is nonetheless revealing in its underlying suspicion that Robinson’s periodical and Lane’s publishing house must have been linked in some way.

Speculation is unnecessary, however, since concrete evidence links these outlets. Although Minerva novels such as *Rosella* openly disparaged the *Lady’s Magazine*, the 1798 Prospectus for Lane’s Circulating Library reveals that it stocked the periodical, while the Minerva catalogue additionally reveals that the Minerva Press was happy, indeed proud, to publish several of Robinson’s authors. Its list includes many later editions of works first published by the Robinson firm, many of which were excerpted in the *Lady’s Magazine*, including: Thomas Holcroft’s translation, *Caroline of Lichtfield* (1786); Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond* (1792); Frances Peck’s *Vaga; or, a View of Nature* (1813); Barbara Hofland’s *Iwanowna; or, the Maid of Moscow* (1813); and Catherine Cuthbertson’s *Romance of the Pyrenees* (1802), *Santo Sebastiano: Or, the Young Protector* (1806) and *Adelaide: Or, the Countercharm* (1813). The *Romance of the Pyrenees* was, in fact, first serialised in instalments in the magazine after a printer’s fire all but destroyed a first print run intended for volume publication, as was *Grasville Abbey*, George Moore’s popular Gothic serial which ran in the magazine between March 1793 and August 1797, before being published in volume form by the Robinsons (1797) and then in a second edition by Minerva.

Extracts from the works of writers associated partly, but not exclusively, with Minerva also appeared with relative frequency in the *Lady’s Magazine*. Many of these—such as reprintings of the works of Sarah Green (fl. 1790–1825), Barbara Hofland (bap. 1770, d. 1844), Frances Peck (fl. 1808), Anne Plumptre (1760–1818) and Marianna Starke (1761/62–1838)—were not taken from works published by Lane and Newman. A smaller number, however, were taken directly from Minerva novels, such as the extract of Eliza Parsons’s *Errors of Education* (1791), which appeared in June 1794. Additionally, when the magazine initiated regular reviews in the late 1810s, various Minerva novels including Hofland’s *Integrity* (1823) and Regina Maria Roche’s *Contrast* (1828) were noticed and excerpted admiringly.

These borrowings and extracts are unsurprising given the culture of appropriation, reprinting and remediation that was endemic in Romantic publishing. A more striking overlap between the *Lady’s Magazine* and the Minerva Press emerges via their shared iconography and associated branding. It was not until 1790, some twenty years after Lane’s circulating library had opened, that he adopted the Minerva imprint. It was an astute move. Minerva’s symbolic association with wisdom and learning had long been exploited in eighteenth-century
print and visual culture by the time Lane adopted it. As James Raven notes, Minerva was a ‘crucial emblem’ in transatlantic enlightenment iconography, connoting the civilising effects of reading through acts of ‘bibliographical benevolence’ that appeared on library bookplates and the title pages of educational works, and that featured ubiquitously in the periodical press.\(^\text{18}\) The frontispiece to the *London Magazine* for 1750 is typical in its depiction of the ‘genius’ of the magazine (here its ‘Author’) carrying a pile of volumes that represent its back catalogue in the company of ‘Minerva’ as guide. The ‘Endeavours’ of ‘Envy’ to tempt the Genius to his rival cause prove fruitless and he and his volumes are successfully shepherded by the Goddess to an allegorical representation of ‘Fame’ who ‘consequently makes them IMMORTAL’\(^\text{19}\) Year after year, hundreds of such frontispieces adorned periodicals, including the *European, Hibernian, London, New London, Town and Country, Universal and Westminster Magazines*. None of these publications had particular associations with women although all boasted content written and read by both sexes.

The *Lady’s Magazine* also enjoyed mixed-sexed author and reader demographics. This was in spite of the periodical’s insistent, if disingenuous, marketing of itself as a ‘by-women-for-women’ periodical. Key to its marketing as a not merely ‘entertaining’ but also educational companion for the ‘fair sex’ was its re-visioning of Minerva, which recuperated her as a goddess of specifically female wisdom and learning. Serial publications had, in fact, long mobilised Minerva in arguments about female education. The Society of the *Athenian Mercury* (1690–97), the title of which alludes to Minerva’s Greek counterpart, used the goddess to suggest the propriety of the ‘learn’d’ woman, who was always ‘Chaste and Continent’, in response to a reader enquiry on the subject.\(^\text{20}\) By mid-century, the association was utilised in the growing number of magazines marketed specifically at women and whose editorial rhetoric foregrounded the public utility of journals devoted to a supposedly overlooked female readership. Abandoning the more controversial Sappho, who had appeared in the frontispiece of Eliza Haywood’s *The Female Spectator* (1744–46), Jasper Goodwill’s bi-monthly *Ladies Magazine: Or, the Universal Entertainer* (1749–53) featured an ornate engraving in which Minerva, overseen by a flying Mercury (god of eloquence and trade), points a seated woman, quill in hand and surrounded by books, in the direction of a temple of fame. It was a formula followed, with variations, by Charlotte Lennox’s *Lady’s Museum* (1760–61).

Both Goodwill’s and Lennox’s titles were short-lived. The more enduring *Lady’s Magazine* took this iconography and by adaptation and force of repetition made Minerva the figurehead for the aspirations of a women’s magazine that advocated the individual and cultural benefits of women’s reading and writing. In fifteen of the twenty frontispieces it published between 1770 and 1789, Minerva takes centre stage as guide, councillor and protector of its female reader, muse of its authors, and as precedent for the ideal of virtuous female learning the periodical promoted (see Figure 1, opposite). While the iconography followed a similar pattern to that of the *London Magazine*, there are important
differences, not least the fact that the magazine’s ‘Genius’ and its reader-votaries are always female. Moreover, the temptations that beset these readers are gender-specific. The devilish figure who seeks to undermine the treacherous path to virtue on which the magazine’s reader walks with Minerva in its 1773 frontispiece represents moral (potentially sexual) temptations that it would be hard to imagine featuring in the London or Universal. More explicitly still, in 1780, ‘Folly’ is imagined in the guise of fashionably dressed woman, holding a hand of cards. A re-rendering of Hercules at the crossroads, the image sees Folly flanking the adoring magazine reader at the image’s centre, while Minerva tries to direct the woman’s wavering attention to the more enduring and hard-won virtues of wisdom the magazine espouses. By 1789—when Follies was published—such temptations had been banished and the magazine could confidently imagine that the battle for its readers’ hearts and minds had been won. Here, an ‘elegant Female Figure’—an embodiment of ‘Study’—is ‘seated in her Library’, contemplating the magazine. Minerva, who stands behind the figure, is ready to crown her with ‘a Chaplet of Laurel’ assisted by Cupid, who carries ‘the Torch of Hymen’ signalling the compatibility of women’s learning with their domestic responsibilities.21

The 1789 frontispiece epitomises the magazine’s self-conceptualisation as a publication uniting the values of female propriety with a projected (pre-Wollstonecraftian) ‘revolution in female manners’ that would see its female readers and contributors striving to ‘excell [sic] each other’ as much in mental accomplishments (‘scientific studies’) as much as ‘formerly’ they did ‘in the trifling of dress, and in the arts of dissipation’.22 This was an ambitious project that the magazine attempted to realise through various mechanisms: the space it gave to the question of women’s education and extracts from educational works in the

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FIG. 1. FRONTISPICE TO THE LADY’S MAGAZINE FOR 1774. PHOTOGRAPH: AUTHOR’S OWN.
fields of history, geography, chemistry and zoology; the biographies of learned
women it contained; the translation exercises and tests of female ingenuity
it presented in riddles, enigmas and charades; and, most importantly, via its
conversational, dialogic magazine form and its open invitation to all readers to
become contributors.²³ As the Lady’s Magazine’s editors repeatedly claimed, the
talent exhibited by the volunteer authors who produced most of the magazine’s
original content was indisputable confirmation that the periodical’s pedagogi-
cal aspirations had been achieved. According to the ‘Address to the Public’ that
opened the January 1781 issue, the magazine’s success ‘concenter[ed]’ in its ‘Cor-
respondents’ who had ‘abundantly convinced the world that no Salique law can
be introduced in the Republic of Letters’ by not only ‘asp[ir]ing’ to the laurel, but
having ‘snatched it from the temples of those who call themselves the Lords of
the Creation’.²⁴ Their victory was authorised by the ubiquitous Minerva, who
provided a powerful model for the values the magazine upheld.

Why Lane decided to adopt the sign of Minerva for his printing office and
associated library remains unknown. Whatever his motives, it is highly unlikely
that Minerva’s association with the Lady’s Magazine and the periodical’s argu-
ments for women’s education and for the propriety and public utility of women’s
authorship and reading would have been lost on readers. Indeed, Lane leaned
heavily on such associations. Early advertisements for the Minerva published
in newspapers such as the Star borrowed liberally from the familiar rhetoric of
the public addresses in the Lady’s Magazine.²⁵ The oft-reprinted ‘Description of
the Minerva Office’, establishes a relationship between the publisher, its read-
ers and putative authors that could have been cut and pasted from Robinson’s
periodical. Lane opens by expressing ‘gratitude’ for the ‘encouragement and
support’ extended to his Press by a ‘generous Public’ receptive to its commit-
ment to publish works on such ‘subjects […] as are founded on the basis of virtue,
and have tended to improve the understanding, and to amend the heart’ and by
those ‘Authors’ who choose to place their work with him.²⁶

Such commitment to the ubiquitous Horatian twin imperatives of pleasure
and utility is hardly surprising, but the language Lane uses to characterise his
Press is distinctive. To publish with Minerva, Lane suggests, is not simply to
usher an individual work into the world of print, but to contribute to a bigger,
collective enterprise.²⁷ Lane’s metaphors are drawn directly from those long-
established by Minerva’s periodical devotees. His catalogue is imagined not
as a list, but as a ‘Museum’ and ‘Repository’, two words that had entrenched
associations with women’s magazines.²⁸ The Minerva Library, meanwhile, is
imagined as the magazine project writ large: a ‘Repository of Sciences, Arts,
and Polite Literature’, in which the extracts and textual snippets and serials
that fill periodicals are realised in ‘One Hundred to Five Thousand Volumes’
that might be ‘had at a few days notice’.²⁹ The conceptualisation of Lane’s Press
and Library as enterprises designed to collect distinctive texts to form a composite
store of entertainment and knowledge bigger than the sum of its parts, wears
its debts to its periodical precedents as loudly in this marketing rhetoric as it does in its adoption of Minerva as its idol.

**Authors**

An important strand of Lane’s marketing of Minerva as an extension of the project of publications such as the *Lady's Magazine* was the rhetoric of authorship he borrowed from it. Just as successive editors of Robinson’s magazine invited content from reader-contributors to fill issues, Lane openly solicited authors to send works to him to expand his catalogue. Provided that these works were calculated to ‘improve the mind’ and be of ‘utility’, Lane promised ‘an asylum’. Yet unlike fugitive contributions to the magazines, which (with notable exceptions described below) went unremunerated, Lane offered the security of payment: a share of ‘five hundred pounds [...] placed at an eminent banker’s for the sole purpose of purchasing literary productions’. Under the auspices of Minerva, Lane appealed to aspiring Miss Mortimers seeking magazine publication by promising them a better deal.

The tactic worked. Several writers produced original work for the *Lady's Magazine* and Minerva, with some publishing simultaneously in, and others moving back and forth between, the two as opportunity or necessity demanded. Laureate odes by poet, novelist, and playwright Henry James Pye (1745–1813), for instance, appeared regularly in the magazine from 1791, four years before the publication of his anti-Jacobin Minerva novel, *The Democrat* (1795). A reverse trajectory (from Minerva to the magazine) is evidenced by Amelia Opie (1769–1853), whose first novel *The Dangers of Coquetry* (1790) was published by Lane. Opie was a firm favourite of *Lady's Magazine* readers, which published extracts of many of her novels and reprinted numerous of her poems between the 1800s and 1830s. Between 1831 and 1832, Opie submitted an original travelogue-cum-memoir to the periodical, the brilliant, if nostalgic, ‘Recollections of a Visit to Paris in 1802’, which catalogues Opie’s four-month stay in France and her encounters with and impressions of artistic, literary and political figures including Helen Maria Williams, Minerva novelist Anne Plumptre, Maria Cosway, Napoleon and Kosciusko. Pye and Opie are only two of several writers who we can securely identify as having published with the *Lady's Magazine* and the Minerva Press. Countless other examples, because of the periodical’s and Minerva’s encouragement of pseudonymous and anonymous publication, remain matters of speculation. It is possible, for instance, that Jane West (1758–1852) began her career writing for the *Lady's Magazine*. As Jenny DiPlacidi discovered, an 1815 epistolary novel attributed to West, *Vicissitudes of Life* (1815), is a verbatim reprinting of the anonymous *Memoirs of a Young Lady*, one of the magazine’s longest-running serial fictions in the 1780s. If the attribution is accurate, West seems to have begun her career, aged twenty-five, in the *Lady's Magazine* some ten years before she published *The Advantages of Education* (1793) for Minerva as 'Prudentia Homespun'. *Memoirs of a Young Lady*, one of hundreds of fictions by unidentified writers for the magazine, suggests the tantalising possibility that
there might be much authorial crossover between the periodical, the Minerva and other presses that has yet to be uncovered.

Where longstanding connections between Robinson’s periodical and Lane’s press can be tracked, the relationships are instructive and challenge persistent mischaracterisations of their writers as unambitious amateurs or literary hacks who produced popular works of little literary merit. Moreover, these writers’ movements between the Lady’s Magazine and Minerva illuminate how both outlets played in the lives and careers of Romantic-era writers whose enduring, but frequently precarious, careers as authors were often anything but romantic in practice. The first of two such examples I want to detail here is that of novelist Catherine Day Haynes (1793–1851), later Mrs Golland. Haynes made her debut using the signature ‘C. D. H.’ in the Lady’s Magazine in the opening instalment of her Radcliffean gothic novel, The Castle of Le Blanc. Haynes’s serial is mentioned on the title pages of several of her later works, and is a frequently presumed lost text because no extant volume publication exists. It very much exists, however, in the sole form of its publication: the nineteen instalments that appeared in the Lady’s Magazine between October 1816 and its 1818 Supplement issue. The identity of its author, C. D. H., was an open secret to a handful of the periodical’s readers able to decipher veiled references to her identity in poems, songs and rebuses that she also contributed to the magazine. It was not until January 1821, however, that the magazine retrospectively attributed the novel to Haynes in an announcement of her marriage: ‘At St. Bride’s, Mr John Golland, of the New Kent Road, to Miss C. D. Haynes, author of the Castle of Le Blanc, Foundling of Devonshire, and several other works.’

Minerva readers, however, learned Haynes’s identity three years earlier with the publication of The Foundling of Devonshire; or, What is She? (1818), a novel preoccupied with the consolations and difficulties of work and female friendship, and published by Newman while The Castle of Le Blanc was still appearing in the Lady’s Magazine. The title page of this, the first of six novels by Haynes/Golland for Minerva, ascribes the work to ‘Miss C. D. Haynes, “Author of the Castle of Le Blanc, &c. &c.”’ The ‘&c. &c.’ probably signals nothing more than publisher enthusiasm, as The Castle of Le Blanc seems to have been Haynes’s debut and sole fiction between 1816 and 1818. Newman marketed The Foundling of Devonshire, then, on the basis of the merits of a magazine serial, the title of which he had sufficient confidence readers would not only recognise, but which he also felt sure would sell the work to readers eager to devour its author’s next production. For all its disavowals of Paternoster Row magazines, the Minerva happily capitalised upon the Lady’s Magazine’s popularity when doing so served its interests, just as the magazine was not averse to acknowledging it authors’ moves to Minerva, as it did in Haynes’s case.

Shortly after the birth of her first child in 1822—another life event noted in the columns of the Lady’s Magazine—and after publishing two further novels for Newman, Haynes, now publishing under her married name, Golland, went back to the periodical to place a new ‘tale, called the “Single Gentleman, or a
Flight of Fancy”. Her efforts were fruitless; the editor rejected the novel on the grounds that it did not suit the publication’s ‘present system’. The nature of its unfitness (perhaps related to readers’ decreased appetite for serial fiction, the manuscript’s quality or editorial pique) is not articulated. In any case, the fiction seems never to have seen the light of day. Between 1823 and 1841, Golland would give birth to four more children and publish three more multi-decker novels with Newman. She appears not to have written for the Lady’s Magazine again, but her interactions with it, even after her move to Minerva, make clear that she did not define her authorial identity in terms of her association with the Press and she saw no conflict of interest between the two outlets. As DiPlacidi contends, it seems that she saw her paid work for Minerva as ‘contiguous’ to her probably unpaid periodical work. Moreover, she attempted to use her success with each as a tradable commodity with the other.

A different triangulation of the magazine and Minerva via a shared writer emerges from the example of novelist, poet, children’s writer, journalist and biographer Mary Pilkington (1761–1825). Pilkington has left more of a biographical trail than many, although several key details given in standard reference works are incorrect and none mentions her work for the Lady’s Magazine. Pilkington made her first appearances in the periodical and the Minerva catalogue in 1809. The timing of the double move is no coincidence. By 1809, Pilkington had been trying to support herself by writing for over a decade. Defrauded of a paternal inheritance by her uncle, soon to be widowed by her naval surgeon husband and bound to care for her elderly mother in fragile physical and mental health, while in her twenties Pilkington took up a position as a governess. After eight years, ‘Ill-health’ compelled her to resign from this ‘comfortable Situation’, and she attempted ‘to convert those Talents which had been cultivated for Amusement, into the mean’s [sic] of Support’. Her first published work, Miscellaneous Poems, was published by Cadell & Davies in 1796, and was swiftly followed, in 1797, by three works for children published by Elizabeth Newbery. Pilkington’s industry was as acute as her financial need. The next decade saw her publish an impressive range and volume of educational works for children, both original and abridged, as well as her ambitious biographical work, Memoirs of Female Characters (1804) and three novels: Parental Duplicity (1797), The Child of Hope (1800) and Crimes and Characters (1805).

Pilkington supplemented this income throughout her career with periodical writing. Her best-known work in this genre was for one of the Lady’s Magazine’s most tenacious rivals, and eventual partners, Vernor & Hood’s Lady Monthly Museum (1798–1828). Pilkington wrote numerous articles and essays under various signatures (‘M., P.’, ‘M. P.’ and possibly ‘M. S.’) for the Museum in addition to undertaking editorial work for Vernor & Hood, who had been involved in the publication of some of her children’s work and The Child of Hope. By early 1810, however, Pilkington was challenging Vernor & Hood about the fact that she was not being paid adequately for her editorial work. Confronting her publishers was not simply a matter of principle but of acute need following the
double body blow of the bankruptcy of another of her publishers in 1804, and the death, in 1808, of her cherished companion and financial supporter, Lady Gertrude Cromie.\footnote{41}

Following these tribulations, in 1809 the ever-resourceful Pilkington struck relationships with two new publishers—Newman and Robinson. Pilkington’s connection with Minerva began with the publication of \textit{Sinclair; or, the Mysterious Orphan} (1809).\footnote{42} \textit{Sinclair} takes up many themes engaged by other Minerva writers. The novel’s peripatetic central male protagonist is of obscure origin, and struggles to establish his birthright in a world corrupted by others’ self-interest. Eventually, after making an imprudent first marriage, the hero’s noble birth is confirmed, and he is able to marry his first love and retire to Scotland where the couple founds a Millenium Hall-style community. The novel appeared under the author’s legal name and traded, as was common for first-time Minerva authors, on her reputation as an established novelist beyond the Press: ‘Mrs. Pilkington, Author of Crimes and Characters, Parental Duplicity, &c.’

One of the novels not included in this ascription is Pilkington’s 1809 adventure novel for ‘young readers’, \textit{The Ill-Fated Mariner: Or, Richard the Runaway}, which was published near simultaneously with \textit{Sinclair} by George Robinson Jr (who took over his father’s firm and publication of the \textit{Lady’s Magazine} after his death in 1801). \textit{The Ill-Fated Mariner} is an uneven tale featuring heavy-handed narratorial interpolations. It follows the escapades of an Eton schoolboy who runs away to sea, only to be captured by Barbary pirates. For all its extraordinary drama, the novel bears many of the characteristics that unify Pilkington’s fiction for children and adults alike, much of which centres around male protagonists whose fates are bound up with those of their deceased fathers, and in which the author makes extensive use of her knowledge of the medical profession and naval life garnered from her dead father and husband. The novel was swiftly puffed by way of an extract from the novel’s centerpiece, ‘The Shipwreck’, in the \textit{Lady’s Magazine} for October 1809. This issue, which also saw the publication of the opening instalment of an ‘original’ two-part moral tale entitled ‘The Resuscitated Mariner’ by ‘Mrs. Pilkington’, marked the beginning of an at least six-year relationship between Pilkington and the \textit{Lady’s Magazine} to which she was ‘a constant contributor to the amusement of [its] readers’.\footnote{43}

November 1809 saw the launch of Pilkington’s first serialised novel for the magazine, \textit{Benedict. A True History}, a first-person narrative inspired by Hannah More’s \textit{Coelebs in Search of a Wife} (1808), and which begins by decrying precisely the kind of publication associated with the Minerva Press, to which Pilkington had so recently turned to publish \textit{Sinclair}: ‘I never peruse the common herd of novels with which the Country as well as the London Circulating Libraries are infested’.\footnote{44} Alongside \textit{Benedict}, Pilkington was working on a shorter serial entitled \textit{Fleet Prison}, which began in February 1810. Neither \textit{Benedict} nor \textit{Fleet Prison} was published under Pilkington’s name, perhaps to conceal this considerable body of work for the \textit{Lady’s Magazine} from Vernor & Hood for whom she was contracted to work on the \textit{Museum}.\footnote{45}
A longstanding assumption about *Lady’s Magazine* contributors—one linked to the accusations of amateurism levelled against them and one that Lane exploited for his own ends—is that they engaged in a form of vanity publication and were unpaid for their efforts. Non-payment certainly was the reality for most of the magazine’s contributors, including Haynes. This business model generated administrative as well as ethical problems. Many authors failed to finish serials, leaving readers clamorous for the conclusions of tales they had invested months or even years reading. Pilkington’s serials, however, were written in batches, an arrangement the editor was presumably happy to enter into given that the established, yet financially distressed, Pilkington must have bucked the trend and been paid for her work. From the editor’s point of view, the payments, though likely small, would have been assumed to be sufficient to guarantee her future labour. Poor health disrupted this arrangement, however, and a prolonged illness from the spring of 1810 until late 1811 meant that both of her serials were suspended while Pilkington recovered from a violent nervous fever. The desperation of her situation led her to make the first of fifteen years’ worth of applications to the benevolence of the Royal Literary Fund—a charity for impoverished writers and their dependents—in January 1810.

Once recovered, Pilkington finished her serials for the magazine. The hero of *Benedict* winds his way through the trials resulting from his disputed inheritance and marries his first love, while *Fleet Prison* similarly (but more perfunctorily) concludes with the hero resolving the economic and associated moral difficulties that arise from his father not leaving a will, an unfortunate oversight of which Pilkington had painful first-hand experience. Over the next three years, she continued to write for the periodical, but moved away from serial fiction to produce occasional tales, moral essays and biographies. Her most sustained contribution, though, was ‘The Old Woman’ (February 1812–May 1813), another work inspired by More, possibly her *Hints to a Princess* (1805). It nodded also to the long-running and sometimes abrasive agony aunt column (July 1798–April 1808) of the same name in the *Lady’s Monthly Museum*. The *Lady’s Magazine*’s ‘Old Woman’ featured occasional reader letters, but functioned primarily as an advice column on matters including marriage, child-rearing, filial responsibility, female celibacy and the perniciousness of modern novels. The general tone is conservative. Nonetheless, the Old Woman is intolerant of abuses of power (the tyranny of husbands who do not deserve their wives’ respect) and of cultural strictures (against female learning or spinsterhood, for instance) that seem to deny women value outside of marriage.

Pilkington’s contributions continue until at least 1815, during which time she was working for the *Female Preceptor* and writing novels, tales and educational works for children published by John Harris (Newbery’s successor) at the Juvenile Library. Finding Harris was not inclined ‘to purchase [her] Productions as fast as [she] could compose them’, Pilkington was once more ‘induced’ to turn to Minerva and put ‘greater Confidence in a Species of Novel’ associated with ‘Mr Newman’. That collaboration yielded two final Pilkington works
for Minerva: *The Novice; or, Heir of Montgomery Castle* (1814), published under the pseudonym Matthew Moral; and *Celebrity; or the Unfortunate Choice* (1815), a novel about a hero whose head is turned by the specious attractions of fashionable excess and which was published under her legal name. In the very last decade of Pilkington’s life, the last six years of which she spent tending to her dying friend Louisa West, daughter of Lady Gertrude Cromie, Pilkington was able to write only a few ‘Communications’ presented to the proprietor of an unnamed ‘Periodical Work’, perhaps the *Lady’s Magazine*.47

Pilkington was indefatigably industrious and a proud professional who negotiated with care and pride with her publishers over the content, production and distribution of her works. Her contributions to the *Lady’s Magazine* and her Minerva novels encompass a fraction of her three decades long career and prolific multi-genre output. Much less is currently known about Haynes’s/ Golland’s motives for and navigation of her career, and precious little is documented about her life. Piecing together what we can about the works and lives of these two quite different women and other writers who moved between the magazine, the Minerva and, in Pilkington’s case, many other publishers besides, is illuminating. Doing so unsettles assumptions that have held fast in scholarship on these outlets and underscores and extends recent efforts to undermine them.

First, their examples challenge accusations of amateurism levelled at *Lady’s Magazine* contributors and Minerva Press authors. In the case of the magazine, such arguments have partly been tied to the assumption that its writers were universally unpaid volunteers. Unpaid labour might be accurate in the example of Haynes, but could not have been so for Pilkington and would not have been so for Opie in 1831. The slur of amateurism is also symptomatic of a wider sleight, faced also by Minerva novelists, that these writers were unprofessional in the senses: that their attitude to their writing was workmanlike; that they were cynically and, in the case of Press authors, mercenarily motivated; and that they failed to take their writing or readers seriously. Such contentions are, as I suggested earlier, the erroneous, often unacknowledged legacies of the new, gendered and ideological formulation of the ‘work of writing’ that consolidated in the Romantic period. In this climate, the atmosphere of which was partly generated by the Reviews, literary professionalism signalled not only paid intellectual labour, but also the possession of a particularly defined work ethic and set of writerly aspirations.48 Non- or low payment does not necessarily preclude the possession of these behaviours and hopes, but is commonly assumed to do so when applied to writers for publications such as the *Lady’s Magazine* and the Minerva Press. It is more commonly assumed to preclude them when the writers in question are women and even more so when the authors in question cultivated a ‘protean’ authorial identity, constituting a ‘labyrinthine’ web of named, anonymous and pseudonymous publications, as so many magazine and Minerva authors did.49 Heeding Margaret Ezell’s call to attend to the ‘the lived material conditions of […] writing’ for women authors in this period in
the form of the specific examples discussed in this essay, and others beyond its scope, shows strikingly that such notions do not bear scrutiny.\textsuperscript{50}

Second, attention to the particularity of individual careers counsels against attempts to homogenise these writers as ‘Lady’s Magazine contributors’ or ‘Minerva novelists’. Where, originally, such identities were cultivated by the magazine and the Press to suggest the collective enterprise of their publication, more recently they have been used to typecast their authors as if they were all cut from the same social or political cloth, were possessed of similarly low levels of ambition and expertise, and produced work by numbers. My representative case studies demonstrate that writers viewed their relationship to these outlets on their own terms. Their interactions in and negotiations of the literary culture of the day—their movements between publishers at key moments in their lives and to turn to different modes of publication as and when it suited them to do so—were signs of their precarity, but also of their professionalism and persistence.

\textit{Conclusion}

The November 1804 \textit{Lady’s Magazine} featured an article entitled ‘On Criticism’ signed by a contributor who went by the signature ‘A Lover of Candour’. Its author’s attack on the old-boy networks, suspect credentials, cowardice and misogyny of reviewers sounded recurrent refrains that were echoed throughout the magazine’s history. What distinguished this essay was its allegiance to a publishing house its author knew few would defend: Minerva. The catalyst for the defence was a recent issue of the \textit{Monthly Magazine} which had concluded a ‘short article’ on a handful of ‘Novels’ published in the previous six months by noting that ‘Lane might furnish a list of a hundred more’ for possible review but that the periodical had declined to notice them since they had paid attention to all, ‘perhaps more than all, that are worth reading’.\textsuperscript{51} Likening the \textit{Monthly}’s dismissal of Minerva and its habit of ‘damning books in the lump’ to the ‘revolutionary system of government’ in France, the article goes on to condemn such ‘tyranny’ as ‘an injustice [that] should least of all be tolerated’ in the ‘republic of letters’.

‘A Lover of Candour’ assures readers that ‘no connexion whatever with Mr. Lane’ motivates his article and, with no evidence either way, we must take him at his word. To my knowledge, no archival material has yet been uncovered to illuminate personal or business connections between Robinson and Lane and Newman. In the absence of such evidence, it is hard to answer questions such as why so many Minerva reprints are of works originally published by Robinson’s firm or why Robinson’s magazine so often publically supported Lane’s and Newman’s enterprise, despite many Minerva authors’ disavowals of those who contributed to the ‘fort of Paternoster Row’. Yet, in their shared iconography and branding, and through attention to the experiences of their shared writers, we can begin to uncover multiple connections between these two phenomenally popular Romantic-era publishing ventures that bring to the fore the unromantic and unRomantic culture of authorship that was ubiquitous in this period.
‘[D]amning in the lump’, as we have tended to, those writers and their publishers who exploited these conditions distorts our understanding of the particularities both of the lived experience of writers in this period and of the work they produced for periodicals and the circulating libraries under the auspices of Minerva.

Notes
2. The Follies of St James's Street, 2 vols (London: Lane, 1789), ii, 16. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.
4. The novels are: Robert Bage, James Wallace, a Novel (1788); Mr Nicholson, The Village of Martindale: A Novel (1787); Anna Maria Bennett, Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welsh Heiress (1786); and The Duke of Exeter: An Historical Romance (1789).
6. For ease of reference, I am referring to the magazine as Robinson’s. George Robinson (1736–1801) was the publisher of the magazine (along with other family members and partners) until his death, when it passed to his son, George Robinson (d. 1811), and then his grandsons George (dates not yet verified) and Samuel Robinson (d. 1834).


17. Other Minerva novels reviewed in the magazine include *The Sailor Boy* (1800), *Allan M’Dougal* (1831), *The Eve of St Agnes* (1831) and *The Doomed One* (1832).


22. ‘Address to the Public’, *Lady’s Magazine*, 9 (Jan 1778), iii.


24. ‘Address to the Public’, p. iii.

25. ‘Description of the Minerva Office’ was a widely reprinted advertisement that circulated for several years in the newspapers. See e.g. *The Star*, 24 Jan 1791. Lane became proprietor of *The Star*, the first evening daily, in 1788—See Blakey, *Minerva Press*, pp. 10–14.

26. ‘Description of the Minerva Office’.

27. Here, Lane anticipates the culture of ‘collective authorship’ that Neiman identifies with Minerva, a culture ‘engendered (and eventually effaced) by Romantic-era print culture’—see ‘A New Perspective’, p. 637.


29. ‘Description of the Minerva Office’.

30. Ibid.

31. Opie may have written original poetry for the magazine, too. Several poems bearing Opie’s signature have not yet been identified as previously published.


34. ‘Marriages’, *Lady’s Magazine*, 52 (Jan 1821), 56.

35. Her other novels were *Augustus and Adelina; or, the Monk of St Barnardine* (1819), *Eleanor: Or, the Spectre of St Michael’s* (1821), *The Ruins of Rut vale Abbey* (1827), *The Maid of Padua, or, Past Times: A Venetian Tale* (1835) and *The Witch of Aysgarth* (1841).


38. Pilkington’s death date is misidentified in all major biographical sources as 1839: she died in Hammersmith in late 1825. See London Metropolitan Archives, DL/T/031/042.


40. Of these works, Pilkington was most proud of *The Asiatic Princess* (1800), which was dedicated with permission to and written expressly for Princess Charlotte.


42. Three earlier Minerva Press novels by ‘Miss Pilkington’, sometimes still misattributed, were not her work.

43. This quotation is from an obituary to Pilkington’s mother—*Lady’s Magazine*, 48 (May 1817), 240.

44. [Mary Pilkington], *Benedict. A True History*, *Lady’s Magazine*, 40 (Nov 1809), 489.

45. Sophia Troughton (later Hendry) explained that she had not received ‘pecuniary aid’ for any of her fiction for the magazine, nor did she ‘expect’ it. Sophia Troughton to Lady Margaret Spencer, 13 Apr 1813—London, British Library, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75727.

46. Pilkington to the RLF, 5 Feb 1815 (item 8).

47. Pilkington to the RLF, 4 Jan 1825 (item 10).


49. On this ‘protean’ model of authorship, see Mandal, ‘Mrs Meeke and Minerva’.

**Referring to this Article**

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**Date of acceptance:** 9 January 2019.
Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) never wrote a novel for the Minerva Press. It is unlikely that Mary Ann Radcliffe (c. 1764–1810), the proto-feminist author of The Female Advocate (1799), did either. Despite this, catalogues, footnotes, bibliographies and scholarly essays have associated Ann Radcliffe and Mary Ann Radcliffe with a handful of anonymous Minerva novels, and both Radcliffes have travelled through literary history alongside the press and its owners William Lane and later A. K. Newman. These dubious attributions have resulted in the literary survival of select Minerva novels and contributed to the creation of our literary historical Radcliffe. Two such novels, The Fate of Velina de Guidova (1790) and Radzivil, a Romance (1790), exemplify this phenomenon. Both Radzivil and Velina de Guidova were published anonymously by William Lane in 1790; the Radcliffe name was not attached to either novel until a 1798 Minerva catalogue attributed Velina de Guidova to a Mrs Radcliffe. Years later, an 1814 catalogue assigned Radzivil to Mrs Ann Radcliffe. These post-publication attributions have been rightly understood as an attempt by Lane to capitalise on Ann Radcliffe’s growing fame and the public’s appetite for gothic fiction. The association of Ann Radcliffe with these texts persisted until Dorothy Blakey suggested the Scottish memoirist Mary Ann Radcliffe as the likely author of both Radzivil and Velina de Guidova in The Minerva Press 1790–1820 (1939). Mary Ann Radcliffe’s suspected authorship of the popular gothic fiction Manfroné; or, the One-Handed Monk (1809) and established authorship of a proto-feminist tract provided a rich potential identity for a Minerva novelist. In the wake of the feminist recovery efforts of the late twentieth century, new encyclopedias of women writers embraced Mary Ann Radcliffe’s authorship of these texts; this impulse lingers in twenty-first-century encyclopedias of women’s writing, which paradoxically frame Blakey’s attribution of these fictions to Mary Ann Radcliffe as an educated but likely mistaken guess yet continue under the author heading to use ‘Mary Ann Radcliffe—?’ as a placeholder.

By continuing to signify under the Radcliffe aegis, these Minerva novels create a curious constellation of texts and authors: Ann Radcliffe’s established oeuvre; the anonymous Minerva novels, Radzivil and Velina de Guidova; and the certain and interesting output of Mary Ann Radcliffe, including The Memoirs of Mrs Mary Ann Radcliffe; in Familiar Letters to her Female Friend.
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(1810) and the proto-feminist The Female Advocate; or an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation (1799). The commercial and historical repackaging of these Minerva novels in catalogues and subsequent editions has much to tell us about the construction of literary history and Radcliffe’s place within it, particularly if, as Michael Gamer has recently claimed, ‘when writers and publishers begin assessing how given works might be better presented in altered garb or with a revised set of claims [...] literary history begins’. In literary historical terms, Radzivil and Velina de Guidova suggest a curious prehistory for both Radcliffes. Although Ann Radcliffe’s first two novels had been published anonymously by 1790, neither she nor Mary Ann Radcliffe had yet published anything under their own names. It is difficult to imagine that readers in 1790, who happened to read both Radzivil and Velina De Guidova, would have understood them as being written by the same person. Although both novels adapt an epistolary framework, their styles and settings are worlds apart. Building on the late eighteenth-century popularity of translations both real and contrived, Radzivil presents itself as a translation from Russian and recounts the adventures of two Polish sisters who travel through war-torn Eastern and Central Europe alongside a Hungarian officer who loves them both; in contrast, Velina de Guidova imitates and critiques Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Sorrows of Young Werther (1774), both displacing Werther’s plot from contemporary Germany to medieval Spain and including an attack on the narcissistic and immoral tendencies of Goethe’s protagonist.

Instead of attempting to discover a ‘real author’ for these Minerva fictions, this essay uses these novels as a starting point for positing a corporate Radcliffe, an authorship that blends the known output of Ann Radcliffe with anonymous Minerva novels and the productions of the lesser-known proto-feminist writer and memoirist Mary Anne Radcliffe. This approach illustrates that Lane and Newman’s disregard for the literary property and reputation of Ann Radcliffe and later scholarship’s desire to recover proto-feminist authors for Minerva texts provides an alternative to Gamer’s recent account of Romantic poets. As Gamer argues, in their negotiations with readers and publishers, poets such as William Wordsworth rearranged their poems and added new prefaces in subsequent editions or collected works, protecting their singular reputations and unique literary properties and wedding their work to a developing national canon. Alternatively, the dubious attributions of Lane and Newman evidence Romantic booksellers building composite authors that blended the anonymous authors and translators of many of their fictions with Ann Radcliffe and her popular fictions, creating associations that instead of ‘remaking’ texts in order to bolster any one author’s integrity and originality linked Minerva fiction and Ann Radcliffe to imitation and translation. The literary historical Radcliffe that emerges from its association with Minerva fiction suggests that the exchangeable and composite authors of Romantic print culture exerted an influence on literary history that has yet to be fully documented.
Mapping these attributions suggests how continued study of Minerva Press novels can expose gaps in models of literary history that rely either on understandings of authorship rooted in genius or possessive individualism or on disciplinary categories that organise texts according to an author's nation or gender. Recent feminist work on Romantic-era fiction has done much to unsettle the idea of the singular Romantic genius. Elizabeth Neiman suggests that Minerva novels posit a form of 'collective authorship', one that embraces imitation and intertextual borrowing as a means of communicating about aesthetic and literary categories both among the Minerva community and within Romantic print culture. Similarly, Melissa Sodeman understands the formulaic sentimental fiction of the 1780s and 90s, much of which was written by women, as acutely aware of emerging and masculine 'notions of authorship privileging originality and genius'. According to Sodeman, sentimental and gothic writers such as Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe deploy formulaic plots and intertextual references to memorialise an alternative literary history and mourn their own dispossession from the dominant narratives of literary history and value, which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. Gathered under the Radcliffe aegis, Minerva novels such as Radzivil and Velina extend the story of collective authorship and complicate literary history in the ways that Neiman and Sodeman so deftly suggest; however, they also make visible a related transhistorical and corporate mode of authorship, a form of authorship that embraces the ways novels travel through time, acquiring new attributions and associations with each edition, catalogue listing, review, scholarly essay and encyclopedia entry. As Rita Felski writes:

The fate of literary works [...] is tied to countless agents: publishers, reviewers, agents, bookstores, technologies of consumption, institutional frames, forms of adaptation and translation, the physical and material properties of books ranging from fonts to photographs, and so on. Instead of emphasising what we do not know about the authorship of anonymous Minerva novels, I would like to explore the authorial attributions—however dubious—that enabled them to survive first commercially and then historically. Instead of suspiciously searching for the real Radcliffe, embracing a corporate Radcliffe offers an alternative model of authorship that makes room for discussion of not just intertextuality, but also translation, as well as looser textual affinities that accrue over time. This form of reading provides evidence of a Radcliffe style or aesthetic—what we might think of as a proto-Radcliffe—that was shaped by Minerva novels she never wrote and that were published well before Radcliffe was dubbed by Nathan Drake 'the Shakespeare of Romance Writers' in 1798. These attributions also get at the legacy of largely unknown or ‘forgotten’ women writers at the end of the eighteenth century, such as anonymous Minerva novelists and the only slightly better remembered Mary Ann Radcliffe. Interestingly, Mary Ann Radcliffe may never have written a novel, but her reputation as a Minerva novelist has informed readings of her
memoir, which details the economic and legal obstacles she faced as a woman, as well as her proto-feminist tract, an early critique of the gendered inequities built into modern economic systems. Finally, these novels and their complex bibliographies suggest that our aversion to anonymous and commercial texts and our critical compulsion to both recover authors and ‘authenticate’ attributions has obscured the influence of the novels of the Minerva Press and the transnational and transtemporal forces that shaped them.

Radzivil and Velina de Guidova: The Proto-Radcliffe
Known for their meta-discussions about novel writing, female authorship and the Minerva press itself, Minerva novels act as important archives of Romantic print culture. Paratextual materials, such as advertisements, prefaces and even reviews feature discussions of authorship and often promote the press; related discussions of authorship and publishing even make their way into the novels’ plots. For example, two anonymous novels, What Has Been (1801) and The Follies of St James’s Street (1789), feature female authors as characters and portray William Lane as a benevolent bookseller, always ready to buy the literary properties of young and often desperate women and either relieve their short-term distress or provide them with an introduction to the literary world. Although neither Radzivil nor Velina de Guidova includes an explicit discussion of the Minerva novelist or of Lane, in their paratexts and plots they engage in the press’s ongoing conversation about authorship, particularly the role that translation, imitation and foreign fiction played in positioning the Minerva novelist within Romantic print culture. Whereas Radzivil draws attention to the role of translators and editors in the creation of the Minerva author, Velina de Guidova emphasises formula fiction, translation and imitation as equally important factors. Like canonical texts by Goethe and Walter Scott, Minerva novels participated in the creation of what Andrew Piper has called the ‘transnational nature of the bibliographic imagination’ during the Romantic era. They also anticipate the ways imitation, translation and transnationalism have shaped our understanding of the literary historical Radcliffe.

Radzivil’s two prefaces, one from the author and another from an anonymous editor, highlight the importance of translation to the Minerva Press and make plain the press’s and Radcliffe’s strong connection to foreign sources and events. The title page itself describes Radzivil as ‘A Romance Translated from the Russ of the Celebrated M. Wocklow’, and is followed by the author’s preface, purportedly written in St Petersburg by the Russian author M. Wocklow. Both the names Radzivil and Wokloff (an alternative spelling of Wocklow) appear in contemporary English accounts of Catherine the Great and Frederick the Great and his partition of Poland, making it likely that the anonymous author borrowed from these sources in crafting the novel’s plot and paratext. Horace Walpole engaged in a similar subterfuge in The Castle of Otranto (1764). The first edition of Walpole’s novel presented itself as an ancient Italian book, found in the library of a Catholic family in Northern England and translated by a
fictional William Marshal. Although not masquerading as an ancient romance, *Radzivil* includes an equally complex account of its journey into print. The first author’s preface claims that the novel was designed for ‘innocent amusement’ and that, although intended for a Russian audience, the plot and style ‘imitate’ the contemporary fiction written and sold in Paris and London. The author argues that his efforts will be best judged by French and English speakers living in St Petersburg, but then qualifies this, claiming that he will be ‘particularly’ attentive to those who speak French because this is the language ‘into which the best English Novels are translated’ (1, ii). From the beginning, translation is positioned as both an amusing pastime and a means of engaging in cosmopolitan conversations about aesthetics and manners. The paratext positions *Radzivil* as a product of what Mary Helen McMurran describes in her study of eighteenth-century French and English novels as a still active early modern understanding of translation as a ‘ubiquitous task that belonged to all literary endeavour’ and an integral part of the learning process, instead of the more modern perception of translation as a mode of cultural exchange between ‘the national and the foreign’. The preface describes French speakers as the surest judges of the work’s success not because of their own national literature but because of their cosmopolitan familiarity with translations of English novels, gesturing towards what McMurran calls the ‘extranational’ history of the novel—a history which was repressed by the emergence of national canons in the nineteenth century.

In addition to presenting itself as a translation, the novel also recounts the wartime adventures of a Hungarian officer and two beautiful Polish sisters. Complete with dramatic battle scenes, accounts of attacks by Turkish banditti, flights from Russian prisons and descriptions of Enlightenment Vienna, the novel presents Minerva readers with a cosmopolitan Europe being reshaped by war. *Radzivil*’s paratext and plot point toward the extranational and, to borrow from Srivinas Aravamudan, the ‘translational’ nature of gothic romance and sentimental fiction more generally.

Building on the ‘author’s’ opening remarks about the text’s extranational origins, the editor’s preface provides a detailed description of *Radzivil*’s rendering into the English format offered to Minerva readers, mapping another complex transnational network of exchange. According to the editor, the initial translation of the Russian text was performed by an English clerk stationed in St Petersburg. He describes the translation of popular fiction as the clerk’s entertaining pastime and confesses that the clerk’s version featured so many ‘dialectic singularities’ that the editor was forced to ‘rewrite it’, despite the fact that he knows no Russian (1, vi). In order to meet the expectations of ‘an English reader’, he admits to major formal alterations, particularly the addition of chapter and volume breaks to what was initially ‘one long, uniform narration’ (1, vii). Although the editor mentions popular English novels, he makes no explicit mention of Radcliffe, neither does the editor; of course, the Radcliffe that the novels are later attributed to did not yet exist. If read outside of Minerva catalogues and more recent literary histories, the 1790 edition presents itself as a
collaboration between a male author, a male translator and a male editor. These three men—all of whom, when one considers the Minerva Press’s attitude toward authorship—may be fictions; however, they belie long-standing conceptions of the press and its readers as almost wholly female and provide evidence for the claims of Deborah McLeod and Jan Fergus, who have documented both the significant number of male Minerva writers and readers of circulating library fiction. The post-publication attributions of this text to Radcliffe evidence the Minerva Press’s acknowledgment of changing perceptions of its fiction as mainly written by and for women, a perception that was created by Romantic-era reviewers and later literary historians with a vested interest in feminising commercial fiction. These Radcliffe attributions also impact the Minerva Press’s and Ann Radcliffe’s relationship to continental source material. On the one hand, the press’s post-publication turn to an Ann Radcliffe forecloses any possibility of Radzivil’s being a translation and domesticates and anglicises the Minerva Press. On the other hand, the attribution can be understood as yoking Ann Radcliffe’s fiction more closely to foreign sources. Angela Wright has argued that Ann Radcliffe’s use of French legal texts, Rousseau and the fiction of Madame Genlis (1764–1830) as sources in her novels also illustrates an ‘underestimated continental literary heritage’ that has been downplayed by twentieth-century readers who depicted Radcliffe as a more nationalistic and conservative writer. The link the Minerva Press forged between Ann Radcliffe and Radzivil complements Wright’s reading and provides more evidence of a continental Radcliffe circulating within Romantic print culture; more importantly, it positions the Minerva author as a shifting signifier that could alter identity, gender and nationality to meet the needs of the changing market and the emerging canon.

Unlike Radzivil, Velina de Guidova begins without a preface or any mention of an author, even on its title page. However, the novel’s status as an imitation of Goethe positions this Minerva novel as a comment on the transnational circulation of texts, authors and ideas. In addition, Velina de Guidova suggests that imitations function as more than just derivative commercial forms but also further evidence of the extranational development and circulation of the novel during the Romantic period. The plot of the novel repeatedly reminds readers of its status as an imitation of Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther, as do direct references to Goethe’s novel. For example, Velina de Guidova is structured around a series of letters from Henrique to his friend Lorenzo Salvador, and like Werther’s friend Wilhelm, Lorenzo writes to encourage Henrique to restrain his passions and exert his reason:

I have seen a German book in your library whose beautiful simplicity of style and general sublimity of thought forms a most seductive charm. The Sorrows of Werter enchant us to destruction. It is a serpent hidden beneath a wreath of roses. I am too sensible of its charms, and alas! too well informed of their effect, not to wish the book had never existed. It has poisoned your mind, I fear, beyond the power of antidote.
Although the characters’ dispositions and the plot borrow significantly from *Werther*, the novel picks up gothic resonances by disavowing the contemporary setting of Goethe’s novel and transposing the events to medieval Spain; in addition, unlike the middle-class Charlotte and Werther, both Velina and Henrique are minor aristocrats. They meet on their parental estates in Spain and quickly fall in love; however, their feuding fathers force a break between the young lovers. Henrique leaves for Switzerland, where in imitation of Werther and in anticipation of Radcliffe’s much adored landscape descriptions, he projects his melancholy onto the sublime vistas he discovers in the Alps. Like many of Radcliffe’s heroines, Velina is isolated on her father’s estate and courted by a series of violent and possessive men and, eventually, unhappily married to an Italian marquis. Unable to possess the woman he loves, Henrique abandons his faith, and channels Werther when he proclaims that God ‘thought fit to afflict me beyond what I am able to endure’ (iii, 144). Continuing to echo Werther’s sentiments, he says that he ‘could weep to the thought of what I once was and what I might have been: but it is now too late—the eternal seal is impressed upon my fate’ (iii, 145–46). While borrowing from Goethe’s novel, *Velina de Guidova’s* ending deviates significantly from the original: Henrique’s suicide is thwarted by the death of the evil marquis and Velina and Henrique marry. These lovers remain ‘peculiarly sensible’, but they redirect their passions away from themselves and toward others in ‘gratitude to the power’ that saved them (iii, 169). The novel’s plot imitates and critiques Werther, while also proleptically including characters and scenery that become markers of Radcliffe’s fiction.

Read together *Radzivil* and *Velina de Guidova* foster conversations about translation and imitation as part not only of the Minerva Press but also the corporate Radcliffe, which as I have been suggesting was created and sustained in part through these texts. As *Radzivil* recalls Radcliffe’s own connection to French sources and European wars, *Velina de Guidova* connects Minerva and Radcliffe to German texts and politics. Between 1779 and 1788, the first English translation of Goethe’s novel went through five editions. This complements the figures on translations of German novels into English, which suggest that of ‘1421 novels first published in Britain in 1770–1799, at least 51 were translated from the German’, including Minerva translations published by Lane such as another 1790 novel, *The Baron of Manstow*. James Raven has linked these German translations to the ‘full fledged fashion for novels entitled “from the German”’, when in fact they were penned from desks in London and the home counties. We might extend Raven’s claim to include imitations of German gothic novels, *Werther* imitations and fictions like *Velina de Guidova* that blend elements of both. In fact, *Velina de Guidova* is one of a number of English imitations of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* written between 1790 and 1805, the period Syndy McMillen Conger has identified as the most active period for English imitations and adaptations of Goethe’s novel. As Conger notes, novelists and poets, such as Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson and Anna Seward, used Werther and Charlotte’s story to temper the radical politics of sensibility, generating a
‘new sensibility’ that mediated the more radical sentiments of Goethe through a feminine and Christian lens. Of course, Radcliffe understood and participated in this redefinition, channeling her heroine’s famous self-command in the face of adversity as well as her own response to the Alps in her travel narrative *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany with a Return Down Rhine* (1795) through Goethe-inspired descriptions of sublime landscapes. Although *Radzivil* and *Velina de Guidova* are, as Dorothy Blakey long ago noted, unable to be attributed to the Radcliffe who wrote *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), they provide evidence of how a publisher and innovative marketer like Lane traded on and helped create the Radcliffe brand, while at the same time connecting Goethe, Minerva novels and Radcliffe to what Piper has called a transnational ‘history of networked thought’, which was fostered by booksellers, translators and authors, and ran between as well as within Romantic novels. Notably, they also provide evidence of the corporate Radcliffe’s tastes and sensibilities operating within the Minerva Press well before this Radcliffe was concretised and became the commercial phenomenon and, later, the literary historical marker that we know today.

From Ann Radcliffe to Mary Ann Radcliffe: Incorporating Radcliffe

First issued by the Minerva Press in 1790, *Radzivil* and *Velina de Guidova* appeared at a point when Ann Radcliffe had published her first two works anonymously. *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and her *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) were both published not by Lane but one of his rivals, the circulating-library proprietors Hookham & Carpenter. Although the title page of *A Sicilian Romance* carried the attribution by the ‘Authoress of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne’, Ann Radcliffe’s name did not appear on the title page of any of her fictions until the second edition of *The Romance of the Forest*, which was published in 1792. The Minerva catalogues’ post-publication attributions of *Radzivil* and *Velina de Guidova* to Ann Radcliffe came after the enormous success of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and the publication of her penultimate novel *The Italian* (1797). Although William Lane’s marketing strategies have been lauded as revolutionising the fiction market, his backwards projection of the Radcliffe name onto texts of suspect origin is not unique. In her recent work on Defoe attribution, Ashley Marshall notes that the circulating-library proprietor Francis Noble, another of William Lane’s contemporaries, was the first person to attribute *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) to Defoe, decades after his death. Although Noble had already published anonymous versions of both texts earlier in the century, in the mid-1770s he attributed both novels to Defoe and bowdlerised them, making them, as the Defoe bibliographers Furbank and Owens write, ‘suitable for a genteel circulating library readership’. Marshall concludes that ‘[w]hat is now regarded as Defoe’s major fiction was not firmly associated with him until late in the eighteenth century’. Although Marshall stops well short of discounting Noble’s assignation of these texts to Defoe—a provenance that helped construct the standard rise of the novel narrative—she
establishes Noble’s post-publication attributions as a marketing ploy that gestures towards the difficulty in separating our literary histories from the early marketers of the fiction we study. Attribution in studies of Radcliffe is similarly complex; although, because Radcliffe wrote outside of the realist tradition, there was both less enthusiasm surrounding the assignation of anonymous texts to her in the mid-twentieth century and later less time spent scrutinising the attributions that did exist. Despite this, like Noble’s commercialisation of Defoe, Lane’s and later A. K. Newman’s marketing strategies have shaped the way we read and write about her work. Instead of thinking about these attributions as distorting an authentic Radcliffe, tracing the emergence of these attributions throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries produces a corporate Radcliffe built by the commercial structures that shaped literature during the period and that continue to impact our literary histories.

The bibliographic history of Radzivil and Velina de Guidova collects a number of women writers under the Radcliffe aegis. These writers became largely exchangeable and often stand in for the Minerva author. Circulating-library catalogues, such as the ones issued by Lane and Newman, emerge as a major factor in the creation of the corporate Radcliffe. If the Minerva library included the 17,000 titles listed in its 1802 catalogue, browsing the collection would be no easy task. Visitors to the library, those who bought or borrowed books remotely and the provincial circulating-library proprietors supplied by Lane (not to mention proprietors in the American colonies, Jamaica and even India) would require catalogues to guide their selections. Catalogues often helped readers make choices by linking titles to popular authors, such as Radcliffe, through the often ‘unauthorised’ use of their names. Lane and later Newman obviously understood the Radcliffe name as a powerful draw. If they were lucky enough to find an author with a similar last name, they often linked her work to Ann Radcliffe’s known fiction, conflating Radcliffes by omitting first names and relying on an indeterminate Mrs Radcliffe or in title pages combining the work and identities of different Radcliffes. For example, in 1819, Newman reprinted a second edition of Manfroné, which was originally published and attributed to Mary Ann Radcliffe by J. F. Hughes in 1809; Newman followed Hughes in attributing it to Mary Ann Radcliffe but adds to her name the additional assignation ‘the author of The Mysterious Baron’. Donald K. Adams notes that The Mysterious Baron, or the Castle in the Forest, A Gothic Story was in fact the work of a Mrs. Eliza or Elizabeth Ratcliffe; it had been published by Lane and Newman at the Minerva Press in 1808. Newman had either forgotten the identities of his several authors named Radcliffe (or Ratcliffe), or he wished (in 1819) to compound the confusion over Ann Ward Radcliffe’s 22-year silence. The intentional conflation of multiple Radcliffes survived the Minerva imprint and persisted well into the nineteenth century. Adams notes that an 1844 edition of the popular Manfroné extended Newman’s strategy, attributing the work to
Mary Ann Radcliffe, ‘Author of “The Italian,” etc.’ This composite Radcliffe soon migrated into scholarship.

No one seriously attempted to sort out these various Radcliffes until Dorothy Blakey’s 1939 appraisal of Minerva fiction; however, in attempting to separate Ann Radcliffe from the Minerva Press, she introduced additional bibliographic inconsistencies. In her entry for The Fate of Velina de Guidova, she challenges G. F. Singer’s careless attribution of Velina de Guidova and Radzivil to Ann Radcliffe in his 1933 The Epistolary Novel. She continues to note that he ‘does not say on what grounds. It is attributed by a Minerva Library catalogues of 1802 and 1814 to Mrs. Radcliffe, but is probably by Mrs. Mary Ann Radcliffe, author of Manfroné; or The one-handed monk (1809)’. The entry for Radzivil is almost identical, except that she comments that the novel is not attributed to ‘Mrs. Ann Radcliffe’ until the 1814 catalogue. Since Blakey’s study most scholars have ascribed these novels to Mary Ann Radcliffe. Resources, such as the Orlando database, place Radzivil and Velina under the heading ‘suppositious novels’ and persuasively argue for the near impossibility of Mary Ann Radcliffe’s authorship, but still catalogue them under her name. The 2007 edition of Manfroné issued by the Valancourt Press features Mary Ann Radcliffe’s name on the cover, despite Dale Townshend’s thoroughly convincing challenge to her authorship of Manfroné as well as Radzivil and Velina de Guidova in an afterword.

As Townshend, Peter Garside and others have argued, although a skilled writer, Mary Ann Radcliffe’s known output bears little resemblance to these Minerva fictions. In addition, her detailed three-volume memoir includes no mention of work for Minerva nor any interest in Goethe or Eastern European history. Without reading her memoir, it would be easy to explain her omission of these novels by deferring to the still pervasive idea that many women writers were forced to disavow their fiction writing as a means of protecting their reputations, but this does not seem likely in the case of Mary Ann Radcliffe. Her lengthy autobiography includes frank accounts of her husband’s alcoholism and habitual mishandling of money, including his loss of a significant portion of her fortune through gambling and other ill-conceived expenditures, and his misdeeds often leave her satirically ‘ruminating [...] on the comforts of matrimony’. In addition, she recounts the work she has to undertake as a lady’s companion, such as carrying (with the aid of another servant) her employer’s ‘ponderous weight of twelve or fourteen stone round the garden or pleasure grounds’ (pp. 124–25). Her shameless accounts of running a lodging-house, working as a governess and opening a store called ‘The Ladies cheap Shoe Warehouse’ indicate that she would not be ashamed to own herself a Minerva author. Despite the distance between the Scottish and Catholic-born Mary Ann Radcliffe’s life and the life of Ann Radcliffe, the English Dissenter, well-compensated novelist and wife of a hard-working newspaperman, it is clear that Mary Ann Radcliffe’s own career as both a memoirist and writer of a Wollstonecraft-inspired treatise on women’s rights was in part supported by the accident of her last name. As she recounts in her Memoirs, when she first
approached the reputable booksellers Vernor & Hood about her proto-feminist treatise, which she intended to publish anonymously and call ‘An Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain’, they convinced her to change the name to *The Female Advocate*; moreover, as she explains, they also ‘strongly recommended giving my name to it. Whether, with a view to extend the sale, from the same name at that period standing high amongst the novel readers,—or from whatever other motive, is best known to himself’ (p. 387). The tongue-in-cheek affect that dominates her autobiography suggests not only her awareness of her publisher’s desire to combine her marketable last name with a treatise carrying a Wollstonecraft-inspired title, but also her complicity in acting as an imitation or doppelgänger for Ann Radcliffe in Romantic print culture. The affinity between Ann Radcliffe’s gothic fiction and Mary Wollstonecraft’s feminist philosophy encouraged by Mary Ann Radcliffe’s publisher also anticipates current feminist scholarship, which often pairs these two writers, suggesting one way in which our own scholarship bears an uncanny resemblance to Romantic marketing strategies. Contemporary accounts of *The Female Advocate*’s reception suggest that Vernor & Hood’s strategy worked. Ann Radcliffe’s most recent and authoritative biographer Rictor Norton notes that many readers of *The Female Advocate* believed that they were reading a work by Ann Radcliffe and that the French translation ‘was specifically attributed’ to ‘the Mrs. Radcliffe’ in 1799. Norton speculates that Mary Ann Radcliffe’s *Memoirs* reached a second edition because they were ‘thought to contain the memoirs of the mighty magician of Udolpho’. For some readers, Mary Ann Radcliffe’s autobiography must have fulfilled their desire to know the notoriously reclusive author of their favorite gothic fictions. An 1812 review of her *Memoirs* from the *British Critic* even registers disappointment at discovering the autobiography not to be by ‘the very ingenious and much lamented Mrs Radcliffe’. This review appears even more peculiar when one realises that Ann Radcliffe was not yet dead when it was written. As Norton demonstrates, rumours of Ann Radcliffe’s death and descent into madness began circulating in print at least a decade before her actual death in 1823, and her peculiar dead–alive status provides further evidence of the distance between the ‘real’ Radcliffe and the literary historical Radcliffe constructed by print.

Recent scholarship, including Norton’s important and excellent biography of Ann Radcliffe, largely maintains and even compounds the conflation of Ann Radcliffe, Mary Ann Radcliffe and the fiction of the Minerva Press. Writing almost a decade before Dale Townshend’s work on the attribution of Mary Ann Radcliffe’s fiction, Norton unquestionably accepts her as the author of *Velina de Guidova, Radzivil* and *Manfroné*. This idea of Mary Ann Radcliffe as a Minerva writer will be sustained by Norton’s biography into the foreseeable future; despite its foibles, it is unquestionably the best existing biography of Ann Radcliffe, and it continues to be used by scholars and students. Norton’s acceptance of Mary Ann Radcliffe’s authorship of these novels leads him to unlikely conclusions. He conjectures that the ‘1809 rumor of Mrs. Radcliffe’s
death may have prompted Mary Ann Radcliffe to take up the mantle of the Great Enchantress.\textsuperscript{44} Most bizarrely, Norton speculates that the very persons of the two Radcliffe were likely confused. He recounts an incident described in Mary Russell Mitford’s correspondence, which depicts her father claiming to have seen Ann Radcliffe in 1811 at the business address of Mitford’s publisher. Mitford (misinformed herself) informs her father that Radcliffe died in 1809, and Norton suggests that as there would be little reason for the still living Ann Radcliffe to visit Valpy’s business the Radcliffe spotted by Mitford’s father was ‘more likely’ a sighting of ‘the other Mrs Radcliffe, Mary Ann Radcliffe of the Wollstonecraft school’.\textsuperscript{45} There was likely no Radcliffe spotted at all, but Norton’s account of the physical confusion of these two Radcliffes reinforces the persistence of doppelgängers within our histories of Radcliffe’s authorship and the Minerva Press.

Romantic authors such as William Wordsworth and even Charlotte Smith worked tirelessly with publishers in creating the editions that built their posthumous reputations and positioned them within a national canon. By contrast, Ann Radcliffe’s name and brand were more manipulatable, if judged by the anonymous Minerva novels later associated with her and Mary Ann Radcliffe. While it is tempting to read such novels as enemies of the singular and authentic Ann Radcliffe, lesser beings that damage or distort her legacy, they are—for better or worse—a part of the story of her survival. William Lane, A. K. Newman, and the publishers and critics who followed them shaped a corporate Radcliffe that both led to the alignment of Ann Radcliffe with what we might think of as the anti-canonical novels of the Minerva Press, the translations and imitations for which Minerva and, in part, Radcliffe came to stand. It also created a corporate Radcliffe as an alternative to the high and canonical Romantic author of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, contributing to the development of what Walter Scott dismissively described and later critics derided as ‘the Radcliffe school’.\textsuperscript{46} As Felski argues, ‘art works can only survive and thrive by making friends, creating allies, attracting disciples’.\textsuperscript{47} Certainly, by including Ann Radcliffe’s novels among the constellation of gothic texts for which the Minerva Press has come to stand, Jane Austen has acted as an ally—‘the horrid novels’ of \textit{Northanger Abbey} being just one example of Minerva novels kept alive by their association not only with Austen but also with Ann Radcliffe. The additional affinities between Radcliffe and Minerva novels created by Lane and Newman in catalogues and later in feminist and gothic scholarship also ally Radcliffe with Romantic translation and the extranational history of the novel of which the Minerva Press is certainly a part. Embracing the corporate Radcliffe introduces us to a Romantic-era author that assembles itself overtime and, most excitingly, continues to change and grow. The corporate Radcliffe privileges the textual affinities and associations created by publishers and scholars as rich tran\textsuperscript{\textregistered}temporal and living networks that exceed individual authors, their nations and their historical contexts, making possible new frameworks for understanding texts, their survival and the construction of literary history.\textsuperscript{48}
Notes


2. *Manfroné; or, the One-Handed Monk. A Romance* was also attributed to Mary Ann Radcliffe, and, although it was originally published by J. F. Hughes in 1809, it was reprinted by the Minerva Press under A. K. Newman’s direction in 1819. Mary Ann Radcliffe’s assumed authorship of *Manfroné* is often cited as the reason for Dorothy Blakey’s assignation of *Velina de Guidova* and *Radzivil* to her in the early twentieth century. I have not directly treated it in this essay because it did not originate with the Minerva Press, and it was Hughes rather than Newman who originally marketed it as by Mary Ann Radcliffe—an attribution that Dale Townshend has recently challenged, in ‘On the Authorship of *Manfroné*’, in *Manfroné, or the One-Handed Monk* (1809; Kansas City, MO: Valancourt Press, 2007), pp. 265–96. See also the entry on *Manfroné* in *British Fiction, 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception* <http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/titleDetails.asp?title=1809A061> [accessed 7 Apr 2020].


7. Ibid., pp. 1–2.


17. Ibid., p. 15.

18. Ibid., p. 22.


22. *The Fate of Velina de Guidova*, 3 vols (London: Lane, 1790), III, 139. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.


24. Ibid., p. 18.


26. Ibid., p. 49.


30. Ibid., p. 21.

31. Evidence of Ann Radcliffe’s business acumen can be glimpsed in her move from the circulating library publisher Thomas Hookham early in her career to established and prominent booksellers such as George Robinson and Cadell & Davies. Each move yielded more money for her increasingly valuable copyrights. Despite this, Radcliffe seemed to exert very little control over her name and reputation and its circulation within Romantic print culture. See JoEllen DeLucia, ‘Radcliffe, George Robinson, and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture: Beyond the Circulating Library’, *Women’s Writing*, 22.3 (2015), 287–99 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2015.1037981>.


H. Caritat, the New York agent for the Minerva in 1802, had a circulating library in which a great many Minerva books were
included; and in 1808, although literature was said to be little cultivated in the island of Jamaica, there was a circulating library at Kingston, and in one or two other towns. There seems to have been a library in Bombay, to which Lane’s novels had penetrated before 1806.

35. Ibid., p. 56.
36. Ibid., p. 57.
38. Ibid., p. 151.
40. Mary Ann Radcliffe’s name also appears on the title page of a periodical entitled Radcliffe’s [sic] New Novelist’s Pocket Magazine, which was published in 1802 and includes a gothic chapbook entitled The Secret Oath; however, her detailed memoir does not mention the publication of this periodical, Radzivil, Vélina or Manfroné.
41. Mary Ann Radcliffe, The Memoirs of Mrs Mary Ann Radcliffe; in Familiar Letters to her Female Friend (Edinburgh: for the Author, 1810), p. 67. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.
43. Qtd in ibid., p. 215.
44. Ibid., p. 214.
45. Ibid.
47. Felski, Limits of Critique, p. 165.

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Date of acceptance: 9 January 2019.
Transatlantic Terror
James Hammond’s Circulating Library and the Minerva Press Gothic Novel

Eric Daffron

It [Robert Lenox Kennedy’s donation] is a very curious memorial of the taste, manners, and lighter literature of the country from the period of 1783 until about or near 1830. Newport in those days was [...] a resort during the warm season of the most refined, wealthy, and cultivated society of the whole of this country; and this [James Hammond’s] Circulating Library was long the chief resort of that society for lighter literature [...] This circulating library contained the works of light reading at the time in most demand, including the numerous novels from the then fashionable Minerva Press in London, most of which have now passed away and are forgotten, although a few of them are by authors, like Mrs. Radcliffe, of great power and originality.1

In 1811, the Newport Mercury, a local newspaper in Newport, Rhode Island, reported that James Hammond, a dry-goods merchant, had purchased the stock of Wanton & Rathbone’s Providence Circulating Library. According to the article, Hammond’s ‘collection of Novels and Romances, is more extensive than can be found in any other Library in America’.2 Operating his library for over half a century, Hammond grew his collection over time. In 1817, the Newport Mercury ran an advertisement claiming that the library offered over 3000 volumes; in 1858, a newspaper advertisement cited 10,000 volumes.3 Not only nineteenth-century New England’s largest circulating library, Hammond’s library also became, by all accounts, an important institution in Newport and beyond.4 In 1848, Henry Barnard claimed that ‘Hammond’s Circulating Library is one of the oldest libraries in the country’; in 1866, on the occasion of Hammond’s death, the Newport Mercury remarked that the library had served a ‘public benefit’.5 When the library later closed its doors and its holdings went to auction, Robert Lenox Kennedy purchased approximately 1850 volumes and donated them to the New York Society Library, for which he served as trustee.6

Considering its size, its importance and its multi-decade operation, Hammond’s circulating library is a compelling site for exploring the fate of Minerva Press gothic novels on American shores decades after their publication. Gothic novels printed at William Lane’s Minerva Press account for only a small por-
tion of the New York Society Library’s Hammond Collection: sixty-five novels published between 1791 and 1810. However, the library’s 1868 trustees’ report, partially quoted in my epigraph, called attention to those novels as a noteworthy subset. The report associated the Minerva Press with Ann Radcliffe, conflating the press whose output included gothic novels with the gothic novelist herself, despite the fact that none of her novels were originally printed at that press (p. 5). It is true that the Minerva Press later reprinted two of Radcliffe’s novels, but, of those two, only *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) appeared in Hammond’s last-known extant catalogue (1858), and that novel was apparently an American edition. The erroneous association between popular press and gothic novelist notwithstanding, the report nevertheless implied that Minerva Press gothic novels enjoyed a lively readership in nineteenth-century Newport. In fact, despite their dubious reputation, these novels counted among those that were ‘at the time’, the report claimed, ‘in most demand’ (p. 5).

This essay investigates Hammond’s promotion of Minerva’s gothic novels—and Newport readers’ engagement with them—for almost half a century after the Minerva Press ceased to print under that name. In so doing, this essay contributes to the literary history that has shifted attention from the gothic’s initial publication and first readers to the gothic’s persistent circulation and later readership. Literary histories of the gothic novel that emphasise production over circulation chart the mode’s decline in the 1820s. However, as Franz J. Potter and Edward Jacobs have argued in their work on early British gothic publishing and circulating libraries, a novel’s circulation and readership may extend well beyond its initial publication. In fact, as Potter contends, ‘circulating libraries and their readers […] constructed a different “canon” than is suggested by literary history’.

Hammond, the proprietor of an important nineteenth-century American circulating library, contributed to the formation of just such an alternative canon. His contributions followed in the footsteps of Lane’s earlier ‘transcontinental and transatlantic network of printers, circulating libraries, and booksellers’. A notable member of Lane’s network, Hocquet Caritat—turn-of-the-nineteenth-century New York-based librarian, bookseller and publisher—held many Minerva Press titles, reprinted Regina Maria Roche’s Minerva title *The Children of the Abbey* (1796), introduced Charles Brockden Brown’s novels to Lane, and became the latter’s American agent in 1800. More modest in his endeavours, Hammond nevertheless held a significant collection of Minerva Press gothic novels until at least 1858 but probably until the library went out of business approximately a decade later. Considering a circulating librarian’s motive to turn a profit, Hammond would not have retained these novels so long if he had not recognised their demand, nor would he have used his catalogues to promote them. Hammond’s catalogues arranged and altered Minerva Press titles and authors and appended reviews. These promotional strategies, examined in section one, foregrounded the gothic content of these novels and attested to their
quality. In so doing, the catalogues assisted subscribers in selecting books and prepared them for reading those selections.

Hammond’s patrons also played a role in keeping alive the novels’ “experiential popularity”\(^\text{16}\). Little is known about these readers, who resided in Newport or visited the resort town. If living in or travelling from the region, Hammond’s subscribers probably enjoyed a high literacy rate, read European and increasingly American literature and accessed novels from local circulating libraries.\(^\text{17}\) Beyond those regional characteristics, these readers reportedly demanded Minerva Press gothic novels, apparently had access to them and likely borrowed and read them. Many of the volumes that they would have selected contained copious marginalia. Written by other subscribers or earlier readers, these marginalia, examined in section two, evaluated the novels and commented on their gothic and non-gothic elements alike.\(^\text{18}\) In so doing, the marginalia sometimes supported, and at other times conflicted with, Hammond’s promotional strategies. If Hammond’s catalogues prepared patrons for quality gothic reading experiences, the novels’ marginalia reshaped patrons’ expectations and influenced their engagement with the novels.

For Hammond’s patrons, the catalogues and the marginalia constituted two points of entry into the Minerva Press gothic novel. Collectively but at times divergently, these paratexts ‘ensure[d]’ the Minerva Press gothic novel’s “reception” in Newport and its ‘consumption in the form […] of a book’.\(^\text{19}\) Neither paratext should be considered alone. Only by examining both the catalogues and the marginalia can we assess the degree to which the Minerva Press gothic novel terrified and delighted Newport readers decades after its London heyday.

**Catalogues: Promoting the Minerva Press Gothic Novel**

‘Persons Sending for Books from this Catalogue, will Please to send by the Numbers’, requested Hammond’s 1858 catalogue. Hammond published this catalogue and others not only to assist patrons in locating and selecting books but also, and more importantly, to promote his stock. As one of his primary promotional tools, the catalogues affected how patrons encountered the library’s collection of Minerva Press gothic novels. According to Edward Jacobs, circulating-library catalogues ordered literary knowledge in highly predictable ways. In so doing, they ‘called upon book selectors to perceive, experience, and judge books in ways that interacted [...] with the practices of reading and writing’\(^\text{20}\). Contending that Hammond’s catalogues performed a similar function, this section considers four catalogues with particular attention to the 1858 catalogue, which not only contained all of Minerva’s gothic novels under examination but also reflected Hammond’s cataloguing strategies towards the end of the library’s operation.\(^\text{21}\) The catalogues organised, altered and supplemented many of the collection’s Minerva gothic titles. As a result, the catalogues singled out the novels, highlighted their gothic mode and provided evidence of their quality.

All four catalogues arranged titles in alphabetical order in the main or a generic listing. According to Garside and Jacobs, that organisational strategy
romantic textualities

encouraged generic reading practices. Period novels, notoriously gothic novels, recycled the same title lead words, such as ‘castle’ and ‘mystery’. As a result, similar titles inevitably appeared alongside each other in a catalogue’s alphabetical listing. Subscribers who wanted novels akin to those they had already read would have likely turned to titles with the same title lead word even if that presumed generic similarity was misleading.\(^{22}\) Enhancing the impression that novels with similar title lead words were virtually interchangeable, Hammond’s library occupied the same space as his dry-goods store, as lists of available dry goods in the 1820s and 1844–45 catalogues reminded subscribers. The spatial proximity of books and dry goods, two commodities operating on different business models, invited customers to believe that one castle novel could easily substitute for another just as one piece of linen might serve as well as another.

Although it is generally the case that Hammond’s cataloguing strategies and business architecture promoted just such a perception, the 1858 catalogue arranged some novels more complexly. For example, when hypothetical subscribers opened the catalogue, they would have discovered eighteen titles beginning with ‘mystery’ or some variation. While it may have given the impression that mystery novels were essentially interchangeable, this arrangement alone in no way guaranteed that all eighteen novels belonged to the same genre or that, moreover, subscribers would have recognised among them five original Minerva Press gothic titles. Curiously, Hammond placed these five titles out of strict alphabetical order (to which he rarely conformed) in an almost continuous, nearly uninterrupted numeric sequence in the 1300s within the larger mystery section, whose numbers ranged from the 1300s to the 6000s. In all likelihood, the Minerva sequence corresponded to shelf order and reflected the novels’ acquisition dates. In any case, the catalogue did not organise titles numerically, and other, non-Minerva titles that should have belonged to this sequence by virtue of number appeared elsewhere in the mystery section. Thus, even if it resulted from an alphabetical or a numerical accident, this cluster nevertheless called attention to these Minerva Press gothic novels as a particular subgenre of mystery novel while effectively preventing them from being dispersed across the section. Augmenting this visual effect, the catalogue placed just before the Minerva sequence Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the imminently recognisable gothic novel. That placement showcased these Minerva Press gothic novels as a worthy subdivision of Hammond’s collection of otherwise potentially fungible mystery novels.

In addition to arranging Minerva Press titles, Hammond occasionally altered them. In fact, circulating-library proprietors often enhanced titles to inform and entice readers.\(^{23}\) Hammond’s alterations typically foregrounded novels’ genres and settings. For example, he changed some titles’ genres from ‘novel’ to ‘romance’ and even added nationalities to those generic designations. In the 1858 catalogue, the genres of *The Castle of Ollada. A Romance* (1795), *Lusignan, or the Abbaye of La Trappe. A Novel* (1801) and *Edmund of the Forest. An Historical Novel* (1797) (as rendered on the novels’ title pages\(^{24}\)) became, respectively, ‘a
Spanish romance’, ‘a French romance’ and ‘a romance’. By replacing ‘novel’ with ‘romance’, Hammond signalled to patrons the titles’ gothic genre.²⁵ Considering his patrons’ alleged taste for the Minerva Press gothic brand, Hammond had a financial motive in making the novels’ genre explicit. Moreover, his addition of national markers invoked far-flung, even exotic settings that might have appealed to thrill-seeking Newport readers. Thus, collectively, these altered titles served not only ‘to designate’ and ‘to indicate subject matter’, to borrow Genette’s words, but also ‘to tempt the public.’²⁶

While Hammond most often organised and altered Minerva Press titles, he occasionally changed their authorship, notably to novels published anonymously. In fact, almost half of the Minerva Press gothic novels in Hammond’s collection were published anonymously—a statistic roughly in line with Minerva Press authorship in 1800.²⁷ Pervasive during the Romantic period, anonymous-novel publishing served ‘to impose greater similarity, regularity, and predictability on the nature and habit of novel-reading, in other words to turn novels into uniform and mutually substitutable commodities, and the renting and reading of them into a regular habit.’²⁸ If novels could be interchanged by virtue of anonymous authorship or similar title, they risked getting lost in the shuffle of such a large circulating library. To avoid that consequence, Hammond could have identified the authors, when known, of anonymous novels and elevated them to the select company of authors whose titles he listed in separate author sections in the three 1840s and 1850s catalogues. Undoubtedly, the author sections drew subscribers’ attention to certain novelists, such as Walter Scott, thirty-nine of whose titles appeared under his name in the 1848 catalogue’s author section. However, that section listed only one author, Eliza Parsons, with at least one Minerva gothic novel in the subset under examination, and that novel, The Mysterious Warning (1796), was not published anonymously.

Instead, Hammond chose other strategies, ones admittedly tenuous and thus less effective but ones that nonetheless used authorship for their ‘classificatory function’: a function that, according to Michel Foucault, ‘permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others.’²⁹ For example, the 1858 catalogue included Minerva Press gothic novels originally attributed to Anna Maria Mackenzie and ‘Gabrielli’, the pseudonym of Elizabeth Meeke. In addition, the catalogue listed Danish Massacre (1791) and The Sicilian (1798), novels attributed at publication by way of the authors’ previous novels but attributed by Hammond, respectively, to Mrs Mackenzie and Gabrielli.³⁰ Although several Mackenzie and Gabrielli novels were dispersed throughout the main title listing, fans would have been more apt to select the novelists’ other titles if attributed by name. Hammond used a different technique with Melbourne (1798). While the title page attributed the novel to ‘the author of Deloraine [1789]’, he credited ‘the author of Reginald, &c.’ Hammond likely took his cue from the title page of Reginald, ‘by the author of Melbourne, &c.’ By substituting Reginald for Deloraine—an ‘Italian romance’ (as his catalogue labelled the former) for ‘a domestic tale’ (as his catalogue and
the title page labelled the latter); a novel attributed to Melbourne’s author for an anonymous novel—Hammond effectively cross-referenced two Minerva gothic novels. Though subtle, these changes grouped some anonymous Minerva Press gothic novels and, in some cases, linked them to other novels attributed by name. These groupings effectively drew subscribers’ attention to particular authors.

Generally, Hammond’s arrangements and alterations informed subscribers about book content while enticing them to select certain novels. Supplementary information in some catalogue entries, notably in the 1820s catalogue, not only informed and enticed readers but also evaluated the novels. A few entries offered unattributed quotations, sometimes derived from the novels’ title pages. For instance, the quotation appended to the catalogue entry for *The Mystic Castle* (1796) abbreviated and spliced the two Hamlet epigraphs on the novel’s title page: “Foul deeds will rise; murder will speak” (p. 47). Though compressed, this literary quotation gave subscribers with a penchant for the gothic an immediate impression of the novel’s lurid themes. To enhance just such an effect, the catalogue passed over the epigraph on the title page of *The Mysterious Warning* to capitalise on the novel’s gothic theme of mystery. Instead of “Thus conscience | Can make cowards of us all”; the catalogue entry read: “a seared conscience fears mystery” (p. 47). Other entries in the 1820s catalogue provided information, sometimes quoted and attributed, that likely came from the novels’ contemporary reviews. For example, the catalogue quoted from a review, attributed to the *Critical Review*, of *The Forest of Hohenelbe* (1803): ‘here are caverns inhabited by outlaws, massy chains, and impenetrable prisons: all probable’ (p. 38). If the title alone did not sufficiently reveal the novel’s content, the excerpted review detailed the gothic elements that awaited the book selector. The excerpted review of Melbourne, quoted and attributed to the *Critical Review*, forewent the gothic for a simple declaration of the novel’s quality: “the characters are original and interesting, the plan ingenious” (p. 45). For subscribers unfamiliar with particular Minerva Press gothic novels in Hammond’s collection, reviews such as this one assured book selectors of the novels’ quality.

In appending these reviews, Hammond made an unusual marketing decision. Certainly, his decision was not without precedent. For example, Caritat included excerpts from London reviews in his so-called ‘explanatory catalogs’. However, by the 1820s, at least one to three decades after the publication of Hammond’s Minerva gothic novels, these recycled British reviews surely appeared outdated to Newport readers. Rather than updating them to reflect then-current American tastes, Hammond mostly abandoned this marketing strategy in later catalogues. Even so, Hammond’s subscribers still had access to reviews that the Minerva Press appended to advertisements in the volumes’ final pages. For example, at the end of Volume Three of *Anecdotes of the Altamont Family* (1800), the advertisement for *Reginald, or the House of Mirandola* (1799), ‘Just published’, quoted a flattering excerpt from the *London Review*, dated January 1800. Although Hammond obviously did not insert these advertisements, they nevertheless
informed readers about the novels’ content and their perceived quality. In so doing, the advertisements supplemented Hammond’s promotional strategies—but probably ineffectively and inauthentically: ineffectively because, as remnants of a then-defunct London press, they solicited mid-century Newport patrons to read, even to purchase, novels oddly described as ‘just published’; inauthentically because the positive reviews came from earlier professional British readers. In contrast, the volumes’ marginalia, to which this essay now turns, provided advice from ordinary readers about how to read these novels.

**Marginalia: Modelling the Reading Experience**

‘Books lost, written in, or otherwise damaged, must be paid for’, warned Hammond’s subscription terms, pasted in *Orwell Manor* (1795) and other novels. Not alone in condemning marginalia, Hammond’s library conspired with other nineteenth-century institutions, such as schools and public libraries, to curb the habit. Despite the warning, some readers left, or had already left, copious marginalia in Hammond’s Minerva Press gothic collection. Like their predecessors across the centuries, these writers of marginalia sought to improve, correct, supplement, cross-reference, assess, correct and otherwise comment on texts. With only a few possible exceptions, these marginalia, ‘the actual responses of actual readers’ at some time and in some place, cannot be definitively attributed to Hammond’s patrons, since his collection probably belonged to at least two previous libraries. Regardless of their origins, these marginalia nevertheless reflected and shaped an ‘interpretative community’ of Minerva gothic-novel readers, including Hammond’s Newport subscribers across a half century. These marginalia sometimes underscored and at other times undermined Hammond’s promotional strategies. In so doing, the marginalia served as models for how to read Minerva Press gothic novels: models that Hammond’s patrons could consider and either adopt or reject.

Many readers commented on characters and plots. More than any other type of comment, these comments illustrate the differences between Hammond’s catalogues and readers’ marginalia. Preparing subscribers for gothic reading experiences, the 1858 catalogue placed *The Mystic Castle* and *The Castle of Caithness* in gothic company with, respectively, other ‘mystery’ and ‘castle’ listings, and the 1820s catalogue quoted parts of the eerie epigraph on *The Mystic Castle*’s title page. However, the readers of these novels did not limit their attention to gothic elements. For example, one reader of *The Mystic Castle* labelled Jane, De Mowbray’s aspiring daughter, ‘a hateful bitch’ (11, 36). One reader of *The Castle of Caithness* provided a playful running commentary on a passionate scene between the imprisoned Isabel and Edward. Next to passages in which the characters swoon and embrace, the reader wrote: ‘how I do love her’; ‘and then what fun’; ‘Oh what loving times’; ‘dear good little soul’; ‘and kisses him’. While those readers shifted attention from the gothic, one reader of *Reginald* engaged with the gothic only to deflate it. At one point, Sigismond, the rightful heir of Mirandola, sees a tombstone engraved with his mother Hypolita’s name.
Underneath the inscription, the reader wrote: ‘She is still living’ (111, 203). This plot spoiler joined the other readers above in modelling reading experiences that read away from the gothic or against it altogether. As a result, they compromised Hammond’s promotional goals and invited later readers to follow suit.

Like commenters on characters and plots, readers who supplemented the volumes with visual and textual materials engaged with non-gothic and gothic features alike. Their supplements ranged from the whimsical and the parodic to the studious. For example, in the first few blank pages of Volumes Three and Four, a reader of Correlia, or the Mystic Tomb (1802) provided makeshift frontispieces. Drawing as many as four illustrations, the reader labelled two of them ‘beautiful Correlia.’ At the end of Lusignan, or the Abbaye of La Trappe, a reader added advertisements below and opposite the existing advertisement for First Love. A Novel. In Three Volumes (1801). Cleverly mimicking print, this reader created advertisements for ‘Second Love in Four Volumes’ and for ‘Nothing in Eighty Volumes’ (iv, n.p.). By parodying its predictable titles, its multi-volume formats and even its perceived vacuousness, this reader undermined the literary pretensions of Minerva Press novels and arguably influenced subsequent readers to adopt a similar opinion. In contrast, other readers appreciated the novels’ literary aspirations. For instance, in the first volume of Edmund of the Forest, Edmund requests that his host, Sir James, ‘listen to my tale’. Apparently detecting an allusion to Hamlet (1. 5. 15), one reader underlined ‘I shall unfold’ (the phrase that followed) and noted at the foot of the page: ‘I shall a tale unfold, &c’ (p. 222). Unlike Hammond, who lifted lines from title pages for promotional purposes, this reader recognised the novel’s literariness, demonstrated literary competence for the gothic in particular and facilitated future readers’ appreciation for the literary mode.

Readers who edited the novels also engaged with literary language, not necessarily to appreciate it, but often to improve, parody and even criticise it. Take, for example, a series of edits to Edmund of the Forest. In Volume Two, a reader struck the phrase ‘thought he’ towards the beginning of a passage about Edmund’s internal reflections and placed the phrase at the end of the paragraph (p. 63). Striking the word ‘ah’ in that passage, a reader, probably the same one, wrote ‘Too many ah’s’ next to an advertisement at the end of Volume Two and later, in the first few pages of the next volume, added ‘B’ to ‘Ah’ as well as ‘Ah!’ and ‘O, Ah!’ to numerous passages (pp. 10–15). Back in Volume Two, the same or another reader wrote below an epigraph ‘Too much of’ next to ‘Shakespeare’ (p. 110). In the next volume, four of the first seven chapters begin with Shakespeare epigraphs. Arriving at Chapter 8 and discovering an epigraph from John Home’s tragedy Douglas (1756), the weary reader wrote ‘Good’ above the epigraph’s attribution and changed the epigraph’s ‘ah!’ to ‘oh!’ (p. 113). In making these edits, the reader(s) demonstrated and modelled a different level of literary competence from that of the reader who detected the Hamlet allusion. Showing sufficient literary sophistication to recognise an author’s repetitive patterns and tiresome homage to Shakespeare, the reader(s) questioned the quality of
the Minerva Press gothic novel while suggesting that at least some readers no longer expected deference to the literary canon.

In commenting on, supplementing and editing the novels, earlier readers surely anticipated a future readership for their marginalia. However, it is mainly when they evaluated the novels’ quality that we witness their creation of a larger ‘interpretative community’ and their implicit invitation to future readers to join. For instance, when the ghost of the murdered Glencairn appears to his son Edward in *The Castle of Caithness*, one B declared: ‘I like not the ghost [sic] in romances.’ In response, another reader wrote ‘not me either’. Joining the running commentary, one L took a shot at B’s orthographic deficiencies: ‘I wish B knew how to spell Ghost’ (ii, 73). Two of these comments showed a lack of appreciation for the novel’s gothic machinery; two comments engaged as much with other readers as with the novel itself. Broadening their scope to the novel as a whole, multiple readers left overwhelmingly favourable comments at the end of the novel: ‘Highly animated material and engaging’; ‘Excellent’; ‘Beautiful’; ‘Superlative in the highest degree’ (ii, 256). This sequence and others like it in Hammond’s collection prove that some readers noticed previous readers’ comments. Moreover, unlike professional reviews, these marginalia reflected the musings of ordinary readers who not only evaluated the novels but also left space for others to contribute. This makeshift ‘interpretative community’ of unknown readers potentially included future readers who, even if they left no trace, still encountered, and were arguably influenced by, these marginalia.

Obviously intended and promoted for reading, these novels often met unanticipated fates in the hands of some readers. For instance, *Romance of the Castle* (1800) served, in part, as notepaper. On a blank page at the front of Volume One, a reader listed three Walter Scott novels: ‘Rob Roy Guy Mannering Waverly [sic]’. Whether dissatisfied with *Romance of the Castle* or simply planning future reading, this reader ironically used the paper in an anonymous popular novel printed at a down-market press to list a celebrity author’s respectable novels. On a blank page at the back of Volume Two, a reader (likely one Stephen, whose name appears on the same page) recorded a palindrome by John Taylor: ‘Lewd did I live and evil [I did] dwell’. Perhaps the evil machinations of the novel’s Longueville inspired the notation, or perhaps the notation had no connection to the novel’s plot at all. In any case, Stephen, like the list-maker, valued the novel as much for its material as for its content and invited subsequent readers to entertain similar uses that Hammond would not have intended, much less promoted.

All in all, these sample marginalia extended and countered Hammond’s promotional strategies in both purpose and content. Generally speaking, Hammond’s catalogues informed subscribers and enticed them to select novels by highlighting the novels’ gothic characteristics while promising quality reading experiences. In contrast, the marginalia read with, against and beyond the gothic; they accepted and questioned the novels’ literary quality; they even put the novels to alternative uses. In leaving traces of what they read, how they
read it and how they used books, these unknown readers shaped the reading experiences of future readers, including Hammond’s subscribers. Clearly, this community was far from univocal in its appraisal of the Minerva Press gothic novel. Two comments in particular epitomised readers’ divergent views. One reader of *The Mystic Castle* teased future readers by writing upside down and backwards: ‘Novels are bad things Don’t you think so’ (1, 131). A reader of *Who’s the Murderer? Or the Mystery of the Forest* (1802) could not have disagreed more: ‘He that says there is no Good from a Novel is a Liar’.

**Conclusion**

James Hammond’s Circulating Library and, in particular, its collection of Minerva Press gothic novels illuminate one aspect of nineteenth-century Newport experience. The term ‘experience’ derives from the late work of Foucault. In his 1982–83 lectures at the Collège de France, he defines ‘focal points of experience’ as the intersection of ‘a possible knowledge (*savoir*)’, normative frameworks of behavior for individuals, and potential modes of existence for possible subjects. The first two ‘dimensions of [...] experience’—namely, knowledge and power—found expression in Hammond’s promotion of Minerva Press gothic novels. Using catalogues as one of his primary promotional tools, Hammond organised literary knowledge by title and other recognisable terms. Within those arrangements, he occasionally enhanced individual catalogue entries with reviews and alternative titles. The catalogues in turn shaped Hammond’s patrons by informing their literary knowledge, influencing their book selection and moulding their expectations about their upcoming reading experiences.

The marginalia constitute the third ‘dimension’ of this particular Newport ‘experience’—in brief, subjectivity. Subject formation is, Foucault implies, twofold: both a process that potential subjects undergo and the models that they consider while undergoing that process. Unfortunately, we cannot definitively determine the models of subject formation that influenced this study’s marginalia writers. However, from their marginalia, we see the effects of their formation as readers of Minerva Press gothic novels, a specific subjectivity among others available to Newport readers of circulating-library books. According to Foucault, ‘the individual’ who undergoes a process of subject formation ‘delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal’. Likewise, these marginalia writers staked out ‘position[s]’ towards literary language: whether to read for enjoyment or for literary competence—or whether to read at all. Likewise, they adopted ‘mode[s] of being’: attitudes—playful, derisive and even parodic—towards characters, actions and words; positions of editor and evaluator; and relationships—critical or agreeable and almost certainly imaginative—with unknown readers across time.

These writers’ marginalia in turn served as models for future readers, including Hammond’s patrons, in their own process of subject formation. These models at times supplemented, and at other times diverged from, Hammond’s
promotional strategies, which initially shaped patrons’ expectations of the novels’ content. According to Foucault, ‘models’ of subject formation include ones ‘proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self’ and ‘for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object’.50 At a basic level, the marginalia provided options for what and how to read—options that subscribers could take, ignore or modify. In making those concrete decisions, however small and seemingly inconsequential, readers effectively enhanced and even altered their ongoing formation as Minerva gothic readers.

To understand this nineteenth-century Newport ‘experience’, we must examine both Hammond’s catalogues and readers’ marginalia. Without addressing both paratexts, we would fail to see what induced these resort-town readers to read Minerva Press gothic novels and how a library proprietor and earlier readers shaped future gothic reading experiences. Such an analysis necessarily requires attention to a specific historical site, and that focused attention obviously comes with limitations. After all, James Hammond’s Circulating Library—its catalogues, its collection and its patrons—cannot tell us everything about nineteenth-century American readers of Minerva Press gothic novels. That limitation notwithstanding, this local site nevertheless increases our understanding of the transatlantic, multi-decade history of Minerva Press gothic novels while suggesting similar sites for future work.

Notes
For opening their collections and providing research space, I thank the New York Public Library, the Grolier Club, the Morgan Library and Museum and especially the New York Society Library. Special thanks go to Barbara Bieck and Laura O’Keefe, New York Society Library staff members, for their expert assistance and patient support. For their invaluable suggestions on this essay, I thank Christina Morin, Elizabeth Neiman and the anonymous peer reviewer.


3. *Newport Mercury*, 10 May 1817; *Newport Mercury*, 10 July 1858.


18. Hammond’s Minerva gothic novels likely came from one or both of his immediate predecessors in Rhode Island: William R. Wilder, who set up a library in 1798 and sold it in 1806 to Wanton & Rathbone, who then sold their collection to Hammond in 1811. See Kaser, *Book for a Sixpence*, p. 97. At least one novel in the subset bears subscription terms from earlier libraries. See ‘F. H. P.’, *The Castle of Caithness. A Romance of the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1802). Both volumes of this novel have been rebound. Attached to the inside front cover of vol. 1 are subscription terms for Hammond’s library and Henry Cushing’s Circulating Library in Providence; attached to the inside front cover of vol. 2 are subscription terms for those two libraries and for Wanton & Rathbone’s Circulating Library. This novel thus gives evidence of a third circulating library to which at least two of Hammond’s volumes belonged. All Minerva Press gothic novels cited in this article are held in the New York Society Library.


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21. The other catalogues consulted include: *Catalogue of James Hammond’s Circulating Library* (Newport, RI: [n. pub.], [182–?]); *Catalogue of James Hammond’s Circulating Library* (Newport, RI: [n. pub.], [1844–45]); *Catalogue of James Hammond’s Circulating Library* (Newport, RI: Power Press, 1853), in Google Books <http://books.google.com> [accessed 13 Jan 2019]. Further references to these catalogues are cited in the text usually without page numbers, as titles are listed alphabetically. I preserve Hammond’s idiosyncratic spellings and versions of titles and authors but, for brevity’s sake, typically shorten titles.


33. Eliza Parsons, *The Mysterious Warning, a German Tale*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1796). The epigraph was taken from the title page of the second volume, as the first volume has been rebound.


40. Many of the marginalia analysed below are part of longer, sometimes partially illegible comments. For brevity, I quote only decipherable phrases relevant to my discussion.

41. ‘F. H. P.’, *Castle of Caithness*, ii, 166–69. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.


48. Ibid., p. 4.


50. Ibid., p. 29.

**Referring to this Article**


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**Date of acceptance:** 22 January 2019.
If all press is good press, then William Lane and his Minerva Press could be said to have received more good press than any publisher of the Romantic period. Indeed, data show that one in three new novels published from 1790 to 1820 was put out by Lane, and one in ten novels reviewed during this thirty-year period (the years when the press flourished) were of Minerva productions. Lane’s reputation and the infamy of his press reached beyond his shop in Leadenhall Street—it extended across Britain through circulating libraries, publishing advertisements and book reviews. It is the latter that this article considers as building Lane’s contemporary reputation and popularity, and in influencing the far-ranging rhetoric that has since placed Lane’s publications on the periphery of novel-canonicity.

Minerva published works by a diversity of authors: men, women, those of various backgrounds and levels of authorial experience. The volume of works it published, however, combined with Lane’s liberal business practices, meant that many novelists who might otherwise have found it difficult to secure a relationship with a publisher wary to take risks on novice writers, for the first time had an accessible avenue to publication. By 1790, Lane was advertising his works ‘at the Minerva, Leadenhall Street’ and for the next thirty years enabled writers without the finances or patronage of the genteel class to contribute to the novel’s establishment as a literary genre. Women novelists, and Lane’s press, which championed so many of them, made their work available in the Romantic period, establishing the novel’s rising dominance in the market. Because ‘books, like servants, need recommendations’, the ‘Review [was] in a mediating position between the booksellers and the reading public’—both in the Romantic period and for scholars today. Tracing the criticisms that Lane, Minerva and their authors received at the hands of the book review periodical is foundational to interpreting the contemporary critical reception of the novel during this period. Uncovering this narrative is essential to understanding the place of women writers (particularly those whose work quickly faded from popular reading) and trade publishers in our modern canon. This problem is exemplified by the fact that current scholars need continually to push back against Minerva’s reputation, and specific unrelenting assumptions about the press and its authors. These assumptions come to us and were transmitted to eighteenth-century readers through book reviews. By categorising Review
rhetoric, then tracking how much space (by page fraction) reviews of Lane’s novels took up in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, and with what regularity reviews of Lane’s works were before the eyes of the reading public, I pinpoint how the constant attention that Lane and his Minerva Press received from literary critics heightened their visibility in the Romantic book market, while adversely determining their place in the literary canon.  

I use the *Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820* (NRD) to show both how reviews aided in Lane’s contemporary success, and his long-term infamous reputation—mirroring the very ebb and flow of Review periodical reception and canonicity. The NRD records are drawn from two rival periodicals that took on as their singular objective the review of recent publications: the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review* from January 1790 to December 1820. The *Monthly* and the *Critical* reviewed roughly one-third of all Minerva productions across the period when the press flourished, totalling 309 review articles of 268 novels.  

I include only novels that are identified as such by the Reviews, a method that impacts the data herein considered in two ways: first, it eschews a modern scholar’s backward-looking definition of the genre; second, it creates a corpus of the genre as it was viewed by contemporary critics and presented to the contemporary reading public.

A Short History of Review Periodicals

As the first-established and longest-running Reviews by the Romantic period, the *Monthly* and the *Critical* were together simply referred to as ‘the Reviews’. They circulated widely and readers depended on them to help navigate the volume of publications flooding the book market. By the end of the eighteenth century the Review periodical had a large reading audience: C. H. Timperley put the *Monthly*’s 1797 year’s sales figures at 5000, the *Critical*’s at 3500. Sales figures, however, do not accurately represent readership since individual copies were often shared among a purchaser’s family, or in libraries, coffee houses and other places of community reading. Further, the Reviews circulated outside of London, reaching readers and libraries far removed from the metropolis. Considering this circulation, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the average reader would regularly come into contact with a Review, and would consider the trends in reviewing as part of their knowledge of the printed word. Additionally, the reviews published by the *Monthly* and the *Critical* were frequently reprinted verbatim in other periodicals, so even individuals who sought reviews of recent literature elsewhere found themselves consuming the rhetoric and criticism of these papers. The Reviews emerged as authoritative judges of literary merit, and the way they treated Minerva novels had a widespread influence on conceptions of that press.

The *Monthly* and the *Critical* were the first two periodicals devoted exclusively to reviewing recent publications in England. Articles in the *Monthly Review* (began in 1749) read like book reports, listing publication information, outlining plots and excerpting important passages. The *Critical Review* surfaced in 1756
and aligned itself with Tory politics, in opposition to the Whiggish *Monthly*.¹² Like its competitor, the *Critical* offered excerpts and short commentary on recent literature, giving a holistic account of the book market. Both Reviews eventually ceased trying to review everything objectively: their original intent had been to supply excerpts from the text indicative of its whole character, but slowly their articles passed judgment on texts, using excerpts to support this criticism.¹³ The very structure of the Review periodical advocates for a high versus low literary divide: longer essay-style review articles with excerpts feature in the first sixty to eighty pages of the periodical, while short reviews (often only a few lines) that rarely have room for summary (much less excerpts), are printed in the back pages of the *Monthly Catalogue*, organised under genre headings.¹⁴ While for other literary genres, such as poetry, the Reviews largely evaluated collections by established authors, for novels they reviewed the celebrity and anonymously authored fictions side by side, though most often in the *Monthly Catalogue*.¹⁵ Examining the *Monthly* and the *Critical* together balances politically bent bias in articles, while enabling us to study the contemporary critical reception of now canonical authors alongside those never identified or long forgotten. Unique to their evaluation of novels, the Reviews, while unable to evaluate all new productions, do not turn a blind eye to the productions they deem ‘low’. It is this convention that provides an opportunity for a macro-study of these reviews as a rich source through which to expose the history and practices of literary critics’ high-versus-low, front-section-versus-Monthly-Catalogue dichotomy in evaluating fiction, especially that published by Lane.

When critiquing Thomas Carlyle’s 1828 comparison of Minerva Press novels to ‘copper currency’ legally able to circulate amongst gold, Elizabeth Neiman reminds scholars that Lane’s reputation was ‘crystallized [...] largely [...] by Romantic era writers’ who represented Minerva as ‘reflect[ing] and up[holding] the dissipated taste of the nation’.¹⁶ Neiman states that ‘even those [modern scholars] interested in individual novels do not go so far as to counter nineteenth-century commonplaces about the novels *en masse* and many inadvertently perpetuate them’.¹⁷ Acknowledging formulaic plot elements, one of the categories by which I later show the Reviews evaluated Minerva novels, Neiman finds a community of Minerva authors, speaking to one another through their works. She argues that ‘Novelists’ adaptive reuse of [...] formulas suggests that when Minerva novels are read both collectively and in relation to other Romantic-era texts, their revisions of value-laden conventions become more visible—that is, bringing Minerva’s authorial community into view’.¹⁸ This authorial community should have been evident to Romantic reviewers. However, there are two invisible elements at play which prevented that. First, the elements Neiman tracks as guides and subversions of formulaic elements are a message to novel *writers*, not novel *critics*; their message lies in nuances that reviewers did not or could not detect in their determination to dislike anything but ‘original’ characteristics. Second, the Reviews were too busy enforcing the parameters of the genre to allow their criticisms to expand into how or why a novel might include discussions of poli-
tics or class, since their articles argued that this was not what a novel should do. Neiman notes that these reviewers strive to reinforce their role as guardians of high literary culture and, as Laura Runge explains, by representing themselves as ‘gentleman’ reviewers who chastise and advise ‘lady’ novelists. Women novelists, however, increasingly did not see themselves as oscillating dangerously between the domestic and public spheres. They took up the mantle of authorship as a labour that met their financial needs, was intellectually stimulating, and that brought pleasure to readers. The Review periodical, though, took a hard line in emphasising the division of domestic and public work, and as a leading critical voice, it solidified the division that women writers themselves were contesting with every review, not to mention all those that were reprinted, excerpted and reread. The intersections of gender, genre and work are especially fraught because Reviews enforced the idea that, as Jennie Batchelor argues, ‘novel writing was [...] a degradingly feminized, financially expedient and inferior mode of textual work, while poetry was supposed to be the offspring of disinterested genius and thus a higher art form’. Batchelor traces review criticism of authors, such as Charlotte Smith, who make transparent their labour of writing and financial need, and highlights the Minerva authors who did write for the income. The Reviews, she notes, let neither of these instances pass without sharp judgement and often denigration of the female novelists.

Slowly these Minerva novels and authors are gaining more attention, as this special issue attests. Dorothy Blakey in her 1939 monograph, The Minerva Press 1790–1820, declares that she is pushing back against contemptuous quips about the press, including comments from Sir Walter Scott, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Charles Reade and those printed in periodicals, all of which heavily influenced how readers, the academy and the canon treated such popular literature in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship. Scholarship on the Minerva Press, its novels and authors often reference how they have been lost to a sea of disdain, doomed by their base reputation. Contemporary reviews of the novels are cited as examples of how plagued the novels and authors of Lane’s press were by contemporary critics—placing the blame for the Minerva’s reputation at the feet of the Reviews, dragging out the most pointed reviews as evidence, but without examining the larger arguments the Reviews made about the press and how those criticisms have remained attached to Lane’s novels. Many of Lane’s novels were ‘consigned to the catalogue’—the short sentences of recognition and the sharp criticism they received there provide pointed sound bites for citing their abuse. And while Batchelor and Neiman have found evidence of our perpetuating popular assumptions about the Minerva Press, I herein examine more deeply the categories of Minerva criticism printed in the Reviews, the space given to them, and trace them across centuries of common turns of phrase, illustrating how those nineteenth-century commonplaces came to be, and why they persist even in our modern and increasingly more favourable critical reception of the press.
Replacing Minerva novels within the format and rhetoric of Reviews reveals how the press’s contemporary critical reception emerged and the traditions of evaluation it instigated. This method of analysis uncovers a series of critical binaries that have detrimentally defined the Minerva Press since the early nineteenth century. This is the first quantitative study of these reviews—scholarship until now has depended on relative generalisations about Review ire toward the press. Though these generalisations are not incorrect or uninformed, they are only partial, and this article traces which issues the Reviews continually raised in their evaluation of Minerva novels. These Reviews deserve a closer look because the issues they raise have influenced over two hundred years of criticism and have only recently begun to see resistance through scholars’ increased attention to Minerva, its works and its authors.

Using the NRD, I have identified four primary issues of concern in the Monthly and the Critical’s reviews of Minervas: 1) Minerva Novel(s)/Press Reputation; 2) Genre Evaluation; 3) The Novels Themselves as Material Objects; and 4) The Activity of Reading or Writing Minerva Novels. Each of these larger topics can be divided into further subcategories, all of which I have tracked across 309 reviews of 289 Minerva novels from 1790 to 1820 (see Table 1, overleaf). Despite scholarship aligning ‘Lane’ and ‘Minerva’ with low, amateur-authored, hastily produced novels, the reviews themselves use these names rather seldomly: only 2 per cent of articles directly name the press, either referencing ‘Lane’, ‘Minerva’, or ‘Leadenhall street’. References to circulating libraries (cited in 20 per cent of reviews of Minerva novels) may also be signalling Lane’s business and reputation. Lane’s name appears more prominently than his press’s in the reviews, likely because his earliest publications did not feature the striking gothic imprint of his later title pages. The earliest mention of Lane’s name in either periodical, however, identifies Lane as only one of several purveyors of bad novels. In 1793, the Critical complains of Belville Lodge that “[s]ome ingenuity seems to be exerted in filling two volumes with a meagre story—but what is impossible to a mind fraught with the rich treasures, dispensed by Lane, Hookham, and Co.”

As Hookham & Co. decreased their publishing of novels significantly in 1796, this comparison did not hold for long.

The Minerva Press is first directly referenced in the Critical’s 1795 review of Ellen Rushford, which the critics argue has ‘no want of [...] distinguishing characteristic[s] of the productions from the “Minerva press”, characteristics they go on to identify as ‘the frivolous and the improbable’. The Reviews are only later induced to mention the Minerva by name when a novel under their scrutiny calls them to it. A character in Catherina Harris’s Edwardina (1800) declares:
### Table 1. Reviews of Minerva Press Novels by the Monthly and Critical Reviews, 1790–1820

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names Lane/Minerva in review</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies class of novels</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions circulating library</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compares to other novel(s)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentimentality</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing quality</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consuming / Producing Minerva Press Novels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female readers</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data taken from Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820

but I think I will turn novel writer! [...] Nature gives me imagination, you bless me with a friend, and the Minerva offers liberal encouragement: and I repeat, when I have too much time, and too little money, why beshrew me, but I will turn novel writer.  

By quoting this passage in their short, Monthly Catalogue review, the Critical scoffs at the novel, the author and the Minerva’s business practices:

> How shall a word, issuing from the sequestered conclave of the Critical Reviewers, set aside a resolution so determinately bent on writing? We have not the vanity to expect such a power: but yet we will be bold, and speak our thoughts upon the subject. The fair author must write her next work better, or we shall not be disposed to praise it, however liberally the Minerva may think fit to pay for the copy.

Though Harris’s novel itself perpetuates the ‘Minerva authors as novice writers seeking easy money’ narrative, the Critical is keen to jump into a dialogue with the text, commenting on the Minerva’s ‘liberal encouragement’ of such authors, and pretending as if their very review does not smack of the ‘vanity of power’ they disavow. This instance of open discussion about the Minerva Press is unique, however, and the Reviews instead largely refer to the press by its location or circulating libraries. Leadenhall Street itself represents to Reviews
a factory of novel production: they declare in 1804 that ‘[a]mong the numerous works which issue from the prolific brains of those who seek their almost daily bread at the great manufacture in Leadenhall-street’ that occasionally one ‘author rises above the vulgar herd’—refusing to align a positive statement with the press’s name. They even slander authors directly, accusing Regina Maria Roche of being ‘one of those ladies who assiduously feed the pig-stye of literature in Leadenhall-street’.

A larger study of the Reviews’ treatment of Minerva novels shows that it is not direct references to the press, but rather the issue of ‘novel classes’ that distinguishes Minerva from other novels. As Table 1 demonstrates, one-fifth of the reviews identify the novel in question as part of a distinct group. For example, the Critical declares in 1790 that Semphronia is ‘the worst of [its] tribe’, suggesting a familial connection between the novel and others issuing from Leadenhall Street—a vein that continues across the lifetime of the press, stating of a novel published twenty-four years later that it should ‘not to be meanly appreciated amongst the fraternity to which it belongs’. Minervas are identified as a larger, more solidly subpar group when the same journal remarks a year later that ‘perhaps, among the wretched productions that have lately issued from the press in this department, it is no very great honour to be in the first line’. Once the ‘tribe’ has grown to a ‘department’, the reviews begin to diagram its identifying features, reflecting, for example, a month later of Lady Jane Grey (1791) that ‘[t]he language and sentiments of this novel greatly excel the merits of the usual sale-work in this department’. Language like the aforementioned ‘tribe’ and ‘department’ as well as ‘class’, ‘rank’, ‘station’, ‘species’ and ‘scale’ establish a hierarchical boundary, calling on divisive rhetoric to position Minerva productions as a class apart from other novels. While the Reviews already established a dichotomy of the novel, as described above (for example, reviewing a select few in the longer front section, and in contrast to one or two often negatives sentences on the lower ranks in the Monthly Catalogue), in the early 1790s the Critical established Lane’s Minerva novels as separate even from other ‘low’ novels of the Monthly Catalogue through a rhetoric that pushed them to the furthest periphery of the genre. The Critical notes in 1791 that Minerva Press novels have turned up ‘to fill up the vacuum which the secession of our best novel-writers had occasioned’—by this the Critical is likely referring to the lack of new novels by Charlotte Smith, who, after publishing a novel each in 1788 and 1789 (Emmeline and Ethelinde, respectively) had no new novel in 1790, and whose Celestina would not appear until July of 1791. Together with Frances Burney and Ann Radcliffe, Smith made up one of the ‘sister-queen’ novelists on whom the Reviews doted, clearly noting that they could admire some novels and praise them highly. Had the Reviews’ tradition been to provide reviews only of texts they endorsed, we might not have seen reviews of many Minervas. However, the Reviews advertise early on that their purpose in reviewing was so readers could ‘choose to have some idea of a book before they lay out their money or time on it’—their very structure required that they evaluate Minervas even
when they found nothing positive to say. Perhaps readers whose taste differed from those of review critics may have found the periodicals’ crushing dismissal of Lane’s novels a kind of recommendation in its own right.

Early reviews of Minerva Press novels provide summary and critique those novels’ ‘pathetic’ plots and bland characters, but generally ‘recommend [them] to the attention of women of every degree’. By the early 1800s few provide plot summary; rather, the content of Minerva novels is measurably evaluated by three categories: 1) their events’ probability (23 per cent of reviews); 2) their story’s originality (42 per cent); and 3) their sentimental style (16 per cent) (see Table 1, above). Sentimentality was connected with issues of plot and it dies out as a traceable feature after 1801, but reviews continue to focus on probability of plot events and originality in Minervas (see Figure 1, opposite). The Reviews declare improbability of plot as a leading defect in Minerva novels, often citing it in a list of other transgressions. This listing format of vague defects suggests that Minerva novels do not have more substantive qualities on which the Reviews could possibly comment. Therefore, the very form of the review articles ironically mirrors their argument about the content of Minerva novels themselves—a series of unfortunate ingredients. Reviews rave that Minervas in particular stand out as ‘a heterogeneous mass of improbability, inconsistency, and stupidity’, placing at their door the fault of introducing improbability into the circulation of the novel’s production in general. And perhaps reviewers would have been willing to stand for improbability alone as a novel’s flaw; however, they viewed it as intertwined with another characteristic: near half, 42 per cent of reviews, make statements about a Minerva novel’s lack of originality (Table 1, above). When the Critical declares in 1790 that ‘[u]ncommon and unexpected incidents please by their novelty’, they present originality as ‘uncommon’ in the Reviews’ evaluation formulae. Much as novels reviewed in the Monthly Catalogue were dismissed as ‘low’, or as part of Lane’s ‘tribe’, Review rhetoric assigned Minervas a status based on the concept of originality—they are represented as ‘common rank’ novels, with common events, characters or plots. This rhetorical strategy uses ‘common’ as both a unifier of the Minerva ‘rank’ and a sign of multiplicity.

Presenting novels as unoriginal and thus at the bottom of the literary hierarchy reinforced the Reviews’ role of providing guidance for authors and readers. Noting that Minervas contain elements ‘in common with all productions of the same class’ serves as a sorting mechanism that evaluates both the work’s content and literary merit. By privileging originality in novels, the Reviews were able to represent novels by anonymous authors of various levels of writing experience as low or ‘common’. ‘Common’ as a discursive term used to evaluate genre, or originality, also points to repetitive or familiar patterns traced across novels from the period. If a novel has ‘scarcely any event which we have not before witnessed, nor an escape which has not had a hundred prototypes’, then reviews of Minervas specifically singled those works out as ‘too much in the common strain to interest greatly’. Indeed, reviews exclaim that
FIG. 1. TOPIC OF GENRE EVALUATION: MINERVA NOVELS REVIEWED IN
MONTHLY AND CRITICAL REVIEWS, 1790–1820. ALL DATA FROM NRD.
so numerous are the novels which have been published of late years, that it requires no common abilities to invent one at present, in which either the plot or many of the incidents should not bear a striking resemblance to those that are to be found in others, already published. 41 All of this is ironic considering the listing format and ‘repetitive nature’ of the reviews themselves had become a staple format for that genre. 42 The Reviews also criticise novels for their combination of elements from other works. Fifteen per cent of Minerva reviews make direct comparison to other named novels (see Table 1, above), building a canon against which to evaluate this lower rank of publications. Reviews frequently refer to Defoe, Richardson and Fielding as foundational works of the genre. When comparing Minerva’s to recent publications, Radcliffe, Burney and Smith are held up as both examples of successful female novelists and pinnacles of their subgenres (gothic, comic and sentimental respectively).

Though the Reviews acknowledge these female authors as masters of their trade, articles continued to gender the labour of novel writing in denigrating ways. When criticising Minerva novels’ combination of ‘common’ genre elements, the Reviews deploy a metaphor that highlights the Minerva’s largely female authorship: sewing, more specifically, darning or patching. As if smiling on the quaint attempt of lower class women to mend worn clothing, one review declares The Fair Cambrians (1790) ‘a pleasing interesting story, made up, however, of shreds and patches from other works of this kind’. 43 Batchelor shows that women writers used various methods to think about and present their labour in ways that often complicate our assumptions about separate private and public spheres and that the Reviews’ focus on women novelists’ work of writing reinforces such a narrative.

During the Romantic period, the Reviews forced the needle and the pen first into a contrast, and then an eventual companionship, a relationship that deprecated the labour of Minerva authors’ professional work. The Reviews’ repeated use of the patchwork analogy represented Minerva novels as threadbare quilts stitched together with the rag remains of more brilliant ideas. ‘This is a cento, a patchwork from different novels’, one review says of Matilda Fitz-Aubin, a Sketch (1792): ‘we always trace the author in the steps of Miss Burney or Mrs Smith—even her characters are in no instance original’. 44 This use of a short Monthly Catalogue review to list canonical authors alongside stitching metaphors illustrates the Reviews’ practised and strategic deployment of criticisms, cementing our evaluation systems for Minerva novels for centuries (for example, the erroneous argument that Minerva’s formulaic novels required no labour and were thus written by and for the working classes). The patchwork analogy both denigrates the labour (feminine, domestic, non-challenging) and intellect (novels already sitting at the bottom of literary rigour), an emphasis that ‘holds intellectual and manual labour to be at odds with one another’—an idea perpetuated in continued criticism of Minervas, even with the rising commitment from the 1970s onward to studying non-canonical works and those
by women writers. For instance, the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* says of the press in 1995, ‘Minerva fiction was throwaway literature—quickly written, read, and forgotten. Reviewers gleefully condemned it.’ Indeed, modern scholars’ neglect of Minerva novels for so long in the study of the genre mirrors the Reviews’ declaration that those works ‘[deserve] not even the labour of pointing out [their] faults. The gulph of oblivion is already open to receive [them]’. This special issue does the cultural work of refusing to accept biased eighteenth-century reviews of these works at face value.

That the Reviews took time to critique Minervas thus attests to their anxieties about readers consuming novels without guidance, yet issues of readership are represented in a mere 8 per cent of reviews of Minervas. Mentions of circulating libraries (4 per cent) and even length of novels—citing which volumes are good and which could be skipped (15 per cent)—could be said to consider readers. However, over half (57 per cent) of reviews of Minervas reference authorship (Table 1), and likely the reputation Lane had for recruiting authors from among novel readers influenced this trend. Whether critics addressed the author’s intention for writing: ‘We are sorry to find, by the preface of this novel, that gain is the author’s chief motive for writing, not because we think that motive is an improper one, but because we are convinced the end cannot be answered by such productions as the Haunted Castle’; their oeuvre: ‘We have formerly acknowledged the pleasure which we received in perusing the works of Mrs. Bennet’; or offered advice: ‘we would advise the writer to cultivate, in future, a more correct taste’; the guardians of literary evaluation were keen to build a rhetoric around critiquing Minerva authors. Authors’ social status features in this rhetoric, often as conjecture. For example, ‘Belleville Lodge appears to be the production of some milliner’s apprentice, whose mind, wonderfully rich in expedients, provides fathers, brothers, and husbands, rich and handsome, suddenly and unexpectedly for all her young ladies’. At times, bibliographical information is taken from a novel’s prefatory material or combined with suppositions, as in the case of a December 1793 review of Sarah Green’s *Mental Improvement for a Young Lady, on her Entrance to the World, Addressed to a Favourite Niece* (1793), where the dedication and title reveal that Green is a ‘maiden aunt’ to one Charlotte. The review slanders the work (and Green herself) as the ‘maudlin production’ of one ‘who writes much, as she might be expected to talk, whilst under the operation of a dose of ratafie’. Green’s style is no less verbose or sentimental than similar productions, but the review accuses her of excessive drink and wild ramblings. The *Critical* excerpts her preface, sharing it with more readers than her novel itself would likely have found. These wild accusations speak to continued assumptions that Minerva novelists were unqualified women who did not take their work seriously—that is, hacks to be despised. The Reviews’ prejudice against possible lower-class and female authorship is specifically attached to Minerva novels. That these works uniquely received this pointed criticism about genre and authorship is made clear by a slip in the *Critical*’s reviewing practices. The *Critical* also reviewed Green’s
Mental Improvement earlier that same year, in April 1793—under the Monthly Catalogue genre heading of ‘miscellaneous’ rather than ‘Novels’. They list the chapter headings and conclude with this evaluation: ‘[the letters] contain many salutary advices, as well as just remarks, adapted to the female character, and are written with perspicuity.’ The Reviews’ rhetoric when reviewing Green’s work as a conduct book evaluates its style as clear and lucid: a direct contradiction to their later suggestion that the work is a ‘maudlin’ production, rife with ramblings composed under the influence of liqueur.

Other periodicals that printed book reviews did not have the same commitment as the Critical and the Monthly to notice all publications, regardless of their quality, so we find fewer reviews of Minerva novels in the Analytical Review (1788–98), the Edinburgh Review (1802–1929), the Anti-Jacobin Review (1798–1821) or the British Critic (1793–1826). However, the British Critic uses many of the same categories tracked in the Critical and the Monthly, noting of Minerva novels that the ‘species’ contains elements ‘improbable’, ‘extravagantly caricatured’ and ‘quite out of nature’. The British Critic even goes on to advise an author, citing another female novelist whom she might emulate: ‘If Mrs. H. should continue to cultivate this species of composition, we recommend her to study attentively (as her best model) the simple and unaffected, yet forcible and elegant, style of Mrs. Inchbald’. Other periodical reviews pick up the use of Minervas as a designated group of the genre, but were more likely to deploy its name (and all that was assumed with it) in a positive review by identifying a novel as not a part of the Minerva family.

Visibility of the Minerva Press in the Reviews

By choosing the Monthly or the Critical as their source for evaluations of recently published literature, readers were actively seeking out reviews and not simply encountering them amid the various other articles in magazines or newspapers. A quantitative examination of Lane’s presence within the pages of the Reviews highlights how ‘loud’ the press likely seemed to Romantic readers. In addition to the number of review articles, the NRD catalogues page space (to a 1/16 fraction) allotted in each review devoted to two categories: criticism and excerpt from the original work. Novels in our modern canon, like those of Frances Burney or Jane Austen, received more pages of review, often in the prominent front section of the periodical; placement and length often correlate to longevity of popularity. Lane’s productions however, were the most visible in terms of volume. The Reviews’ mission to review all recent publications forced them to include even those of which they disapproved, and this practice worked in Lane’s favour. Lane’s Minerva Press (later listed under Newman) is the most-reviewed novel publishing house from 1790 to 1820 (see Figure 2, opposite). With 309 reviews, Lane/Newman far outstrip their closest competitor for review articles, Longmans, whose works appeared in 192 articles during this period. Other well-known publishers, such as Robinsons, who famously paid £500 for Radcliffe’s Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), or Cadell, who published Burney’s Cecilia
Fig. 2. Review articles of novels in the *Monthly and Critical Reviews*, 1790–1820. All data from *NRD*. 
(1792), pale in comparison. In sheer volume, a Review reader was more likely to see reviews of Lane’s works than of any other publisher—thus, the popular observation that the market was ‘flooded’ with Minervas.

In addition to representing the highest volume of reviews, Lane was also most visible in the Monthly Catalogue section. Only 11 per cent of all novels reviewed in the Monthly and Critical during this period were featured in the front section of the periodical in multi-page reviews. As Figure 3 (opposite) shows, between 1790 and 1820, Lane had a mere seven novels reviewed in the prestigious front section, whereas Longmans’ novels received the most front-section reviews with thirty-seven (approximately one novel per year). Cadell is the only publisher whose novels are reviewed equally in both sections. Therefore, if a reader were flipping to the genre-divided Monthly Catalogue section and looking specifically under the heading ‘Novels’, they were more likely to see a series of Minervas reviewed each month, presenting the overwhelming notion that most recent novels were from Lane—like the full page of Minervas reviewed in Figure 4 (overleaf). Only in the make-up of review articles are Minervas less visible than novels by Lane’s competitors. Figure 5 (overleaf) shows the total number of pages of criticism devoted to each publisher, broken down by the content of those articles. Excerpts from a novel featured in the front section almost exclusively. This explains Longmans outstripping other publishers by more than two hundred pages of total review coverage, with over four hundred pages devoted to his novels. Novels reviewed in the Monthly Catalogue could expect a few lines of criticism at best. Because Lane has the most novels reviewed in the Monthly Catalogue (see Figure 2, above), his sheer volume of reviews calculates a page space in excess to that of Cadell (Figure 5), though Cadell’s novels are more frequently reviewed in the front section, and have a balanced excerpt-to-criticism content. Though reviews of Minervas are not prominently placed, or as lengthy as Longman’s, Lane maintains a strong visibility in two of the three categories the NRD helps us visualise, so as to imagine how Romantic Review readers saw them depicted. Review readers of the period, then, had constant exposure to the rhetoric these periodicals deployed in critiquing Lane’s novels, and it is this exposure that explains how that rhetoric continues in reflections on the Minerva Press, its novels and authors into the next two centuries.

**Perpetuating Review Rhetoric**

After the Minerva Press passed from Newman to Robert S. Parry in 1848 until 1854, it froze in time—solidifying its place in history through its contemporary reputation. This reputation was founded by Review rhetoric and introduced to Romantic readers when the novels were newly published. The Reviews had longer lives than other journals: they were often bound and kept in public and private libraries as references for criticism and as a record of England’s literary production. A mere ten years after the closure of the press, the Minerva is caricatured in Charles Selby’s play *Boots at the Swan: A Farce in One Act*, performed at the Strand Theatre in 1842. When Henry Higgins tells a friend
FIG. 3. PLACEMENT OF REVIEW ARTICLES BY PUBLISHER IN THE *MONTHLY* AND *CRITICAL REVIEWS*, 1790–1820. DATA FROM NRD.
MONTHLY CATALOGUE.

Extracts from the Works of the most celebrated Italian Poets. With Translations by admired English Authors. 8vo. 8s. Boards. Rivingtons. 1798.

This volume will be useful to those who are studying the Italian language. The selections are, in general, such as may be approved.

NOVELS, &c.

More Ghosts! By the Wife of an Officer, Author of the Irish Heiress. 3 Vols. 12mo. 10s. 6d. Sewed. Lane. 1798.

More Ghosts would have been superfluous in the present state of novel-writing, had not the author of this work conjured up her ghosts with a view of dissipating the horrors, lately excited in the tender breast of many a boarding-school miss, by the more artful and terrible dealers in the article. The ghosts in this piece are rather cunning than terrible; and they add considerably to our entertainment. The characters are more analogous to those of real life, than the faultless monsters which are indebted to imagination only for a temporary existence: and their adventures lead, by easy and natural means, to many just reflections on the errors of education and the irregularity of the passions. As this production is offered to the public by a widow, who hopes to render her pen subservient to the support of herself and her offspring, those who are in quest of the amusement which novels afford, will not, we hope, be inattentive to a claim that will yield them a gratification of a superior kind.

Duffendorf; or, the Fratricide. A Romance. By Anna Maria Mackenzie. 3 Vols. 12mo. 10s. 6d. Sewed. Lane. 1797.

With regard to the incidents of this romance, the writer imitates those of Mrs. Radcliffe; but she is far from being equal to that lady in this branch of composition. It seems to be agreed that those who write on the horrid plan must employ the same instruments—cruel German counts, each with two wives—old castles—private doors—sliding partitions—banditti—affairs—ghosts, &c.

We have often had occasion to censure the absurd and incorrect language of novels in general; and from such censure this romance is not exempt.

Palmyra and Ermance. A Novel. By Mrs. Meere, Author of Count St. Blancard. 3 Vols. 12mo. 10s. 6d. Sewed. Lane. 1797.

Innocent amusement, without any fixed purpose of the moral kind, appears to be the object of this novel. The characters, principally those of France under the old government, are drawn with spirit. The dialogue is lively; and the incidents of the first and second volumes are interesting. The character of a fop, partly on the English and partly on the French plan, is well sustained, and is exposed to just contempt. In the third volume, the story is unne-
Fig. 5. Number of Pages of Review Criticism and Excerpt by Publisher in The Monthly and Critical Reviews, 1790–1820. Data from NRD.
about the women he is courting, he disarms an assumption that she is a ‘snuffy old girl’, by declaring that she is the opposite: ‘a romantic lady, whose head is turned by novels and romances, gleaned from the Minerva press’. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reflections on the novel’s development and authorship and of the Romantic literary marketplace perpetuate the areas of Review criticism tracked in Table 1. Scholars comment on ‘romantic lady’ readers and feminine authorship, the lengthy yet cheaply printed quality of Minervas, genre evaluations focused on probability, originality and sentimentality, and the circulating library. By doing so, these critics ensure that the scurrilous reputation of Lane is not forgotten as his press’s individual publications are, but rather is repeated until its origin in Reviews is forgotten, and these ideas are instead spouted as truths.

In A Letter to the Right Hon. & Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London: In Reply to the Article in No. clxxii of the Quarterly Review (1850), the author responds to advice on hiring a governess and is concerned about her lack of formal education. ‘Let not the reviewer imagine that because he has taken this precaution’, the text warns, of selecting a less scholarly governess, that ‘her imagination and intellect will not seek to cultivate themselves, and that in the most morbid and dangerous manner […] by reading “Books of Beauty,” and all the wretched stuff of the English or the French Minerva press’. Peter Bayne’s Essays in Biography and Criticism (1857) perpetuates almost every vein of rhetoric concerning Minervas produced by the Reviews. He declares ‘this class of novels’ to have plots representing ‘a hurly-burly of passionate excitement’, signalling that Minervas have always been of a lower status of literature. He goes on to cite evaluations connected to originality, probability and sentimentality. In Minerva novels, Bayne tells us ‘we shall find that its absurdities are, on the whole, traceable to an absence of that sound, basing realism which we have praised so highly [in modern novels]’, and that they are all alike: ‘this class of novels appears to belong the whole series bearing the title of Mysteries, whether of Paris, of London, or Udolphi’. Bayne also turns his attention to literary critics of earlier periods (counting himself among the Victorian sufferers of such labour):

[The press] rendered an invaluable service to criticism, by furnishing an incomparable example of those false sources of popularity, those exaggerated descriptions of passion, those morbid excitements, those modish ideals,—of honor, of beauty, of picturesqueness, of sublimity,—which may, for a time, secure unbounded success, but which, having no root in nature, are fleeting as the whims they pamper. No critic can henceforward be at a loss for specimens of sentimentality, theatricality, fustian, and the mock sublime. Since nature alone affords exhaustible variety, the Minerva Press novel becomes soon recognisable, by the recurring circle of its plots and characters.

Bayne’s characterisation of the Minerva Press is plucked from the pages of the Monthly’s and Critical’s articles—he bemoans the volume of ‘specimens’ and their ‘recurring circle of plots and characters’, and, like the Reviews’ premoni-
tion that a Minerva novel would have a short life on a circulating-library shelf, he calls them ‘false sources of popularity’.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century reflections on great literary and cultural figures reiterate Review rhetoric, stating a work was ‘dubbed by the literary critics of a past era as the Minerva Press School of Fiction, a school of whose writers dealt in the marvellous, used high-sounding adjectives, defied the unities of time and place, dismissed probability as an item of no importance’. A new readership was exposed to the Reviews’ slanders of Lane’s press through biographical works on figures like Scott, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Lamb. In one story about Lamb’s removal from society after she was declared insane, it is noted that Lamb ‘for her part, chiefly restricted her reading to William Lane’s Minerva Press Novels, which she borrowed from the famous library in Leadenhall Street’—and goes on to list those works, including those of Mary Meeke (now known to be Elizabeth Meeke) and Ann Radcliffe, the latter of whom had not published with Lane. This account of Lamb as a weak-minded woman and Minerva-novel reader alludes to Review assumptions about the audience for Minerva works, and cites the novels’ relatively simple storylines. Percy Shelley, on the other hand, read Minerva novels as a boy—‘supped somewhat heartily of the garbage which they purveyed’, which influenced his Zastrozzi, a Romance (1810). His biographers state, with mocking tone, that the young Shelley would ‘haunt the circulating library’ for Minervas, and refer to this clandestine pastime to show how far Shelley’s genius developed across his career. Such statements perpetuated a narrative of Minervas as low, trashy and transitory.

The Romantic novel was often said to have been brought to fruition with the 1814 publication of Scott’s Waverley; or, ’tis Sixty Years Since. Biographers declared that he ‘[pioneered] a new epoch of Literature’ and to bolster this claim all novels that came before his debut were discredited. So, although the genre was already wildly popular by the early nineteenth century, largely authored by women, Scott’s biographers grouped all low novels together as one species, and declared that ‘the namby-pamby productions of the Minerva Press had brought novels into such disrepute that they were forbidden articles, and their perusal was not only held as pernicious, but their readers were actually objects of ridicule’. Other biographers admit sheepishly that ‘there [was] another phalanx of novelists who lived, but can scarcely be said to have flourished, early in the present century. Their works, from the source of their publication in Leadenhall Street, London, were known as “Minerva-press Novels”.’ Discrediting these ‘scarcely flourishing’ novels was performed with practised and familiar rhetoric. In his Sir Walter Scott: The Story of his Life (1871), R. Shelton Mackenzie declares that the Minerva authors ‘dealt largely in common-place [topics], [were] very deficient in constructive skill, usually extended each of her romances to four and even five volumes, [...] [and were] in eager request at all the circulating-libraries in town and country’. Other biographers went so far as to lament the very existence of ‘the illiterate productions of the Minerva Press’: ‘Why [Scott] was so late in coming into his own kingdom [novel writing] is perhaps easier to explain [...]

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during his early manhood the novel had fallen into disrepute, and was associated with the discredited Minerva Press.\textsuperscript{70} In characterising the very novel market of the period William Connor Sydney’s \textit{The Early Days of Nineteenth-Century England} (1898) declared:

\begin{quote}
the tacit condemnation under which fiction of all kinds lay at that time, [was] undoubtedly due to the existence of a colossal weight of indecorous and immoral trash dignified with the titles of novels and romances with which the shelves of the circulating libraries in town and country alike were plentifully stocked […] turned out by the scores from what was known as ‘The Minerva Press’\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

He claimed that ‘these novels enjoyed a surreptitious circulation in high life […] through the medium of the hair-dresser or the mantua-maker’ who snuck them to clients who would not be seen at the circulating library, and that they were ‘crammed from beginning to end with the wildest improbabilities’.\textsuperscript{72} Repeating the Reviews’ criticisms of the Minerva novels then, served to strengthen Scott’s contribution to the genre and his merit as a writer in general.

By the early twentieth century, the Minerva’s reputation and Review rhetoric surrounding it had woven itself into the very fabric of the English language—oxymoronic and hyperbolic. Peter Francisco Smith’s 1902 language primer \textit{The Use of Words and Phrases: Designed for the Use of Schools, Colleges, Writers and Public Speakers} uses the Minerva Press as an example of an oxymoron—for how can a press that produces such ill-reputed novels claim to be under the protection of the goddess of wisdom? One section gives the sample sentence as follows: ‘The Minerva press sends forth, daily, in the most abundant profusion, multitudinous books of amusing nonsense. By the holocaust of four-fifths of the books which find a place in public and private libraries, the world would reap a harvest of blessings.’\textsuperscript{73} Early scholarly interest in the press in \textit{Notes & Queries} wondered about the Minerva’s role in the history of the novel, while also repeating the Reviews’ criticisms. Jonathan Bouchier asked in January 1887: Where was the Minerva Press, and who was the publisher? At what period did it most flourish, and when did it begin and when cease? Were its publications all novels of the ‘trashy’ description; are any of them remembered now? who were the chief writers? Did any of the authors who were eminent in other respects write for the Minerva Press? Were ‘Lane’s novels […] those scanty intellectual viands of the whole female reading public’, mentioned by Charles Lamb in his ‘Elia’ essay, ‘Sanity of True Genius,’ connected with the Minerva Press?\textsuperscript{74}

While Bouchier received responses directing him to its premises in Leadenhall Street, others wrote that ‘the specialty of the Minerva Press was novels and romances of the Mrs. Radclyffe [sic] and the Anna Matilda school of sentiment and sensation, that went down, with the circulating libraries.’\textsuperscript{75} Of the quality of their productions, relating to length and printing style (see Table 1) another respondent reported: ‘The Minerva Press Novels were in three, four, or five highly-spiced volumes, and up to about 1828 were generally printed on a harsh
textured paper of a dirty straw colour'. These late nineteenth-century scholars reported from memory or from friends their ‘first-hand’ accounts of William Lane and the Minerva Press, and yet their assessments repeat criticisms and rhetoric from Romantic Review periodicals.

Understanding how that rhetoric has come to us from such highly critical and problematic sources as the Monthly and Critical further emphasises the need for a fairer, more balanced study of Minerva novels and authors in the Romantic marketplace. That such a prolific business, which represented so many and diverse authors of the Romantic novel, carries contemporary rhetoric into modern scholarship should remind us that perpetuating such echoes does injustice to the very voices we seek to revive. As we welcome Minerva authors and novels back into the fold of literary scholarship, we must recognise the rhetorical inheritance that comes with them, and build new systems for evaluating and studying them that are not rooted in historic and gendered prejudices.

Notes
Many thanks to Jennie Batchelor for her feedback.
1. Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820 (NRD); William St Clair, The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 244. The NRD is a digital database of reviews of novels from the Critical Review and the Monthly Review published from January 1790 to December 1820, along with other bibliographical and publishing data.
2. See Jennie Batchelor’s ‘The Claims of Literature: Women Applicants to the Royal Literary Fund, 1790–1810’, Women’s Writing, 12 (2005), 505–21 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699080502002666>. Batchelor examines women novelists who supported their families by their work, and later applied to the fund for assistance—most notable is the prolific Eliza Parsons (1739–1811).
3. By 1814, the novel was well-enough established that Sir Walter Scott had not only left aside his poetry to pen the outrageously popular Waverley series, he was also editing and writing introductions for Ballantyne’s Novelist’s Library (1821–24). This anthology series and Anna Letitia Barbauld’s British Novelists (1810) were produced cheaply under the assumption that the novel was so important and popular by this time that readers of even the lowest orders, like ‘some milliner’s apprentice’ would desire a collection of their own—‘Belleville Lodge, a novel’, Critical Review, 2nd ser. 7 (Mar 1793), 357.
5. I adopt Derek Roper’s practice of referring to periodicals as ‘Reviews’, and individual articles within the periodicals as ‘reviews’—see Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788–1802 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978).
6. Review data from the NRD. Minerva production numbers from Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwerling, The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 1, 855 and 11, 8–84. I have here removed any duplicates where Garside, Raven and Schöwerling counted a novel more than once because of Lane’s early imprints that included both his name and the name of the Minerva Press. The
total number of Lane/Minerva/Newman & Co. imprints recorded by Garside, Raven and Schöwerling from 1790 to 1820 is 601.
12. The *Monthly* and the *Critical* would later be joined by the *Analytical Review*, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*. By the 1830s, Review periodicals would move away from the ‘criticism and excerpt’ style and toward the essay evaluations that are the foundations of modern book-reviewing practices—see Forster, ‘Book Reviewing’, p. 632.
15. Occasionally, these reviews provide our only record of a work’s existence when no copy is extant; see Antonia Forster, ‘Reviewing the Novel’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by J. A. Downie (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 372–87.
27. Ibid., p. 354.
29. ‘Trescothick Bower, or the Lady of the West Country, a Tale’, *Critical Review*, 4th ser. 5 (Jan 1814), 99.
30. See Batchelor, *Women’s Work*, pp. 5–9 for an extended discussion on the interchangeable nature of the words ‘class’ and ‘status’ to refer to both qualities of literature and the economic status of women, particularly women writers during this period.
32. ‘Persiana; or, the Nymph of the Sea. A Novel’, *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 2 (July 1791), 356 [emphasis mine].
33. ‘Lady Jane Grey, a Historical Tale’, *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 3 (Sept 1791), 234.
37. ‘Edmund’, p. 454.
38. ‘The Butler’s Diary; or, the History of Miss Eggerton’, *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 4 (Feb 1792), 235.
43. ‘The Fair Cambrians, a Novel’, *Critical Review*, 69 (June 1790), 712.
45. Batchelor, *Women’s Work*, p. 25. Even though Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818) is produced using this same patchwork method, albeit in parody, she also deploys Review rhetoric in her manifesto to both define what makes a good novel and to shame those who criticise the genre.
47. ‘Sidney Castle: or, the Sorrows of De Courci, a Novel’ Critical Review, 2nd ser. 6 (Dec 1792), 561.
49. ‘Belleville Lodge’, p. 357.
50. ‘Mental Improvement for a Young Lady, on her Entrance to the World, Addressed to a Favourite Niece’, Critical Review, 2nd ser. 9 (Dec 1793), 477. Ratafia is a liqueur (OED: ‘ratafia’ n. sense 1a).
51. ‘Mental Improvements’, p. 360.
52. Also, these periodicals ran for shorter periods, had more specified audiences and do not often encompass the period when Lane’s press operated.
53. ‘Andrew Stuart, or the Northern Wanderer’, British Critic, 16 (Nov 1800), 556.
54. For more on how Review periodicals were consumed by readers, see Megan Peiser, ‘Reviews as Database: Reading the Review Periodical in Eighteenth-Century England’, PBSA, 111.4 (2017), 491–511 <https://doi.org/10.1086/694572>. Visibility of Lane’s press may differ significantly in other periodicals where reading practices varied from that of Review readers.
56. This chart features any publisher with more than twenty-five review articles in the NRD.
57. Unlike Lane, most of these publishers did not specialise in one genre, but rather spread their business throughout the literary marketplace by publishing a variety of works.
67. Ibid., pp. 9–10.
69. Ibid.
70. Charles Alexander Young, *The Waverley Novels, an Appreciation* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1907), pp. 47 and 22.
71. Sydney, *Early Days of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 231
72. Ibid., p. 231.
73. Peter Francisco Smith, *Smith on the Use of Words and Phrases: Designed for the Use of Schools, Colleges, Writers and Public Speakers* (Atlanta: Foote & Davies, 1902), p. 12 [emphasis in original]. ‘Minerva press’ is later given under the ‘M’ heading for words and phrases to practise putting into sentences (p. 18).
75. A. Hall, ‘Minerva Press’, *N&Q*, 7th ser. 3.60 (1887), 155.

**Referring to this Article**

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**Date of acceptance:** 22 January 2019.
In a passage near the end of *Northanger Abbey*, in what may well now be the most famous literary characterisation of Minerva Press gothic, Jane Austen refers archly to the ‘charming’ works of Mrs Radcliffe and ‘all her imitators’. The novels of Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), in particular *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), are discussed throughout Austen’s tale as the favoured reading material of its unlikely heroine, Catherine Morland. But *Northanger Abbey*’s premise also depends on our awareness of a much larger body of texts, among them those ‘hundreds and hundreds’ of novels that Catherine’s suitor Henry Tilney claims to have read (p. 108), as well as the group of seven ‘all horrid’ novels recommended to Catherine by her friend Isabella Thorpe (p. 33). Although Austen only periodically mentions specific titles of contemporary novels, and never emphasises a particular publisher as their source, her readers would no doubt have recognised the Minerva Press—the most prolific publisher of novels in Austen’s lifetime and the publishing house behind six of the seven ‘Horrid’ novels—in her satirical depiction of the recent rage for popular fiction.

Austen’s reference to Radcliffe and ‘all her imitators’ can thus be seen, from a modern scholar’s perspective, both as a satirical characterisation of an all-too-familiar group of novels and as a record of a historical mode of describing those same texts. For, although her iteration of it is probably the best known to a twenty-first-century reader, Austen was not the coiner of this phrase, and she was far from the last to use it. This essay reconsiders and reorients the seemingly familiar language of ‘imitation’ as it has been used to describe the novel of the 1790s, arguing not only that a broader and more nuanced understanding of ‘imitation’ is essential to our understanding of the Romantic era’s popular (and not-so-popular) fiction, but that the very notion of ‘imitation’ should be understood as a crucial fulcrum in the ongoing Romantic debate over the literary status of the novel. Following Austen’s lead, I take the idea of *gothic* imitation as a starting point for thinking about imitation more broadly: ‘imitation’, as I show, is a double-edged sword, often wielded against the popular novelist but also deliberately employed by her. Recent scholarship on book history, popular fiction and the gothic has already begun to re-evaluate many of the novels so frequently dismissed, then and now, as mere imitations. In this essay, I explore some of the many ways in which novelists used imitation quite consciously, not least as a means of reaching out to a community of readers who understood
I suggest that the fiction produced by the Minerva Press’s novelists is deeply entwined with the press’s status as Britain’s highest-producing novel publisher, in that the form and function of Minerva’s novels stem from their collective identity: each novel is produced and consumed specifically as one of many.

I am far from alone in noting that the popular fiction of the 1790s and early 1800s seems to be unusually—perhaps even uniquely—interconnected. Elizabeth Neiman has recently described Minerva Press novelists as ‘develop[ing] their own model of collective authorship’, in which these writers ‘[link] their works to the codes and conventions of formula’, ‘connect their writings to seminal literary and philosophical texts’ and ‘[connect] with each other over space and time via a market-driven system of exchange’. Deidre Lynch describes a slightly different kind of interconnectedness, noting the gothic’s affinity for literary referentiality and writing that these novels ‘are remarkable […] for the density of their intertextual allusions’, while Melissa Sodeman explores the connection of women writers to the popular marketplace, arguing that their novels ‘memorialize the literary–historical conditions of their writing’. Other scholars including Franz Potter, Anthony Mandal, Diane Long Hoeveler and Edward Jacobs have considered various facets of the Romantic novel’s remarkable web of relationships. Here, I examine this interconnectedness specifically in terms of ‘imitation’: how was imitation used to characterise popular fiction in this period, and what did these characterisations imply? Even more importantly, how does embracing, rather than rejecting, the label of ‘imitation’ and seeing it as a rich and flexible practice rather than just a restrictive critical discourse allow us to better understand the fiction of the period? James Watt has shown how Minerva gothic novels in particular have long been dismissed as ‘symbols of mass-produced uniformity’; I suggest that we should, instead, value their variations within the constraints of commodity form as uniquely compelling attributes.

While the distinctiveness of certain plot elements and the presence of the highly visible Radcliffe made the gothic a prime target for dismissive claims of imitation, I close this essay by briefly showing how widely the concept applies to Minerva novels across genres—and, I would ultimately suggest, to networks of novels across publishers. In so arguing, I simultaneously make a claim for the importance of continued introspection on and innovation in our own critical methods. In an age where we are deluged with print in ways never before seen, where fan fiction, hyperlinks, literary prizes and reader-generated reviews (among many other phenomena) force us to grapple on a daily basis with issues of originality, multiplicity, reputation and excess, the critical problems raised by the Minerva Press and its novels are newly urgent. Despite the drastic changes in the conditions of reading and authorship since the Romantic period, we still recognise both the anxiety inspired by too many texts and too little time, and the generative creativity and pleasure to be found in a like-minded literary community. Literary overwhelm necessitates categorisation and systems of selection, which, as in the Minerva Press’s era, tend to be strongly inflected by perceptions.
of genre related to gender and prestige. Considering the foundations of these perceptions in the mass-produced novel’s early decades may shed new light on our present-day reading circumstances; conversely, recognising the inseparability of concerns about literary quantity and literary quality—and acknowledging the broad range of possible responses to such concerns—suggests new scholarly approaches to the literature of the past.

‘Imitators of Radcliffe’

William Lane’s London publishing business was relatively well established, but not yet famous, when he founded the Minerva Press in 1790. His new business model was uniquely well timed to capitalise on—and contribute to—the meteoric rise of a new genre: the gothic novel. Ann Radcliffe published her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, in 1789; this was followed by *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), the very successful *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and then her best-known works, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). During the very same years that the Minerva Press grew from fledgling press to publishing behemoth, capturing fully one-third of the market for novels, Radcliffe’s fame, and the popularity of the gothic novel, increased exponentially. While this synchronicity has often been attributed straightforwardly to Radcliffe’s critical success—and her works indubitably inspired direct responses of numerous kinds, stage adaptations and poems, as well as novels—such an explanation not only overstates the coherence and uniformity of the ‘gothic’ and minimises the contributions of countless individual authors, but it obscures the multilayered connections between authors, works and motifs that, as I will suggest here, characterise the period’s popular fiction. The extent to which any early 1790s novels should be seen as ‘imitative’ of Radcliffe’s work is currently being challenged by scholars including Yael Shapira, who points to the significant divergences from Radcliffe in the novels of Minerva authors like Isabella Kelly and, in forthcoming work, reconsiders Radcliffe’s place in gothic chronology.

In this essay, I take a different approach to the idea of imitation—and, indeed, to the idea of ‘the gothic’. I am less concerned with the genealogy or definition of genre—who published what first; how gothic is the gothic?—than with the explicit and implicit ways that the novels I analyse do function as (by my definition) imitations. That is, they form a body that is explicitly referential and shares key identifiers, allusions and genre markers, but they also challenge the idea of isolated genius and, most importantly, the notion that imitation is or must be abject or culturally disempowered. I follow the long-standing critical habit of identifying this group of novels, which do undeniably share a number of distinctive attributes, as ‘gothic’ in this essay in order to illuminate how the repetition—or imitation—of recognisable tropes produces genres that are recognisable to the reader as such. As I will suggest, however, a sustained examination of imitation-as-practice ultimately reveals genre itself as porous and protean rather than fixed, and constantly evolving in relation to past works and reader expectations.
If there are two sides to the story of gothic imitation, the better-known one is clearly that espoused by numerous scornful critics. It is not at all difficult to find examples of 1790s reviewers lending credence to Austen’s depiction of the literary landscape as a sea of nameless imitations. *The Abbey of St Asaph* (1795), declared the *Critical Review* in 1795, was composed ‘[i]n humble imitation of the well-known novels of Mrs. Radcliffe’, by 1797, a reviewer at the *Monthly Visitor* would write of a particularly unfortunate novel: ‘This work, as an imitation of Ann Radcliffe, is perhaps one of the most despicable performances that ever appeared’.16 Even more straightforwardly pejorative was the *Critical Review*’s claim that it was a severe ‘penance’ for enjoyment of earlier novels to be forced to review ‘such vapid and servile imitations as the Orphan of the Rhine, and other recent romances’.17 Such uses of ‘imitation’ clearly function not only to identify supposed similarities between texts, but to place the ‘imitations’ in a subordinate literary position to a more valorised ‘original’.

‘Since Mrs. Radcliffe’s justly admired and successful romances, the press has teemed with stories of haunted castles and terrors; the incidents of which are so little diversified, that criticism is at a loss to vary its remarks’, wrote one reviewer in the *Critical Review* in 1796.18 Although this now famous remark is often used in contemporary criticism as a straightforward indictment of the fiction of the age, for the purposes of my argument, it is the reviewer’s comments about critical unoriginality that seem remarkably prescient. A genre-specific identification of a literary fashion was clearly also functioning as a convenient catch-all phrase, designed to dismiss the works discussed as ‘imitations’ and to effectively exclude them from the realm of literary criticism. Reliance on this formula could be a shorthand with which critics—possibly anxious about the increasing numbers of novels taxing their review capacity—could categorise and dismiss at least one substantial group of them.19 As Megan Peiser notes in her essay in this issue, summing up Minerva novels pejoratively as a ‘class’ or ‘tribe’ of their own—often using originality as a criterion for so doing—was common practice in the era’s major reviews (see p. 130 of this issue). While Austen’s defence of novelists in *Northanger Abbey* wryly critiques such blanket dismissals, these summations have had lasting effects: later scholars have seized on the formulation ‘imitators of Radcliffe’, perpetuating it widely and often uncritically.20 In the next section, I examine some of these ‘imitations’ themselves, arguing that whereas the charge of imitation became grounds for dismissal, for a clear verdict of ‘not-literature’ on the part of reviewers, the books themselves showcase the imitative mode in order to capitalise on the narrative possibilities of genre. This opposition arises from the advent of mass production and mass consumption: critics identified overwhelming volume—the ‘innumerable’ gothics—as a symbol of non-value, but the novels use their own strength in numbers as a symbol of literary power.

Gothic Machinery and Generic Expectations
Writing the preface to her gothic novella, *The Castle of Kolmeras*, in 1804, Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis explicitly acknowledged the perceived relationship
between the genre in which she wrote and Ann Radcliffe. As soon as Kolmeras was published, she declared:

I shall speedily publish another under the title of The Castle of Ben-theim [...] [which] I found ready to my hands, and all in a fine state of ruin, on the road from Hamburgh [...] As I went over it, I thanked heaven that Mrs. Radcliffe had not been there before me; for she could not have failed to take possession of so fine a groundwork for a Romance.21

It may surprise a modern reader, especially one who has just read through the litany of criticism aimed at novelists who wrote in a Radcliffean vein, to find the author mentioned so unabashedly as a model and potential competitor. In fact, however, such a reference is quite characteristic of the Minerva gothic, and exemplifies the way that Minerva novelists perform literary influence. Here, literary inspiration (the ‘groundwork for a Romance’) is not only physically concrete, it is characterised as accessible by any one of a network of authors, each aware of the others, familiar with the tropes their novels share and equally capable of capitalising on a new source of inspiration. Referencing the castle’s ready-to-hand ‘machinery’—‘It was besieged in 1794, its walls are battered with cannon, several of its apartments are yet stained with blood, its courts are full of human bones, &c.’ (p. 4)—De Genlis invites satirical recognition of these well-known motifs, but also suggests that Radcliffe herself is no less dependent on them than any other gothic writer. The idea of ‘imitation’, in other words, is not denied, rebuffed or shamefacedly acknowledged; rather, it is openly invoked as a kind of kinship among authors and a source of humorous familiarity for readers.

Reviewers, of course, did not necessarily share this perspective, and the use and reuse of recognisable gothic formulae form one of the most frequent targets of gothic criticism. Just as The Abbey of St Asaph was said to be ‘duly equipped with all the appurtenances of ruined towers, falling battlements, moats, draw-bridges, Gothic porches, tombs, vaults, and apparitions’,22 another novel, Dusseldorf; or, the Fratricide (1798), was summed up with the remark: ‘It seems to be agreed that those who write on the horrific plan must employ the same instruments—cruel German counts, each with two wives—old castles—private doors—sliding pannels—banditti—assassins—ghosts, &c.’23 When discussing The Wanderer of the Alps (1797), the Critical Review referred to ‘the hackneyed and borrowed machinery of haunted castles, skeletons, banditti, &c.’24 Whether characterised as ‘appurtenances,’ ‘ingredients’ or ‘machinery’, descriptions like these reinforce the idea that the gothic novel depends on certain highly predictable topoi. What such a formulation leaves out entirely, however, is the potential that such set elements provide for creative variation.25 Precisely because certain ‘ingredients’ of these gothic fictions are so predictable, authors were able to meaningfully alter and destabilise them to create a range of effects. Predicating their experiments on an assumed readership intimately familiar with the ‘norms’ of the genre, Minerva’s authors undermine and repurpose the gothic conventions they employ.
If castles, banditti and ghosts create the mandatory backdrop for a gothic tale, the unfortunate young women who encounter them are no less central—and no less stereotyped. Marilyn Butler sums up the situation thus:

The commonest of all plots of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel involves a frail protagonist in terrible danger. She [...] is placed in a hostile, threatening, mysterious environment, usually so prodigiously large that it dwarfs her; she is made prisoner; she is threatened by individuals who should protect her.\textsuperscript{26}

Unsurprisingly, then, given the trends I have outlined, Minerva authors frequently use their heroines to play up, and to question, gothic stereotypes. This pattern is evident in three best-selling gothic novels by two of the Minerva press’s best-known gothic novelists: *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *Lucy* (1794) by Eliza Parsons, and *Clermont* (1798) by Regina Maria Roche.\textsuperscript{27} In all three novels, the narratives use their young heroines to call attention to the very predictability of the ‘machinery’ that operates their tales. These narrative ruptures can be brief and humorous, as when the young heroine of *Lucy*, immured in a ruin with her adoptive parents, wonders, ‘by what means did we come to this ugly old castle?’, echoing the thoughts of many a reader bewildered by the oversupply of ruined castles in the gothic landscape.\textsuperscript{28} Occasionally, they seem to call the centrality of the gothic setting into question; in *Clermont*, for example, Madeline’s new romantic prospects are accompanied by a complete revolution in her feelings from one day to the next:

How light was the step—how bright was the eye—how gay was the smile of Madeline when she descended the next morning to the breakfast parlour [...] the appearance of every thing seemed changed, the awful gloom which had so long pervaded the apartments, was banished; and in the landscape before the windows Madeline now discovered beauties which had before escaped her notice.\textsuperscript{29}

This change is so dramatic that it throws even the actual gloominess of the setting into doubt, suggesting that, packed as this novel is with terrifying generic set pieces, it is ultimately the protagonist’s emotions—her potentially unexpected responses to expected narrative stereotypes—that form much of its interest for the reader.

On other occasions, novels contain narrative interjections or tonal inconsistencies that throw the status of the entire novel—its seriousness, its intended effect, its likely outcome—into question. When Matilda, the heroine of *Castle Wolfenbach*, finally penetrates the hidden room in the castle where a countess has been cruelly imprisoned, for example, we are told that she finds lines of poetry cut into the window with a diamond, and that these writings are ‘expressive of misery, though not of poetical talent’.\textsuperscript{30} Given that the reader has already been alerted that these lines are one of the most terrifying aspects of the castle—Matilda is warned before visiting that it contains ‘[in]scriptions [...] on the windows, to make a body’s hair stand on end’ (p. 4)—it is difficult to know how to respond to this sudden cool appraisal. Taking the statement as a joke
undermines the whole premise of the novel as terrifying; to interpret Matilda’s words as seriously meant, however, places her in the role of jaded critic rather than compassionate heroine. Lines like this should certainly be understood in part as what Horner and Zlosnik have identified as gothic’s ‘Comic Turn’: that is, the potential for comedy that they argue ‘is intrinsic to a mode of writing that has been hybrid since its very inception’.31 However, I would also suggest that Matilda’s comment is most resonant only when it is read in context: that is, against a backdrop of dozens of other gothic novels in which characters compose poetry of questionable merit at every opportunity.32 (While the quality of gothic poetry is of course a matter of subjective judgment, it is tempting to read this line as a gentle dig at Radcliffe, whose heroines’ poetic flights are often cited as evidence of her genius.) Similarly, Lucy’s narrator remarks at one point that the eponymous heroine (while exploring a deserted underground passage) is ‘entirely unacquainted with any stories of ghosts and apparitions’ and thus ‘apprehend[s] no danger’ and is not ‘sensible of the hazards she run[s]’ (i, 76). The necessity for an explanation of this kind, of course, only stems from the sure awareness of a projected reader who will know exactly what kind of ‘story’ Lucy is in, and what kinds of ‘hazards’ she is sure to face in it. In all of these cases, the novels’ genre becomes their subject.

Although examples of this kind could be gathered endlessly, I will conclude this discussion with one more cluster of references from Lucy, which illustrates the potential range of purposes to which such metacommentary could be put. At the stage of the novel in which the heroine seems not yet to have recognised her gothic status, the narrator suggests that her lack of generic self-identification—that is, her failure to act as the heroine of a gothic romance should do—may stem from a similar failure on the part of her guardians, given their unseemly (for the gothic) dependence on the prosaic needs of life. Upon first settling in the ‘ugly old castle’ that Lucy wonders at, their first act is ‘planting potatoes’ (i, 4), and potatoes make cameo appearances surprisingly often thereafter. It is ‘while roasting a few potatoes’ that the couple hears the fateful footsteps of the horseman who abandons the infant Lucy (i, 9), and it is hunger that then motivates the young Lucy to rouse her mother from her stupor of grief after her father’s death: ‘I am very hungry’, she remarks, ‘must we all die together?’ (i, 22). Left alone in the castle some years later, Lucy makes a stab at typical gothic-heroine exploration, but finding that the path to the subterranean passages she hopes to explore is ‘walled up, and she could go no further’, she goes home instead, ‘to boil her potatoes’ (i, 30). And after the death of her foster-mother, when Lucy is left to fend for herself once and for all, her embarkation on the path of an orphan heroine is marked by her romantic refusal of all life’s necessities: ‘She returned to her room, alas! how gloomy, how frightful its appearance! No gentle friend to speak the words of kindness; no mother to instruct or amuse her [...] she lighted no fire, boiled no potatoes, made no bed’ (i, 43).

While my aim here is not to attempt an extended close reading of the Gothic Potato, I dwell on this detail at some length because of its potential to illustrate
some of the instabilities characteristic of Minerva’s imitative fiction. All the potatoes might be read, for example, as simply clumsy writing, too-frequent reuse of an unfortunate image. They might also be taken as a spoof on dainty gothic heroines, who are seldom seen eating, and would, we imagine, scorn a meal so unglamorous as a home-grown potato. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, for instance, contains the word ‘hunger’ only three times, once in an abstract reference to hunger and exhaustion, and twice in scenes that mock Emily’s maid servant Annette for her focus on food, which both characters and narrator treat as clearly crass and unladylike.33 ‘Potato’, naturally, appears not at all.) There is likely some truth in both the careless and the parodic explanations, but I would also like to suggest a third: Lucy’s potatoes remind readers of the real risks of hunger and of the importance assumed by food in situations in which it is scarce. This last reading may seem the furthest fetched, given the very brief summary I offered above, but in fact the novel offers a great deal of evidence for it. Poverty is a constant threat, and the novel’s characters repeatedly take a pointed interest in explaining to Lucy that she will have to work to earn her living and to have enough to eat. In other words, the persistence of that out-of-place gothic potato uses the collective aesthetics of this ‘horrifying’ genre to remind readers of the genuine (and much more common) horrors of hunger and poverty. The frequently precarious financial status of Minerva authors including Parsons, as Jennie Batchelor and Edward Copeland have shown,34 directly influences the conditions of their literary production; what passages like this one from Lucy suggest is that the conventions of genre can also be used to reflect upon class-based life experiences.

**Imitation beyond the Gothic**

Thus far we have seen how different forms of gothic imitation allow Minerva authors to capitalise on their own positionality in a crowded market, maximising the benefits—the recognition, the publicity, the appeal—of writing in a familiar genre, and exploiting that seeming familiarity in order to highlight critiques or revisions of the genre—or the marketplace—itself. In this section, I closely examine one Minerva Press novel from the end of the 1790s, Mary Charlton’s *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799), to show how crucial the idea of imitation is to the plot and structure of the work. *Rosella*, like many Minerva Press novels, is a difficult novel to categorise. It could fairly be called a gothic parody; we might also read it as a satirical send-up of female readers. It also, however, reads for long stretches as a persuasively didactic sentimental novel, and in others could very easily be taken for a thoroughly gothic one. Here I read it not as an exemplar of any particular genre, but for the complex and multilayered ways its author practises literary imitation. *Rosella* borrows from recognisable genre tropes, both to satirise and to sincerely emulate them. But it goes beyond that. It reflects upon the material realities of its own production (literary imitation as a kind of mimetic realism), making the physical realities of bookmaking, and the crowded marketplace into which such books necessarily entered, into
parts of the plot. Thus, *Rosella* provides a representative example of a Minerva author’s imitative and intertextual relationship with other Minerva authors, readers and texts. Not only does the imitative mode allow authors to import plots, characters and even the identities of other authors into their own works, it renders the intertextual project explicit. The devoted readers who are merely implied in many other gothic fictions here make their way right into the text.

*Rosella* begins, even at the subtitle, by highlighting its supposedly ‘Modern’ sensibilities. Miss Sophia Beauclerc, at the novel’s opening, finds herself ‘in one of the fashionable streets at the west end of the metropolis’ (i, 1); more to the satirical point, this young lady is immediately identified as a female quixote, foolishly addicted to contemporary novels. The opening scenes of *Rosella* predate the eponymous heroine’s birth; as we soon discover, Miss Beauclerc is in the midst of a fiction-inspired and friend-abetted elopement with an unsuitable lover. Both Sophia and her friend, the equally novel-addicted Selina, derive immense enjoyment from imagining themselves to be gothic heroines. Charlton plays up the humour of their heroic self-perception, but she also grounds the satire in the mechanisms of popular readership. Looking in the mirror, Sophia enjoys the elevated pleasure of beholding *in propria persona* a heroine in the bloom of youth, emerging into those delightful, mysterious, and sentimental situations which so agreeably occupy the imagination, when viewed within the inclosure of a tremendous breadth of margin, and caséd in a surtout of marbled paper, extremely soiled by the devotion of the curious. (i, 9)

In its ironic emphasis on the materiality of the popular circulating-library novel, *Rosella* invokes the fictions it mocks and whose conditions of production it in fact shared.

No reader familiar with the quixotic tradition will be surprised to learn that the young heroine’s escapade does not go smoothly. Despite Sophia’s parents’ refusal to spurn her in traditional literary fashion—instead, upon discovering her elopement, they place an ad in the paper requesting her to return home, ‘where she will be received with kindness and indulgence’ (i, 32–33)—her love affair with the feckless and indebted Raymond ends in his death and her own pregnancy. Both her impending motherhood and the fact of her brief marriage are hastily hushed up by her concerned parents; the child—Rosella—is shipped off for fostering; and Selina and Sophia both return home, somewhat chastened but, as we soon learn, no wiser for the experience.

If the story ended here, *Rosella* would be an entertaining and relatively simple rewriting of the female quixote trope. As the title suggests, however, this tidy plot—which fills only the first hundred pages or so—is merely the prelude to the central story of the novel. As the action begins to unfold, we find ourselves in what seems to be a parody of a parodic novel (or, to put it in the terms I have thus far been using, an imitation of an imitation): now it is the innocent Rosella (innocent of moral error as well as of excessive novel reading) who is the heroine, and Selina and Sophia, grown up into Mrs Ellinger and Miss Beauclerc, who
are the ‘authors’ of her melodramatic escapades. Charlton misses no opportunity to reiterate gothic and sentimental stereotypes through the musings of Selina and Sophia, but she also repeatedly emphasises the active, writerly role these two ladies take in creating their own novelistic tale, as Sophia recounts Rosella’s adventures in lengthy letters to her friend. Where Rosella’s natural inclinations and experiences, like Lucy’s in Parsons’s earlier novel, do not align with her status as heroine, her guardians do their best to alter them, a process that necessitates such steps as the purchase of a harp, voice lessons and removal to a country estate: ‘her progress in celebrity and heroism [...] [was] not to be attained in the odious metropolis’ (1, 124).

Charlton and Rosella’s two guardians all seem eminently conscious of the story’s potential for metanarrative, and scenes are often deliberately contrived to highlight this aspect of the plot. Miss Beauclerc’s constant writing, as she narrates Rosella’s day-to-day activities, is described as an activity that is in itself dependent on reading: ‘Miss Beauclerc wrote her interesting narrative, and read another equally interesting from the large packet of books she had brought with her from her Circulating Library’ (II, 29–30). Fiction is thus presented not just as a creative endeavour, but as an intermediary between readers and other novels. Readers within the novel—Sophia and Selina—use fiction to learn how to write and how to live; at the same time, actual readers of Rosella are invited to use the novel to test the breadth of their own reading, and possibly to envision themselves as future Minerva Press authors. Rosella gets endless comic mileage out of Miss Beauclerc’s dissatisfaction when her life fails to unfold like a novel plot. She is disappointed to find little to interest her attention on a well-frequented turnpike road, where the moonlight walks of fair ladies would probably terminate uncouthly, from their being run over by mail-coaches, or being knocked down and robbed in a common vulgar way by a footpad (II, 6) and she makes herself dangerously ill when she insists on sitting up through the night (as a heroine would) to record one of her escapades for posterity (II, 194).

The satirical force of these humorous but relatively predictable scenes is, however, continually undermined by the tendency of the story to veer beyond the pale of realism straight into the melodramatically fictional zones that the narrator so frequently mocks. Though Rosella consistently serves as the sensible foil to her guardians’ bizarre machinations, her unquixotic nature does not safeguard her from becoming embroiled in countless scenarios of unmatched literary stereotype. Forced by her guardian to violate the rules of prudence and politeness to pursue a potential hero, for example, Rosella ends up caught in what is surely the most dramatic thunderstorm of the century, and is obliged to take refuge in a mountain hovel that turns out to be the hideaway of precisely the stranger she set out to find. Secretive and melodramatic, this young man conceals a tormented past, writes Rosella confessional letters signed ‘a wretch’, and ultimately dies in exile (II, 68). Later in the novel, Rosella finds a scene equal to Clermont in its gothic excess, after arriving at an abandoned house where,
she learns, the master has just died at midnight (11, 99–100). Subplots like this constantly take over the novel’s satirical momentum, embracing the attractions of gothic machinery with all the verve of a circulating-library devotee. The surprise climax of Volume Three, and the turning-point of the entire novel, is the conspiracy-laden arrest and institutionalisation of Miss Beauclerc for insanity, leaving Rosella just as alone and unprotected as any other orphan heroine. 

Rosella teeters, in other words, on precisely the same imitative axis as the gothic novels I examined in the previous sections. In addition to continually treading the thin line between generic expectation and parody, real life and fiction, Charlton troubles the notion of pure and genteel terror (of the kind that critics so often praised in Radcliffe’s works) with frequent references to the horrors of poverty, illness and social inequality. In these moments, Miss Beauclerc’s novel addiction is not problematic so much for its silliness as for its tendency to make her, for example, dismiss the tragedy of a peasant woman left widowed and penniless when it turns out that her father ‘instead of being the ennobled Lord of a fine old castle, containing a fine old skeleton, and a fine old mysterious manuscript, was no other than a wretched fisherman who caught and cured herrings’ (i11, 41). Poor children here are ragged and dirty rather than beautiful and politely mannered; underpaid clerks gaze out of their ‘very dirty grim window’ onto ‘a marvellous foul cinder heap, which the elevated notions of the lady of the mansion prevented her from observing’ (1, 155); and landlords offer chivalrous assistance only when they are confident that they will be well recompensed for their pains. Even more than Lucy, Rosella uses genre standards to reinsert concrete financial concerns into fictional scenes. Social critique thus intersects directly with humorous revision of genre norms; the dependence of the critique on the familiar stereotypes of popular fiction, however, means that without knowledge of the latter, the point of the former is likely to be missed. Imitation is about genre critique (and genre perpetuation, and genre revision), but it can also be about social critique. Writing novels is one way to make a living, many financially struggling authors remind us, and the distance some literary characters appear to have from the necessities of everyday survival becomes yet another theme to rewrite.

These fictional gambits depend on readerly familiarity with genre norms. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that though Miss Beauclerc is the object of many of the novel’s jokes, and supposedly represents the cautionary tale at which the reader is meant to laugh, Rosella also contains many passages in which the reader is invited to identify with her. Early in the novel, after Rosella has met with some malicious gossip, the narrators tell us that Miss Beauclerc was, in fact, not displeased that Rosella, beloved as she was, should become the object of transient malevolence and misrepresentation. Was there indeed a single heroine in the great circle of her reading, who had escaped them?—Not one of any celebrity. (1, 297)

The first response to this may well be laughter: obviously, we think, such a passage is designed to highlight Miss Beauclerc’s terrible shortcomings as a
mother. But it also has quite a different effect, in that a reader who has any knowledge whatsoever of fictional heroines will likely acknowledge the truth of her statement. Miss Beauclerc may be an unfit parent, but she is also, by this literary logic, correcţ. Thus, the more novels the reader of Rosella has read, the more she will find herself aligned (in knowledge, if not in behaviour) with the novel’s oástensible scapegoat.

Nor is such identification purely abstracţ. Throughout Rosella, Miss Beauclerc discusses specific plot points, characters and incidents from other novels she has read, in order to compare them to the situation at hand. The scenes are often stereotypical or comically melodramatic, as one might expect; what might not be so immediately apparent, however, is that they are also often referencing actual contemporary novels. When Miss Beauclerc describes the ‘captivating heroine [...] who made a pedestrian tour on the Continent of more than eight hundred miles, in pursuance of the dictates of “Plain Sense”’ (11, 173–74), readers would likely have thought of the best-selling Minerva Press novel Plain Sense (1795), which reached at least three editions in the 1790s. Similarly, when we are told that in Miss Beauclerc’s favourite reading spot she ‘relished more particularly the descriptive progress of the loves of all the Ethelindas, the Jemimas, the Fredericas, and the Georgianas, with all their panics, their castles, and their visions’ (1, 125), we may not now recognise that these names refer specifically to heroines in different popular novels published in the 1790s, some published by the Minerva Press and some not. When Miss Beauclerc asks Rosella, ‘in the charming new novel we lately read, did not a very amiable, honest, and moral man introduce a very lovely young stranger to his wife and daughters, as their niece and cousin’, she is not merely justifying her own point of view; this description (and the entire page-long plot summary that follows it) also serves as a hint to all of Rosella’s readers who have also read the seven-volume novel in question, The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors (1797), by Anna Maria Bennett (11, 244).

Miss Beauclerc’s assurance of Rosella’s safety in the first quotation is, then, not quite as ridiculous as it sounds at first—the novels she is thinking of are real, popular and commercially available, and her constant references to them are intended to trigger recognition in the experienced reader. That reader, in turn, recognises Rosella itself as another Minerva novel, with identifiable conventions, and rests assured that Rosella will indeed be safe at the end of the novel, regardless of what dangers she faces in the meantime. Miss Beauclerc’s delusions are thus recast as entirely reasonable generic expectations. We might, in a sense, see Rosella as an extended meditation on the readerly—and authorial—security to be found in predictability, with the novel’s frequent metanarratives serving as a reminder that the comfort of knowing a beloved character will end happily may also be precisely what is required to secure another kind of comfort: that of knowing that a sympathetic audience eagerly awaits one’s new novel. The novel, the reader, the author and the market intersect within the matrix of genre. Nevertheless, Rosella also reminds us that predictability may be a precondition for risk-taking: the surprising, the ironic and the bizarre proliferate in this
imitation, intertextuality and the minerva novel

novel because of, not despite, its familiar outlines, suggesting that, as Rosella’s readers surely already knew, genre conventions enable—or reveal—reinvention as frequently as they stifle it.

Knowing Fictions

As Deidre Lynch has argued, ‘Gothic fictions [...] produced a nation of knowing readers [...] [t]his knowingness bespeaking the repeatability of this fiction’s formulae.’ Just what did those knowing readers know? As the Minerva novels I have examined here suggest, one of the most salient characteristics of the Romantic-era novel is a hyperconsciousness of other novels. Materially and textually, these books and their ‘marbled paper’ casings represent a vast and mobile fictional field, in which circulating libraries facilitate the movement of texts from reader to reader, and the texts themselves evoke the very milieu(s) in which they move. If we acknowledge that Minerva’s authors were engaged in a deeply imitative and intertextual writing practice, what does that mean for us as critics? Given the broadness of the field and the obscurity of most of the works involved, it can be a challenge for a twenty-first-century reader to achieve the depth of fictional knowledge of a Catherine Morland or a Sophia Beauclerc. Some references are hard to miss, even if one does not know the original; countless others, however, are subtle, invisible to a less-expert reader (there are quite a number of references in Rosella that I have yet to identify, and likely still more that I have not even recognised as such). We must read, and read broadly, to catch examples of imitativeness like these.

If a reader encounters a plot in which a heroine is shocked to learn that her guardian-turned-love-interest may be her father (as readers of the 1818 Minerva novel Genevieve; or, the Orphan’s Visit will do), she will receive an explicit hint of the intertextual issues at play when another character alerts the heroine that the problem she is facing has been encountered before: specifically, in a work called The False Friend: A Domestic Story (which, though the character does not share this information, and appears to be somewhat misinformed as to the details of the plot, is in fact a 1799 work by Mary Robinson). But only extended reading will reveal that this plot twist, in a wide variety of manifestations, actually features in multiple novels of the period, and that the variations in its construction and resolution not only challenge stereotypes about the sentimental novel, but comment on the issues of class and gender raised by intergenerational (and potentially incestuous) romance. Characters from Fielding’s Charles Grandison pop up in 1810s novels; novels are published in hasty response to earlier novels; and numerous novels feature young authors in the act of attempting publication.

As my earlier readings have suggested, the ramifications of this kind of imitative practice extend far beyond issues of plot. If the novelist Robert Bage repeatedly refers to his projected readers as explicitly female in his two Minerva Press novels (of 1792 and 1796), the significance of the claim, and its relationship to the realities and stereotypes of Romantic readership, only comes into view when we contrast it with differently gendered portrayals of readers
in other works of the period, and, perhaps, most strikingly, with the sharply divergent portrayal in Bage’s earlier novels of an English nation in which ‘all people read’. In the fiction of this period we see not only countless portrayals of reading and writing, but reflections—which, we should be aware, may also ultimately be reshapingsof the physical ways that literature instantiates and circulates. These references are often real and specific; at other times they may be red herrings (as with Bage’s supposedly newly female readership) or simply erroneous. But in all of these cases, they serve a specific function: they invoke the authority of a large body of fellow texts and large numbers of fellow readers, making the reader feel part of a complex literary community that bridges real and fictional worlds across time. As critics, we must consider the historicity of this community in order to understand the aims and effects of fiction written in a climate of fictional abundance.

Invoking implied readers obviously necessitates a certain speculative leap: no matter how persuasive the evidence may be, the structures of a novel itself can never tell us for certain how its actual readers received it. In Rosella’s case, however, the patterns so provocatively suggested by the novel itself are also substantiated by the material form of one of the novel’s surviving copies. In the British Library’s copy of Rosella, a real reader has left marginal notes and annotations throughout, many of which explicitly respond to the novel’s intertextual references. In one typical passage, Miss Beauclerc is described as wishing to explore the palace of Edinburgh, ‘where she had lately read a beautiful young creature had been immured from the ardent gaze of her lovers’ (ii, 216). Placing a firm ‘X’ beside this line, the reader then identifies the plot as that of ‘The Beggar girl by Mrs Bennet’. Elsewhere, the anonymous reader calls attention to another Minerva Press author: where the narrator refers to that ‘grand, minute, superb, sentimental, overbearing, manoeuvring lady of doubtful fame, Madame G— —s’, this reader helpfully writes in ‘Genlis’: that is, the author of Castle of Kolmeras, discussed in the previous section (ii, 248–49). The same imitative plots, repeated and re-appropriated, create a frame of literary reference within which this reader locates herself and her reading practices.

When critical observers referred to literary ‘imitators’, then, they were not necessarily wrong. The critics who complained that ‘Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, were the Wedgewoods of their days; and the imitators that have since started up in the same line, exceed all power of calculation!’ were likely as accurate (which is to say, partially) as those who bemoaned the countless ‘imitators of Radcliffe’. When a writer in the Monthly Review remarks, ‘With due respect to the memory of Fielding, we cannot but think that his Tom Jones has produced more imitators of his vices, than of his virtues,’ or the author of The Mystic Cottager of Chamouny [sic] (1794) is said to ‘imitat[e], though very feebly, the tender simplicity of Sterne’, we ought to recognise the essential genre affinities potentially revealed by these claims, even as we challenge their pejorative valences. For, what both this kind of criticism and, frequently, that of subsequent scholarship has come to obscure is how openly and purposively
many of Minerva’s novelists practised the art of literary imitation, and how widely the practice spread, beyond the gothic, and beyond the press itself. The eighteenth century’s many ‘imitators’ cannot be summed up simply as time- strapped and idea-pressed authors unself-consciously banging out rote copies of famous books, and lacking the time and the talent to do otherwise. While examples can certainly be found which support this cynical assessment, such a blanket dismissal prevents us from seeing the effects on the works themselves, just as it makes it impossible to consider the field of popular fiction at large as an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century reader would actually have experienced it. In an age of literary multiplicity, then as now, imitation offers us one way to think about the complex relationships between novels, and a means to consider the ways that sheer numerousness (and its potential corollaries: popularity, economic power, cultural influence) can give authors themselves a way of asserting themselves in the marketplace. What the Romantic era’s ‘knowing’ novel readers certainly knew, then, is that fiction is, to a great extent, about fictionality, and that imitation, in all its forms, is a part of its ongoing negotiations between readerly expectation and authorial innovation.

Notes
I am grateful to the readers, editors, conference attendees and anonymous reviewers who have provided helpful feedback to this essay in its various stages, including Terry Castle, Marshall Brown and, of course, Tina Morin and Elizabeth Neiman; the members of my writing group have, as always, supported and strengthened my argument through many iterations. I also thank my wonderful research assistants, Anna Pravdica and Amanda Zarni, for their assistance in tracking down a number of the intertextual references discussed in this essay.


9. James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre, and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 94. For discussion of the Minerva Press as a branded commodity, see Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 137–38. My argument here is very much in agreement with Neiman’s claim that ‘Minerva authors communicate with each other by way of constant and often subtle modifications of and infractions to popular formulae. These modifications come into view when the novels are read collectively and with a definition of intertextuality that is flexible enough to include literary formula’ (‘New Perspective’, p. 635).


12. Radcliffe-inspired plays from the era include *Fountainville Forest* (1794) and *The Mysteries of the Castle: A Dramatic Tale in Three Acts* (1795), both performed at Covent Garden.


15. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 14 (July 1795), 349. This review, as well as several of those mentioned in the following paragraphs, is also cited in Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, pp. 152–70. As Yael Shapira points out, this reviewer’s claim ‘seems convincing enough if we read only the novel’s third volume; if we read it in its entirety, however, her work reveals that Kelly’s work and Radcliffe’s contain two
distinct Gothic formulas’ that ‘differ from each other significantly’ (‘Beyond the Radcliffe Formula’, pp. 4–5).


18. Critical Review, 2nd ser. 16 (Feb 1796), 222.

19. See Roper, Reviewing before the Edinburgh, p. 37; and Peter Garside, ‘The English Novel in the Romantic Era: Consolidation and Dišpersal’, in Garside, Raven and Schöwerling, English Novel, 11, 15–103 (p. 16). The role of Minerva Press’s books as conveniently synonymous with all things literally undesirable has been noted in many works of gothic criticism; see e.g. Michael Gamer, Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 2000), p. 67; Watt, Contesting the Gothic, pp. 80–84; Clery, Rise of Supernatural Fiction, p. 137.


27. The inclusion of the first and last novels on this list in Austen’s Northanger Abbey has ensured that, as 1790s gothic novels go, they are well known to current scholars; both authors, however, with all of their works, were also included in the Minerva Press’s 1798 Prospektus on a list of ‘particular and favorite Authors’. The Prospektus is reproduced in Blakey, Minerva Press, pp. 309–14.

28. Eliza Parsons, Lucy: A Novel, 3 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1794), 1, 24–25. Subsequent references to this and all other eighteenth-century editions are parenthetically cited by volume and page number.


35. In this sense we can see that less well-known female authors were also participating, if in slightly different ways, in the process of writing books that ‘memorialize’, quite self-consciously, the conditions of their writing’ that Sodeman identifies in the works of authors like Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith (*Sentimental Memorials*, p. 15).


37. See Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, p. 66 for discussion of the perceived ease of breaking into publishing as a Minerva Press author. Neiman discusses the phenomenon of the would-be Minerva author represented in Minerva fiction at more length in ‘A New Perspective’.

38. *Plain Sense* is the title of a best-selling triple-decker by Frances Jackson, which reached at least three editions in the 1790s (London: Minerva Press, 1795).

39. See e.g. Charlotte Smith’s *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake*, 5 vols (London: Cadell, 1789); Anne Hughes’s *Jemima. A Novel*, 2 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1795); as well as the anonymous *Frederica: Or the Memoirs of a Young Lady*, 3 vols (London: Ridgeway, 1792) and *Frederica Risberg, a German Story*, 2 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1793).


43. See Neiman, ‘New Perspective’, p. 649, for a discussion of a similar intertextual reference, which purports to describe a novel called *Fatal Obedience* but, Neiman argues, does not accurately characterise the 1769 novel of that title.

44. This copy of *Rosella* is also available via Gale’s *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO)* <https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online>; the marginalia identifying Mrs Bennet can be seen on p. 216 [image 218].


47. *Analytical Review*, 20 (Dec 1794), 491.

**Referring to this Article**

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**Date of acceptance:** 22 January 2019.
How should a gothic scholar approach Isabella Kelly’s *The Ruins of Avondale Priory*, published by the Minerva Press in 1796? Or perhaps we first have to ask: *should* a gothic scholar read this novel? Judging by common accounts of gothic literary history, Kelly’s book belongs to the wave of ‘imitations’ that glutted the British fiction market in the 1790s and early 1800s, prompted by the enthusiastic reception of Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and especially *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and by the scandalous success of Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796). Nothing about the external appearance of Kelly’s novel would seem to refute this assumption: as book-historical analyses of the period have made us aware, the word ‘ruins’ in the title is a marketing cue, announcing the novel’s kinship to the gothic best-sellers of the day and thus locating it within an emerging system of generic classification meant to direct library patrons to ‘types’ of works they already liked.1 Once we turn the page, enough of what we find in *Avondale Priory* will indeed appear familiar: there is a heroine fleeing various persecutors, attempted rapes, abductions, murders, a long-buried family secret coming to light. All of these, moreover, take place among ‘the magnificent ruins of an ancient Priory’ or in the nearby castle, where the heroine finds herself in a ‘blackened turret’, its ‘rugged and damp’ walls seeming to ‘freeze her blood by their petrifying chill’.2

The verdict, then, seems clear enough: we must be in the company of one of Radcliffe’s ‘servile imitators’, as Sir Walter Scott called them—that is, those many now-forgotten authors who, encouraged by Minerva’s enterprising owner William Lane and prompted (in many cases) by their own financial necessity, produced one Radcliffe or Lewis knock-off after another to stock library shelves and meet the demands of an avid readership.3 And if that is the case, perhaps we really would do better to skip *Avondale Priory*: after all, why waste time on what seems an obvious member of that class of gothic novels that have been variously described by critics as an ‘unappetizing gallimaufry of earlier stories’, ‘tame, sentimental rehashes of Radcliffe’s Female gothic romances’ or simply ‘trash, of little interest today save to antiquarians, bibliophiles, and literary historians’—and, judging by the amount of serious attention paid to such fictions, not of much interest to them, either?4

Considering the special issue in which this essay appears, it will come as no surprise that I do not endorse this assessment of *Avondale Priory*, or of Minerva
gothics more broadly. Rather, I join a recent wave of criticism in arguing that to ignore Minerva Press novels is to accept significant blind spots in our view of Romantic literary history—and more specifically, in this case, in our understanding of Romantic gothic fiction. As scholars have recently demonstrated, there is a substantial cost to gothic scholarship’s all-but-exclusive focus on what Frederick Frank has called ‘the official circle of critically acceptable Goths created by literary historians—the gothic constellation of Walpole, Reeve, Beckford, Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and Mary Shelley’.5 Isolating the works of the authors on Frank’s list as ‘originals’ and dismissing the rest as ‘imitations’ that deserve only a passing nod, most histories of the gothic trace a relatively clear genealogy that runs from Walpole, by way of Reeve and Beckford, through the ‘male’ and ‘female’ strands of Radcliffe and Lewis to the Romantic gothic’s alleged decline around 1820, with Mary Shelley and C. R. Maturin marking its final flowering. Yet these tidy narratives of the gothic’s evolution have what Christina Morin calls an ‘unfortunate—if largely unintended—homogenizing effect’ on a far broader, messier and more diverse history of fiction writing, while ‘consign[ing] to oblivion whole swathes of outlying literary production’.6 When those ‘swathes’—the many novels long written out of gothic literary history—are written back in, we discover not a clear line of descent that runs through a handful of novels, but a diffuse and vibrant scene of fictional experimentation that unfolds across dozens of titles.

As recent work on the Minerva Press has compellingly shown, the critical payoff of this broader view extends beyond the rediscovery (important in itself) of forgotten works: it makes certain long-held tenets of gothic scholarship newly debatable.7 One of these tenets, as I discuss in more detail below, is the common view of Romantic gothic as neatly bifurcated into ‘Radcliffean’ and ‘Lewisian’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ schools. But Minerva novels also reactivate other critical conversations, such as the already vexed discussion of what even constitutes a ‘gothic novel’—a term that, as various scholars have reminded us, is itself a retroactive critical coinage, implying a generic cohesion not actually found in the fiction that now bears this name.8 Numerous and deeply heterogeneous, Minerva novels prove even more frustrating than canonical gothics (themselves already famously hybrid) for the critic who desires a clearly defined object of study. Their sheer number and diversity validate Gary Kelly’s description of ‘the “gothic romance”’ as ‘not so much a coherent and authentic genre as an ensemble of themes and formal elements which could be taken over and adapted in whole or part by other novelists’.9 Informed by this debate, the term ‘gothic’ in what follows is used to name components rather than novels—that is, those formal and thematic elements that Romantic observers foregrounded as the hallmark of the new fictional trend: settings such as castles or abbeys; plotlines involving extreme and fearful events (haunting, murder, rape); images such as bloody corpses and spectres, skeletons and demons. Rather than tackle the largely irresolvable question of how and when such elements suffice to define a ‘gothic novel’, my discussion is interested in the circulation and mutation of
the components themselves—dominant or marginal, persistent or occasional, darkly earnest or tongue-in-cheek—and in pursuing a gothic literary history that encompasses their varied manifestations.

But while (to return to my opening question) fewer scholars now wonder if Lane’s contributions to the gothic should be read, the issue of how to read them still requires thought. Can we take Minerva novels seriously without ignoring their uneven quality or over-reading what often is repetitive, bathetic or downright ludicrous? Do such recurrences of familiar motifs necessary spell ‘imitation’? Is every case of the explained supernatural or every lascivious Catholic cleric we run across unproductive to study, because Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis used them more skilfully or conspicuously? And when Minerva authors do repeat components of more famous novels, is this the ‘servile’, mindless duplication denounced by Romantic critics, and further denigrated by modern ones? Are there ways we might approach such repetition that will yield other, more productive conclusions? In short, what kinds of interpretation, theorisation and contextualisation will best illuminate these forgotten novels, account for their distinctive features as well as those they share with other works of their time, and help us understand their place in the gothic’s history?

One central challenge for scholars of Minerva gothic is the label of ‘imitation’ itself, which needs to be interrogated rather than allowed to continue dictating the boundaries of what we study. As both Hannah Doherty Hudson and Elizabeth Neiman have compellingly argued, the derogatory notion of ‘imitation’ as an innate property of Minerva novels is a legacy of Romantic critics, who anxiously gave this word a newly negative currency as they tried to come to terms with a sudden surge in commercial fiction publication. This inherited bias, Hudson and Neiman demonstrate, may keep us from seeing such important qualities of Minerva novels as the pronounced self-awareness with which they use shared fictional tropes, or their participation in the very debates over literary value that eventually gave rise to their wholesale forgetting. Minerva novels not only (as Hudson, Neiman and Morin all note) respond playfully, at times parodically, to their own clichéd materials, but engage with canonical novels in more serious and meaningful ways as well, adapting the materials they borrow to insightful and sometimes critical ends. From the particular vantage-point of gothic scholarship, I would add, the term ‘imitation’ is reductive: it renders invisible webs of nuanced connections between novels, a dialogue which is itself a vital part of the history of gothic fiction. As I will show, it is precisely the reproduction-with-a-difference of recognisable pieces from other works, rather than their mindless replication, that renders a text such as Avondale Priory more complex, interesting and idiosyncratic than the generic ‘marketing cue’ in its title might suggest.

Detecting such intertextual play, however, requires that we pay close attention to Kelly’s novel, which brings me to the second methodological conundrum with which my essay is concerned: the dilemma of scope, or—to use the dominant scholarly metaphor—of ‘distance’. This methodological question leads us back
to Franco Moretti’s well-known speculations about the value of ‘distant reading’ over traditional methods of reading closely:

the trouble with close reading [...] is that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon. [...] you invest so much in individual texts only if you think that very few of them really matter [...] And if you want to look beyond the canon [...] close reading will not do it. It’s not designed to do it, it’s designed to do the opposite.12

The possibilities Moretti outlines seem particularly relevant for the study of Minerva gothics, given the large number of as yet unread novels and, conversely, the truly tiny canon on which all attention has been focused until now. However, the kind of binary choice he poses—either the close reading of a canon that ignores larger patterns or a distant reading in which the individual text goes unread—is neither warranted nor desirable here: unlike the tens of thousands of European novels that Moretti proposes as his dataset, Minerva’s gothic titles can be read, and there are strong arguments in favour of both close and distant scrutiny. On the one hand, the new engagement with these novels aims to question precisely the belief that only a few texts out of the much larger corpus ‘really matter’, because the rest—or so the claim went—are derivative trash: reading individual Minerva gothics closely—as Angela Wright, for example, has done for fiction by Minerva authors Francis Lathom and Eliza Parsons, Dale Townshend for the work of T. J. Horsley Curties and Diane Long Hoeveler for that of Regina Maria Roche—not only adds to our knowledge of the gothic, but helps counteract the assumption that novels of this type do not reward close investigation.13 At the same time, to isolate particular Minerva Press gothics from the mass of which they form part is to ignore basic information about their origins and purpose, a context helpfully reconstructed in the more ‘distant’ accounts of Anthony Mandal and Edward Jacobs.14 Nor does the focus on one or two novels allow us to see the illuminating webs of connection that tie different Minerva novels to each other and to canonical works of their time, as recent scholarship by Franz Potter, Hudson and Neiman has indeed suggested.15 In short, factoring Minerva gothics into our accounts of gothic literary history is not a matter of choosing between the close and the remote: both are needed, as are studies seeking a middle ground that allows for what Susan S. Lanser calls a ‘large reading, poised between the close and the distant’.16

In this essay, I wish to connect the two methodological issues outlined above—the question of ‘imitation’ and the dilemma of ‘scope’—by showing how a combination of close and more remote perspectives can illuminate the use of familiar gothic tropes in Minerva novels. My discussion thus approaches Kelly’s work, and specifically The Ruins of Avondale Priory, from two complementary vantage points. The first section offers a wide-angle view of Kelly’s career with Lane, charting the patterns formed by gothic elements in her fiction across her intensive years of Minerva authorship. As we will see, Kelly’s deployment of gothic tropes is marked by variety as much as by repetition: she plays with gothic materials throughout her Minerva titles, varying their dosage, tone and
narrative function. Beyond illuminating an underexplored aspect of Romantic
gothic authorship—namely, how gothic elements multiplied and evolved in the
hands of authors producing novel after novel for trade presses like Lane’s—this
section offers what I am calling the ‘semi-distant’ view of Kelly’s work. While
not delving very deeply into any one novel in this cluster, my account of them
is based on detailed familiarity with their contents, so that they become not
data points but interlocutors with which, as I go on to show, *Avondale Priory*
is conversing. The second section begins by zooming in on *Avondale Priory* to see
what exactly it is doing with the gothic tropes it shares with other novels.
When not dismissed offhand on the basis of surface similarities and read
attentively, the novel proves not so much an ‘imitation’—much less a mindless
and mechanical one—of canonical gothics as one in a chain of adaptations to
which the more famous works also belong. Moreover, Kelly’s take on their shared
tropes is deliberate and self-aware: particularly striking is the strain between the
novel’s frame—the familiar story of a haunting that announces the disruption
of succession—and seemingly digressive or secondary episodes that persistently,
almost obsessively, repeat the depiction of a woman’s grief over a dead lover.
Bringing the broader perspective back in, I then follow Kelly’s particular twist
on this gothic trope across her Minerva career, demonstrating the creative and
even personal ways in which she turned a piece of gothic ‘formula’ into part of
a distinctive fictional vocabulary.

**Isabella Kelly’s Career in Minerva Gothic: View from a Semi-Distance**

Kelly worked with William Lane from 1794 to 1801, publishing seven novels and
becoming one of the press’s ‘particular and favorite authors’, as announced in
a 1798 publicity Prospectus.17 Her first novel, *Madeline; or, the Castle of Mont-
gomery* (1794), appeared anonymously, as did *The Abbey of St Asaph* (1795); by
the publication of *The Ruins of Avondale Priory* the following year (1796), Kelly
was signing her name to her books, and her later Minerva novels—*Joscelina: Or,
the Rewards of Benevolence* (1798), *Eva* (1799) and *Ruthinglenne, or the Critical
Moment* (1801)—were all identified on their title pages as the work of ‘Isabella
Kelly’ or ‘Mrs Kelly’, while *Edwardina* was published in 1800 under the pseud-
onym of ‘Catherine Harris’.18 After *Ruthinglenne*, Kelly and the Minerva Press
parted ways. *The Baron’s Daughter* (1802) was published by Joseph Bell, though
Minerva did undertake a second edition; two subsequent novels, *A Modern
Incident in Domestic Life* (1803) and *The Secret* (1805), went to Philip Norbury
of Brentford; and a final work of fiction, *Jane de Dunstanville* (1813), was printed
privately for the author. In 1805, Kelly also published a French grammar book
for children, and her sporadic output in her later years would include a book of
instruction for youth and a memoir of a relative’s life.

Surveying Kelly’s fiction for Lane as it developed over time allows us to see
an aspect of gothic literary history not visible in the standard, canon-based ac-
counts of its unfolding: that is, Romantic fiction’s diverse uses of gothic tropes,
which the professional writers responsible for Minerva’s rapid output combined,
recombined, reworked and sometimes subverted as they wrote their many novels. In concocting her fictions, Kelly weaves together gothic, sentimental, domestic and even satirical components, demonstrating the difficulty of dividing Minerva novels into distinct subtypes since, as McLeod writes, ‘more often than not, [they] do not conform to such simplistic categorizations’. Kelly’s seven novels for Minerva feature numerous sentimental set pieces of languishing distress, tearful reunions, miraculous discoveries of noble origins; there are scenes that take place in salons and assemblies, exposing and mocking the foibles of modern society; and finally—most importantly for my purposes—there are sojourns in crumbling castles and abbeys, where dark family secrets turn up hidden in dungeons, night-time noises announce the possibility of ghosts and human remains make shocking appearances. Kelly, in other words, wrote much and she wrote fast, echoing the successful models of her time as she did, but also enjoying considerable leeway in choosing how to engage them. In her hands, gothic materials prove more malleable and tonally diverse than the traditional objects of gothic scholarship have taught us to expect.

Looking over the entirety of Kelly’s career with Lane, we can follow her gothic components as she plays with them, varying their usage, dosage, location and tone in moving from one novel to the next. In her first two novels, _Madeline_ and _The Abbey of St Asaph_, Kelly makes rather limited use of the gothic—an interesting fact, given that both appeared after Radcliffe’s enormously successful _Mysteries of Udolpho_. Even when faced with such a temptingly proven precedent, it seems, Kelly still had her own preferences about how much space to give to the type of materials Radcliffe had made famous. In these two early novels, Kelly employs isolated gothic episodes to draw her stories to a close, having spent the first half of both books involving the reader in the financial straits, personal losses and romantic upheavals of the heroines and heroes—primarily Madeline Montgomery and her sister Ellen in _Madeline_, and siblings Lionel and Elinor Douglas and their mother’s young ward Jennet in _St Asaph_. Since Madeline, Ellen and Elinor all marry midway through the story and face a range of conjugal challenges (abandonment, jealousy, estrangement), the two novels establish Kelly’s particular interest in marriage as a site of discord, another significant deviation from Radcliffe: concluding courtship plots early in her works, Kelly then plumbs the exquisite miseries involved in the breakdown of matrimonial relations. In _Madeline_, it is marital unhappiness that leads the plot towards gothic territory in the third volume, albeit briefly and rather comically: the paragon heroine’s flighty sister Ellen is whisked off by her husband to the crumbling Castle of Glomart for an oddly humorous ‘taming of the shrew’ episode, thanks to which they live happily ever after. In _St Asaph_, marital misery is Elinor’s fate, treated with great earnestness before the introduction of a gothic subplot focused on Jennet in the novel’s latter half. While serving as companion to an heiress at a castle near the eponymous abbey, Jennet spends some terrifying hours in the burial vaults and discovers a secret prisoner: the
true lord of the castle and (of course) her long-lost father, who restores her to her original name, title and property.

Kelly is at her most concertedly gothic in her third novel, *The Ruins of Avondale Priory*: the complicated plot (discussed in detail below) follows Ethelinde St Clair, her husband Athwold, his sister Juliet and the young Lord Avondale through a preponderance of adventures involving alleged hauntings, attempted murders, frightening-yet-atmospheric rambles among gothic ruins and a number of dramatic deaths. After *Avondale Priory*, Kelly goes back to working gothic episodes into longer narratives dominated by other generic components. She makes relatively sparing use of the gothic in *Joscelina*, a Burney-like blend of social satire and sentimentality, whose heroine spends a brief while in the last volume near a supposedly haunted castle, where secret documents help her regain her wealth and status. Gothic components have somewhat greater weight in *Eva*, clustering this time mainly in the first volume, where the heroine’s father confines her in a gloomy nunnery in order to coerce her into an unwanted marriage. In *Edwardina*, gothic tropes are once again used to wrap up the plot rather than launch it: recounted in the letters they exchange, the adventures of close friends Edwardina and Arabella in and around two gothic piles play a crucial role in restoring the lost fortune of Edwardina’s family. Finally, *Ruthinglenne* uses the gothic to negotiate pivotal moments midway through the novel: strange lights, quivers in the ground and a spectral voice warn the heroine Benigna not to marry her determined suitor, and a similar supernatural agitation later prevents her rape by the novel’s villain.

From the 1794 *Madeline* to the 1801 *Ruthinglenne*, then, Kelly’s gothic materials shrink and expand, move backwards and forwards in plots, open stories or bring them to a close. Moreover, the remote view allows us to see that Kelly varies not only the narrative placement and function of her gothic storylines, but their tone as well. In some cases, she plumbs gothic scenarios for their horrific import, piling on both gruesome description and fervent emotion. Beauvais, an Englishman who barely escaped the Revolutionary mob in France, describes finding the buried body of his wife: ‘I looked down into the cold, damp grave, would have descended, and once more pressed her in my trembling arms, but [...] already had corruption seized the fairest and most faultless form, that ever graced the works of bright creation’ (*Avondale Priory*, III, 13). Elsewhere, by contrast, Kelly’s use of the gothic is mischievous, occasionally self-parodying. In one of the few studies of Kelly’s fiction, Tenille Nowak points to her startling use of humour in the final scenes of *St Asaph*, seeing it as expressing ‘an astute (albeit somewhat clumsy) understanding of the fine line that often exists between humor and fear’. Surveying Kelly’s entire Minerva corpus reveals various other instances of this blend: Ellen’s stay at the Castle of Glomart in *Madeline*, mentioned above, includes fearful noises that turn out to be caused by a stray kitten, and the episode ends with a rather indelicate set of jokes about the way Ellen has inadvertently allowed a stranger into the castle (that is, she and her husband are expecting a new baby). The gothic ordeals of *Edwardina’s*
Arabella, an adventuress undaunted by mystery, are likewise narrated in a lighthearted tone: sword in hand, she swashbuckles her way through the castle to the fortuitous ending.

Taking in the whole of Kelly’s Minerva oeuvre and its gothic materials allows us to see how hard it is to fit her—like other Minerva novelists—into the gendered subcategories of gothic that critics have conceptualised around the influential examples of Radcliffe and Lewis. The sharp divergence of tone and style between the two premier gothic novelists of the 1790s, combined with their opposed approaches to the supernatural, have long formed the basis for distinctions between the so-called male and female gothic traditions, defined not simply by their authors’ genders but (critics have claimed) by their distinctly gendered perspectives on the sources and experiences of fear in patriarchal culture. Within such accounts, prominent differences between Radcliffe and Lewis are broadened into “types” of gothic and given a gendered cultural rationale. Thus, “female gothic” has been linked to an emphasis on a heroine’s fearful experiences, a preference for terror over horror and the eventual triumph of rationality over superstition. By contrast, blunt bodily horror (especially that involving female flesh), graphic violence and the unabashed use of ghosts have been placed on the “male” side of the divide.22

Kelly’s fiction, however, combines components from both sides of this assumed split. Her novels emphasise young women’s initiation into a dangerous world, and she opts for the “explained supernatural” throughout most of her Minerva career. But if these traits seem to place Kelly’s fiction in the “Radcliffean” camp, in Ruthinglenne she suddenly allows Benigna’s dead father to intervene from beyond the grave and save his daughter from incest and rape. Throughout her novels, moreover, Kelly shows a stylistic preference for horror: as described above, there is considerable brutality as well as a penchant for gore in her gothic scenes.23 Seeing Kelly manoeuvre this way between components of the male and female formulae strengthens what Wright and Hoeveler have also suggested in recent readings of non-canonical women’s gothic: that generalisations long based on Radcliffe and Lewis alone need to be rethought, along with some of our previous conclusions about the links between gender, authorship and gothic narrative.24 Rather than replicate a formula offered by any one author, Kelly navigates between multiple influences, borrowing what suits her and changing it further as needed. While doing so, as the next section will show, she recombines familiar materials into an idiosyncratic shape, thus offering her own particular—and, I will suggest, personally resonant—twist on the gothic tale in which a woman comes face to face with what which she most fears.

Avondale Priory Up Close: Formulae and Red Herrings
Like Kelly’s other novels, The Ruins of Avondale Priory is a dense concoction of storylines and characters, the focus being Ethelinde St Clair and her husband Athwold, who have been separated by the schemes of his ambitious mother. Ethelinde takes shelter with her infant twins near Avondale Castle under an
assumed name, though she reveals her true identity to Lord Avondale when he courts her. After surviving an assassination attempt by her mother-in-law, Ethelinde is reunited with Athwold; together with his sister Juliet, who loves Lord Avondale, they spend the final part of the novel confronting the mysteries of the Avondale family, which turn out to be intimately connected to Ethelinde’s own history.

The overarching narrative that holds together Kelly’s tangle of subplots and digressions is that of the ‘haunting’ of Avondale Castle: ‘there is no denying that something is wrong’, Mrs Barlowe, the housekeeper, tells Ethelinde, ‘and never [...] will the unquiet spirit rest until its secret is disclosed’ (i, 148). If we are looking for a formula Kelly is following, one thus immediately suggests itself, though its obvious sources are not Radcliffe and Lewis, but rather Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve. The secret of Avondale, like those of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1778), involves a rupture in the line of succession, announced by a series of uncanny events that end when rightful inheritance is restored. ‘[S]ome say […] that my beloved Lady, for some reason is unquiet’, says Mrs Barlowe, and while the housekeeper dismisses the rumours as ‘a great many silly tales […] by many too much credited’ (1, 135) and Kelly herself makes sure to provide a naturalistic explanation for everything that happens, the plot ultimately confirms that the late Lady Avondale had good reason to rest uneasily. After her husband was killed in a riding accident, we eventually learn, the grief-stricken Lady Avondale died too, but not before giving birth; her husband’s sister, Lady Glenroy, concealed the delivery and sent the infant off to be killed, thus securing the inheritance of Avondale for her own son, the present Lord. As the novel winds its convoluted way towards the end, Ethelinde, Athwold and their friends obtain a piecemeal account of what really happened on the night of Lady Avondale’s death, capped off by Lady Glenroy’s confession. Meanwhile a fortuitous birthmark turns up to identify Ethelinde as Lord and Lady Avondale’s lost daughter, and her inheritance is further facilitated by the death of young Lord Avondale, accidentally killed during his mother’s attempt to have Ethelinde murdered.

Kelly, then, patterns her main storyline after those of Walpole and Reeve; but looking closely at her use of these well-known materials, I would argue, is precisely what raises questions about the relevance and usefulness of the label ‘imitation’ for *Avondale Priory*. Yes, Kelly is retelling a familiar story, but so were Reeve and Walpole; Reeve was openly and declaredly revising Walpole’s novella, and both were riffing on—or is it ripping off? —Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. *Avondale Priory* belongs to an entire line of Romantic gothic novels (including Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest*) that found in *Hamlet*, as Dale Townshend claims, ‘a blueprint or set of dramatic instructions’ for unfolding tales in which the secret violence of the past unsettles the present until the old crimes are brought to light and their victims properly mourned. Given the wealth of scholarship devoted to the complex engagement of canonical gothics with Shakespeare, and specifically with *Hamlet*, there seems to be no question that
Walpole’s, Reeve’s and Radcliffe’s Shakespearean borrowings can support a rich and meaningful critical exploration; their reliance on a common reservoir of themes, plotlines and images has not automatically precluded the possibility that such shared materials might be put to individually significant use. Can we say the same, though, about Avondale Priory? Yes, I would argue—a close look at the novel, sensitive to both sameness and difference, exposes something far more interesting than cookie-cutter replication. Such scrutiny reveals that Kelly’s usurpation-and-haunting plot possesses a playful self-awareness, but also that the novel is a deeper, more deliberate and meaningful reworking of conventional elements than a surface inventory of formulaic pieces can reveal.

Avondale Priory confirms Hudson’s insight that ‘the form and function (in terms of readership) of Minerva’s gothic novels stems from their collective identity: each gothic novel is produced and consumed specifically as one of many’. Rather than reduce the interest of each novel, this self-aware multiplicity actually accounts for its pleasures: Avondale Priory is fun to read not although but because it constructs itself out of well-known pieces, whose potential combinations are held out tantalisingly for the reader to consider. One way in which Kelly plays this game is by leaving the reader guessing until the last minute whether she will follow Walpole and Reeve and produce a male successor to the Avondale line or opt, like Radcliffe, to turn the dispossessed heir into a young woman. To render this uncertainty palpable, she keeps the sex of the baby born to Lady Avondale a secret till the very end, while providing two ‘red herrings’ in the form of possible male heirs. One is the current Lord Avondale, who at one point happens to meet the brother of the late Lady Avondale, his aunt by marriage; the brother, Mr Menville, is surprised to find that the young man bears, as he puts it, ‘a manly resemblance to my charming sister’ (iii, 61). Might Lord Avondale then be the infant the Lady delivered before dying? A second, more sustained false path is set down when the central characters meet a young curate who ‘in form, in feature, and in voice […] bore a perfect resemblance of the late Lord Avondale’ (iii, 64). As though to make sure we do not miss his possible role, Kelly piles on the intertextual clues: the young man’s name is Edmund—the same as Reeve’s hero—and during one dramatic scene he startles young Lord Avondale into believing that he has met the ghost of his late uncle, much as Manfred in The Castle of Otranto is frightened to see Theodore, the exact replica of the murdered Alfonso. Though Mrs Barlowe claims he is the illegitimate son she bore Lord Avondale in her youth, there is thus still the possibility that ‘the blooming modest Edmund, the long reputed child of a youthful indiscretion, would turn out the legal heir of Avondale, cherished by Mrs. Barlowe through her faithful love and adherence to the ill-fated parents’ (iii, 123). For a reader of gothic, such a narrative option is entirely imaginable, and Kelly leaves it open before us until nearly the novel’s end.

But the usurpation-and-haunting formula as a whole, I would further suggest, is itself something of a red herring—a conventional frame that, because of its familiarity and the sense of telos it imposes on the plot, can distract our
attention away from the novel’s deeper thematic investments. In fact, while the story of Lord and Lady Avondale’s deaths and their daughter’s disinheritance provides a loose frame for the novel, there is one small, particular piece of it that *Avondale Priory* repeats and amplifies with almost obsessive persistence. Tellingly, it is not the part that involves what would seem the crux of the formula—the criminal diversion of succession from its rightful path—but rather one of the seemingly random circumstances that make the usurpation possible: the death of Lord Avondale and, particularly, its effect on his wife. As the young Lord tells Ethelinde, his uncle, ‘returning from a hunt, was thrown from his horse in view of his Lady, and expired on the spot […] being at the time of her beloved Lord’s death far advanced in her pregnancy, the shock proved too severe for her enfeebled spirits’ (i, 106). The same scene is later retold in Mrs Barlowe’s harrowing account of how she arrived at the castle to find ‘the beloved Lord Avondale’ with

> every lineament of his beauteous manly countenance bearing the pale impressions of approaching death […] Unhappily the sad catastrophe had reached the ear of his wife, she flew wildly to the gates, and met the attendants bearing his bleeding body, and as I entered the apartment, she had been supported insensible from it. (iii, 79)

After the Lady is carried out, Mrs Barlowe lingers over the corpse of her one-time lover: ‘his face was wan, his hands were cold […] the icy hand of remorseless death was chilling now for ever’ (iii, 80). Her bereaved exclamations over his body cause the other servants to stare in horror, as they ‘believed them arising from a temporary madness’ (iii, 81).

The doubling already packed into this moment—the bloodied form of a dying man; one loving woman losing consciousness, another raving with grief—would not seem significant if not for the fact that *Avondale Priory* is virtually littered with variations on this scene. A manuscript found by Ethelinde contains a ballad, ‘The Fate of Athwold and Elfrida’, which tells of a young woman seduced and abandoned by her lover. On the night before he is set to marry another she sees him by her bedside, an appearance that foretells their joint doom shortly afterwards:

> How deadly pale thou look’st, my love, I fear thou art not well, Speak to me, life, I’ll call my maids, I’ll ring the chamber bell. […] She ran to meet her Earl so dear, She met him at the door, A pale corpse ta’en from the Derwent stream, And not a smiling woer.

> They bore the body on a bier, They laid it by her side:
She looked, she sighed, she kissed his cheek,  
And looked, and shrieked, and died. (I, 145)

Oddly enough, although the manuscript containing the ballad belongs to the Avondale family, its title—‘The Fate of Athwold and Elfrida’—points not to Ethelinde (herself an Avondale, as we will eventually learn) but rather to her husband, who shares a first name with the ballad’s hero. What ties the Earl of St Clair to the mysteries of Avondale is not some secret blood connection—no such link between the families is ever revealed—but rather, it seems, the peculiar destiny threatening men in this novel: a premature death that incapacitates or outright kills the women who love them. Introduced early in the book, the ballad thus offers itself as a possible prophecy, much like a dream that (as Mrs Barlowe recounts) Lady Avondale had before her death, in which a spectral figure informed her that ‘[e]ven now the fates prepare a work of woe [...] husband’s blood will stain these antique walls, a widow’s tears soon fade thy blooming cheeks’ (III, 75). Though Ethelinde and Athwold do live happily ever after in the end, their preceding adventures include not one but two incidents in which Ethelinde believes her husband dead—first when his ship back to England is reported missing, and then again much later, when Lady Glenroy’s henchman tells her that ‘not two hours since I crushed your Athwold to the dust; this arm, this dagger, reached his heart, behold, his blood still reeks upon my hands’ (III, 49).

Though the ‘prophecy’ of Athwold’s death is not fulfilled, the novel does not so much refute as redirect it: Ethelinde does faint at the sight of ‘the mangled body of a youth’ in whose ‘bosom appeared a gaping wound, from which the vital stream had issued’ (III, 53–54), but it turns out to belong to young Lord Avondale, her one-time suitor. Though it spares Ethelinde the grief of widowhood (and, as noted above, smooths her path to inheritance), Lord Avondale’s accidental murder still causes the seemingly unavoidable repetition of the fates of Elfrida (the girl in the ballad) and Lady Avondale, since once again there is a passionately devoted woman waiting in the wings to grieve to death: Juliet, who refuses to leave the dead body of the young nobleman, ‘clasping the murdered form of him she so much loved’ (III, 106). When he is laid out in state, ‘notwithstanding the silent horror of the awful scene, the disconsolate Lady Juliet left it neither night nor day’ (III, 112–13), till she becomes a kind of living corpse herself, ‘her every feature [...] moulded by the icy hand of death’, and finally keels over: ‘she respired not, for her heart was broke, and her fair form reposed within the chilling arms of death’ (III, 169–70).

What are we to make of this odd pattern inside Avondale Priory—the familiar arc of the plot and beneath it, in the novel’s depths of detail, the relentless reverberation of one scrap of narrative? Clearly, this image of a woman confronting the graphically rendered corpse of her lover attracted Kelly’s attention, and the odd urgency of her repetition shifts the thematic emphasis of her novel from the restoration of the heroine’s identity and property to the prospect of a devastating loss that she only narrowly escapes. While the surface of Avondale Priory might
lead us to conclude that it is, in important ways, ‘just like’ Otranto or Romance of the Forest, its internal rhythm says otherwise, especially when considered in light of Kelly’s other novels. If we look at the whole of Kelly’s career, we discover versions of this image of a woman wracked by her grief over the body of a man she loves from Kelly’s first novel, Madeline, through to her final Minerva work, Ruthinglenne. In some cases, the dead man is a father or guardian, but it is lovers and especially husbands who die the most vivid deaths, their remains then captivating the senses of the women who love them and driving them to distraction and beyond.

Some hint of this preoccupation is already present in Madeline, when Ellen, finally free to leave her husband if she wishes, is stopped by her own imagination: ‘She beheld him pining in languor and sickness—on a lonely bed, regretting her who had abandoned him. [...] She beheld his eyes close. Tortured fancy could bear no more.’ The Abbey of St Asaph the following year makes the death of a beloved mate both anxious fantasy and horrific reality. Having dreamed repeatedly of her husband on the field of battle, ‘pale, wounded and bleeding’, Lady Douglas travels to join his unit only to find him dying, a ‘gaping wound in his breast’, leaving her bent ‘in speechless agony over the pale yet still adored countenance’. Perhaps somewhat exorcised by her concerted use of it in her third novel, Avondale Priory, this image becomes less central in Kelly’s subsequent fictions, but it does not disappear. When the heroine’s father in Joscelina is killed in battle, she lies motionless beside him until prompted by the arrival of a friend to ‘rais[e] her pale cheek from the yet paler face of her lifeless father’.

In Eva, the scenario is again focused on a lover, though at something of a remove from the main action: one heroine hears her father describe how he killed the man she married without his permission—‘he fell to glut my vengeance! covered with wounds, he fell!’—while a minor character in an inset tale swoons when her husband is attacked and awakens to find him dead, after which ‘the wildest delirium ravaged her frame, and her brain in a short time became the dreary abode of gloomy distraction!’ By Edwardina, Kelly is back to the sentimental death of a father—one of the heroine’s letters is written by his coffin—though we do share in one more imagined lover’s death, that of Arabella’s husband Horace, away in the West Indies: ‘An engagement daily expected! and is it not possible that my Horace may now be numbered with the braver dead?—stretched on a foreign shore!’ Ruthinglenne, somewhat unusually, opts not to describe the death of the heroine’s beloved guardian—a chapter break moves us from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’—though we do get another inset tale in which a minor character recounts the loss of her husband: ‘She threw herself on her knees, and folded the cold form of him she had so loved, to her faithful heart.’

Kelly, then, spent her entire Minerva career experimenting with the uses of a central gothic trope: the shocking encounter with the dead body. Yet, she seems to have been particularly interested in one specifically gendered variation of this trope, which her fiction represents over and over again, while varying it somewhat in detail, centrality and tone. Surveyed over time and multiple titles,
her use of this image offers yet more evidence of how little the term ‘imitation’
does for us in attempting to describe the composition of Minerva novels and
their relations with the gothic canon. Not only varied within her own fiction,
Kelly’s distinctive, poignant portrayal of the confrontation with the corpse is
intriguingly unlike the influential examples of Radcliffe and Lewis. St Aubert’s
deathbed scene in _The Mysteries of Udolpho_ certainly seems a likely model for
some of the paternal deaths in Kelly’s fiction: Emily, too, gazes at her father’s
body ‘with a mixture of doubt and awful astonishment’, though Radcliffe seems
determined to locate the horror Emily feels in her distraught mind, not in her
father’s ‘placid and serene features’, whereas Kelly is unshy in graphic de-
scription even where saintly fathers are concerned. But Kelly seems far more
interesting in death scenes containing a romantic or even erotic tremor, and the
truly interesting contrast, to my mind, emerges when we read her next to Lewis.
As has been amply discussed, dead women in _The Monk_ are either ghastly icons
of mortality and decay or, in the case of Antonia’s faked death, a pornographic
object served up to the man who covets her; both, arguably, are images infused
with the none-too-subtle misogyny that runs through Lewis’s novel. Kelly, by
contrast, explores the affective potential of dead men, who in her hands become
objects of a female gaze filled with love and longing, but also fear and horror. It
is interesting to note here that Kelly was already using such images in _Madeline_
and _St Asaph_, published before _The Monk_; after Lewis’s novel came out, however,
her emphasis on the lover’s dead body became stronger, but her reversal of Lewis’s
gendering of the moment suggests that she was not replicating his successful
model, but rather adapting it to suit her own needs.

Though I do not wish to reduce Kelly’s long-time experimentation with this
trope to a simplistic biographical explanation, the relevance of this particular
gothic scenario to her personal situation is too suggestive to ignore. As Stephen
Behrendt notes, it is not clear when Robert Kelly died. Though some have as-
sumed that it was sudden widowhood that prompted Kelly—like fellow Minerva
novelists Eliza Parsons—to begin her career with Lane in 1794, there are indica-
tions that her husband was still alive at least as late as 1797, and the _Dictionary
of National Biography_ dates his death to 1807. Even if not yet a widow when
she began working for Lane, the years Kelly spent writing Minerva novels were
years in which she watched Robert (as she would describe it years later in a let-
ter) struggle—and fail—to support their ‘infant family’, until eventually he
‘accepted an offer to go to the West Indies with a civil appointment; he lived
only ten days after his arrival, and his dust now rests in Trinidad’. Though
perhaps not already a reality, widowhood was certainly a dreaded possibility for
Kelly when she began her career in fiction; at the very least, the Kellys’ life in
the 1790s would have made Isabella keenly aware that marriage offered only an
uncertain defence against desperation and heartache—not to mention poverty,
a chronic condition she shared with other Minerva novelists and frequently
represented in her fiction as well.
Even if Kelly did adopt gothic storylines and images from the better-known works of her day, then, she filtered them through her own particular interests and sensibilities. Maybe she preferred to write about dead husbands than St Aubert-style dying fathers because this particular variation on the gothic/sentimental set piece of the deathbed scene felt more intimate and relevant to her. Maybe she imagined women going mad or collapsing dead over their lovers’ corpses because she sympathised with them, or—and I find this possibility more suggestive—because she herself could not afford to do either: there were, after all, children to support. Are the deaths of Juliet, Elfrida and Lady Avondale, then, an expression of her deepest fear, or a pained fantasy about a release and freedom open to gothic heroines, but not to the working mother of young children?

Whatever the answers—at which we can only guess—both *The Ruins of Avondale Priory* and the broader view of Kelly’s career have demonstrated, I hope, why the dialogue between Minerva novelists and the gothic canon consists of far more than ‘imitation’. Kelly pursued success as a professional novelist with great persistence, but also with considerable creativity; and it is this last quality that, to my mind, makes her Minerva gothics rewarding to study, as it gives a unique colouring precisely to those materials we might otherwise be prone to dismiss as *simply* formulaic or clichéd. Kelly’s heroines may fear and flee and suffer and weep as do the heroines of other gothic novels, but they do so in specific ways and under specific circumstances that Kelly privileges above others, at times in sharp divergence from the example of her more famous contemporaries.

**Notes**

This research was funded by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 128/15). My thanks to Sue Lanser, Christina Morin and Elizabeth Neiman for their helpful comments.


2. Isabella Kelly, *The Ruins of Avondale Priory*, 3 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1796), i, 12 and iii, 42. Further references to this edition are given in the text.


18. *Edwardina* is included in a list of Kelly’s published works that was appended to her appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in Aug 1832. See *Archives of the Royal Literary Fund, 1790–1918*, 145 reels (London: World Microfilms, 1981–84), case 632: item 10.


24. Wright, ‘Disturbing the Female Gothic’, pp. 70–73; and Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Sarah Wilkinson: Female Gothic Entrepreneur’, in *Gothic Archive* (Marquette University, 2015), pp. 1–20 (pp. 1 and 2) <http://epublications.marquette.edu/gothic_scholar/7> [accessed 1 July 2018].


27. [Isabella Kelly], *Madeline; or, the Castle of Montgomery, a Novel*, 3 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1794), iii, 218.


31. ‘Catherine Harris’ [i.e. Isabella Kelly], *Edwardina*, 2 vols (London: For the Author, 1800), 11, 72.


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**Date of acceptance:** 8 January 2019.
The ‘Dying-Tale’ as Epistemic Strategy in Hemans’s *Records of Woman*

*Angela Aliff*

The popular participatory histories written by female Romantics resist New Historical contextualisation in organisation, content and intentionality. Elisa Beshero-Bondar observes the increasingly scholarly awareness of this resistance, pointing out that James Chandler and Jerome Christensen ‘have each proposed that Romanticism be dislodged from reductive chronological parameters as well as contextual approaches that limit engagement with the way literary texts formulate perspectives on history’. Felicia Hemans’s *Records of Woman* (1828) invites this shift with its achronological contents as well as her extensive personal involvement with her characters. Beshero-Bondar continues: ‘Such methods limit discussion of literature to matters narrowly relevant in theoretical paradigms of our time, and avoid engaging with how texts determine, assert, or examine epistemologies of history and culture on their own terms’. The standard practice of current scholarship in framing analysis with historical context sometimes overlooks the increasingly absent contextualisation in the anthologies of women’s writing published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These anthologies varied in their historical and contemporary selections, resulting in a sense that women’s writing was valued by situating it within the socio-political context of the female writers and their audiences.

In *Writing Women’s Literary History* (1993), Margaret Ezell offers a broad view of the changes in approach to female anthologies, beginning with seventeenth-century collections of poetry with ‘a strong tradition of beginning with a section of commendatory verse by other writers, particularly in posthumous editions’, and resulting in an organisational structure that produces ‘a specific environment for reading the verse. After having read about the verse and its author, the reader then encounters it with certain expectations, predisposed to like, admire, and perhaps even emulate the contents’. Notably, these introductions are less concerned with clarifying historical detail than establishing a moral context for the reception of the contents. During the time of Hemans’s prolific literary career, the work of past female writers remained relatively accessible when compared to the aftermath of the Victorian solidification of the female canon. Yet, this accessibility was detached from chronological detail by the popular practice of excerpting. Ezell writes:

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the *Ladies Magazine* occasionally used Restoration and early eighteenth-century women’s writings as filler material. However, since the magazine did not
date the poems, the reader would have already had to be familiar with Catherine Cockburn, Mary, Lady Chudleigh, Mrs. Lennox, and ‘Ardelia’ in order to appreciate such pieces as early specimens of women’s writing.4

As Ezell explains, selections in anthologies of women’s writing did not become truly canonised until the 1860s, a generation after Hemans’s death. As the editorial focus narrowed, so did access to the array of female writers that had existed before and during Hemans’s career.

The canonical success of the elected female writers in late nineteenth-century anthologies existed alongside the increasingly popular framing of female writing with expositions of the merits of their ‘feminine’ qualities.5 Hemans herself satisfied the complex expectations of an audience that described her poetry as ‘intensely feminine’ while maintaining her status as an immensely popular poet. Representing the opinion of her contemporaries, Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine proclaimed that, ‘as a female writer, influencing the female mind, [Hemans] has undoubtedly stood, for some by-past years, the very first in rank.’6 Hemans’s poetry undoubtedly develops a female didacticism, but whether she intended to encourage women to embrace domestic stereotypes or circumvented those stereotypes to educate women regarding their innate power is a complex interpretive problem, one that both an awareness and application of ‘affective historiography’ can answer.

The emotional awareness of affective historiography, which acknowledges the complex and varied avenues for emotional transference, sometimes requires the suspension of temporality, or at least that temporality be temporarily deprioritised. To Greg Kucich, this approach is expansive and apparent in a central strategy in broader patterns of women’s historical revisionism in the Romantic era of deepening the sympathetic registers developing in later eighteenth-century historiography. This more affective view of the past, emerging throughout a wide range of experimental histories by women writers, helped to shape a new historical consciousness more open to the social wrongs of the past and more committed to righting their persistence in the present.7

This emotional and moral consciousness appears throughout Hemans’s Records and reflects the kind of historical consciousness that Megan Matchinske advocates in her scholarship on Early Modern women. In finding commonalities between the affective historiography of the Romantics and Matchinske’s ethics of action, I will demonstrate how Early Modern women’s affective and constructive histories can illuminate the study of their female successors. As Matchinske writes, ‘margins/limits are fleetingly discursive, both of the moment and for the moment, and that history—Herod’s, mine, yours—is local, immediate, particular and, always and necessarily, revisable.’8 This theoretical collapsing is surprisingly and productively reflective of Romantic women’s treatment of the past.

Matchinske’s allusion to Herod follows her analysis of a small portion of Elizabeth Cary’s The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry (1613). Act v begins with Nuntio’s brief soliloquy expressing his dread at having been chosen...
to communicate the news of Mariam’s death to Herod. After Nuntio’s initial greeting, Herod, who had ordered Mariam’s execution and should subsequently already know her fate, begs Nuntio with great emotion, ‘I prithee tell no dying-tale: thine eye | Without thy tongue doth tell but too too much’.9 Despite Herod’s request, both he and Nuntio recognise the necessity that the details of Mariam’s death be formally relayed, and Nuntio proceeds to articulate Mariam’s final words and demeanour. Matchinske uses this scene to illustrate Cary’s deliberate positioning of history: [the dying-tale] gives to history a meaning, a rationality, an episteme […]. the history that it generates is not really about Mariam. Instead, the ‘dying-tale’ inscribes a relationship—a relationship between two distinct and very much alive participants: the king and the messenger. The ‘dying-tale’ delineates for Herod a way of assessing his own behavior; it announces to him, after the fact, the consequences of his actions towards Mariam; it makes him responsible, and it promotes tragic remorse.10 Of course, the information Nuntio communicates regarding Mariam’s death carries significance as a preservation of the truth of the situation. However, as Matchinske implies, Nuntio’s narrative exists not for the reader, but for Herod. And Herod, whose actions determined Mariam’s fate, requests Nuntio’s information not because he lacks knowledge, but because the formality of his active hearing will ultimately drive the narrative forward by requiring ‘its most immediate listener Herod to re-act’, and, by implication, require action from the audience.11 This action, as Matchinske discusses, is provoked by Cary’s reshaping of historical information to interrogate the ‘masculinist, state-centered perspective outlined in previous Herod histories’,12 and provoke the rethinking of the role of gender and the dynamics of power. Because Matchinske’s work ultimately illustrates the process of recovering the ethical motivation for female appropriations of history, her insights can be usefully applied to other moments in female literary history.

The implications of the dying-tale share some epistemic characteristics with Hemans’s Records of Woman: the historic–didactic value of both works occurs relationally rather than via straightforward communication of objective truth. Just as Herod already knows the fate of Mariam before Nuntio relays the details, Hemans’s audience, in a sense, knows the fate of most of the women in Records. The hopeful anticipation of ‘youth and love’ nearly always ends in separation and death, if not of the women themselves, then at least of their lovers. And because Hemans typically prefaces the poems with anecdotal historical annotations, she allows the audience to assume the worst before engaging in the poems themselves. Hemans did not write the Records to reveal factual historical details; instead, as in The Tragedy of Mariam, the Records develop a relationship between the teller of the dying-tale (Hemans) and her audience who already know what will occur in the poetic narratives. As Matchinske argues, Nuntio, ‘[t]hanks to his special talents, his credentials, [...] is to be trusted in shaping the “dying-tale”—in arranging its didactic legacy’.13 Hemans entrusts to her poeticism the responsibility
of shaping the didactic legacy of the *Records of Woman* by positioning herself in direct relation to her audience and using her art as a conduit of meaningful history.

To an extent, this relational positioning goes beyond the ekphrasis that Brian P. Elliott describes: ‘Like elegy, her ekphrasis becomes a song of individual loss, a lament for the inevitable dissolution of identity in the sands of time; every figure becomes a broken statue in the desert of history.’\(^\text{14}\) Unlike Cary’s dying-tale, the lament more exclusively looks backward at history by emphasising its shortcomings. To prevent representing Hemans as completely despairing, though, Elliott reads her ekphrastic poetry as purposeful through ‘a paradoxical collapse of distance’, or in Kathleen Lundeen’s phrase, ‘negative incapability’.\(^\text{15}\) In other words, Hemans preserves history by imbuing static or dead factual details with living emotional elements of herself. Elliott illustrates this practice by suggesting a parallel between Properzia Rossi’s projection of herself onto Ariadne and Hemans’s projection of herself onto Rossi, an idea strengthened biographically by Hemans’s difficult marriage.\(^\text{16}\) Ultimately, this projection, or the ‘investments of the speaker into the ekphrastic object’ preserves the past greatness of history’s heroines. Although Elliott’s description of the ekphrastic process differentiates Hemans’s highly personal project from the work of Keats and Shelley to recognise and define Hemans’s poetic achievement, I question how much Hemans could accomplish through an appropriation of history limited solely to the preservation of her private feelings. If the *Records* are solely laments or songs of loss, they can accomplish little to make history—at least the useful kind of history that Matchinske describes as ‘a priori possibility (its ethical imperative, its intentionality, its ability to construct ends and to legitimate them in that process)’.\(^\text{17}\) Instead, Matchinske’s work on Early Modern women’s epistemic approaches to history offers to the study of Hemans an emphasis on the personal and dynamic relationship between poet and audience motivated by the ‘ethics of action’ produced affectively.

If, as a reading incorporating Matchinske might suggest, Hemans writes her poetry compelled by ethics that demand action, a difficult question emerges regarding what specifically Hemans feels needs to change. Michael T. Williamson does position Hemans in relation to her audience, specifically through her invitation for readers to witness the elegy as an anticonsolatory social drama of contamination and purification in which the mourner, not the mourned, must be cleansed after an immersion in death and grief that gives rise to utterances and gestures that are entirely contrary to ideals of composed, resolute, faithful ‘feminine’ mourning.\(^\text{18}\) Williamson’s reading of *Records of Woman* reveals a tension between the ‘idealisation’ of women and their ability, while in mourning, to meet its demands; their attempts to meet these demands result in their contamination and subsequent need for purification. In Williamson’s words, Hemans uses this social impasse for women ‘because she so insistently argues against women’s cultural, political, and social power to effect the transformation of dead men into stable memorialized figures.’\(^\text{19}\) This idea provides us with a profitable way of understanding Hemans as more than a popular, sentimental poet; instead, she confronts the notion that soci-
ety’s women function emotionally to preserve a honourable patriarchal legacy—a legacy that Hemans implies is already unstable, impermanent and degenerative.

Although useful, this reading limits Hemans’s philosophical critique of society to negative definition; in other words, she expresses what cannot and should not be without offering a positive solution regarding what ought to be to her readership. Instead, I argue that Hemans, as Early Modern female historians before her, shaped history according to an ethics that demands action. This is not to say that Hemans’s demands a literal emulation of action, however. The women in *Records* handle disaster in ways that are often uncomfortable if not deadly, and their external circumstances are overwhelmingly undesirable. Yet Hemans’s heroines demonstrate inner qualities such as loyalty, courage and willpower worthy of celebration in an act of ‘visionary expansion of the categories of value’ that Jeffrey C. Robinson associates with Fancy:

> Creating occurs in the presence of dying; as the speaker expires the world fills her breath upon which language is inscribed. The poet at once conserved the expiring life and praises it. A poetics of expiration—the asymptotic approach of death, silence, substancelessness, oblivion—calls forth at the last possible moment a resistance to this fast tendency, a lingering, characteristic of the consciousness poetry seems to urge, out of which comes a complete reversal or conversion, in form, coherence, song, and praise.20

In her emphasis on moments of death in *Records of Woman*, Hemans defies the finality of the historical records she retells by celebrating the spirituality of strong will. In her didactic emphasis on emulating action, she defines and advocates the development of qualities that resist societal constructions of the ‘intensely feminine’.

In this respect, ‘The Switzer’s Wife’ holds an unusual position in *Records of Woman* because the wife, described by Hemans as ‘a woman who seems to have been of an heroic spirit’, accomplishes what no other women in *Records* can; upon recognising the danger to her family’s safety, ‘the free Alpine spirit woke at last’.21 In the succeeding stanzas, Hemans demonstrates the ability of the free spirit to wield great power as she motivates her husband to cast aside his melancholy and fight. Hemans distinguishes the Switzer’s wife from the many other women in *Records* who cling desperately to their men in war and death, hoping to prevent physical and eternal separation. On the other hand, the Switzer’s wife commands her husband to ‘Go forth beside the waters [...]

> God shall be with thee, my belov’d!—Away! | Bless but thy child, and leave me,—I can pray!’ (ll. 91, 95–96). In this exhortation, the poet emphasises the power of independence in the woman who sustains herself in her husband’s absence. The self-sufficiency of the Switzer’s wife causes her to act and makes her the most successful of the women in *Records*. Thanks to Hemans’s introduction, we know that the wife’s story ends in victory for Switzerland. Furthermore, we know from Hemans’s reference to M. J. Jewsbury that ‘yet around her is a light | Of inward majesty and might’.22 The spiritual sufficiency of the Switzer’s wife reveals self-reliance capable of sustaining
separation that surpasses her domestic position. As the only poem in *Records of Woman* that cannot be considered a dying-tale of sorts, ‘The Switzer’s Wife’ illuminates the positive results of ethical action and independence that can guide us through the didactic implications of the remaining *Records*. As Wolfson notes, Hemans ‘imagine[s] women who won’t suffer fate but rebel, and in forms that perversely parody domestic affection’. Under the guise of ‘domestic affection’ and other ‘womanly’ qualities such as elegance and tenderness, through *Records of Woman*, her own version of Cary’s dying-tale, Hemans develops several strategies to teach her audience, in particular young women, a self-determination that defies gendered stereotypes and fosters egalitarianism.

The didactic value of the dying-tale relies on the process of its being heard in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, as well as in *Records of Woman*. Herod, knowing Mariam’s fate and anticipating Nuntio’s tone, must still listen to the details of the story as a gesture toward his responsibility for the tragedy. The scenario itself unveils the limitations of the visual; upon seeing Nuntio, Herod tellingly exclaims:

\begin{quote}
Oh, do not with thy words my life destroy, \\
I prithee tell no dying-tale: thine eye \\
Without thy tongue doth tell but too too much: \\
Yet let thy tongue’s addition make me die, \\
Death welcome comes to him whose grief is such. (v. 2. 16–20)
\end{quote}

In this passage, Herod visually ascertains the weight of Nuntio’s message, while acknowledging that hearing the tale will crush him. The act of listening supersedes the act of seeing. For Romantic epistemologists, the practice of empiricism led to a deepened consciousness of the benefits and dangers of the various senses. In *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (1993), William Galperin discusses how literature complicates the consciousness of the ‘tyranny of conception’ in Romantic literature primarily because of the idea that the tyranny stems from ‘the invisible nature of man’ rather than the physical capability of sight. While critics such as Norman Bryson and Julia Krstićeva have articulated the colonising and patriarchal dangers of this tyranny, Galperin goes on to explain that, ironically, authors like Wordsworth and Coleridge find that ‘only the eye can effect anything resembling an intervention to prohibit the tyranny of sight’.

As Wordsworth was seeking a solution for the problem of the visual objectification of landscape and people through ‘the most despotic of our senses’, Hemans herself develops a counter to the objectification of women and landscape through a multi-sensory, rather than visually dominant, approach to communication.

In *Records of Woman*, Hemans corrects an overemphasis on the visual by alerting the audience to the power of the other senses. Her especially auditory emphasis did not go unnoticed by critics like Byron, which, according to Diego Saglia, reveals that ‘Byron points out and dismisses Hemans’s investments in voice and utterance [...] [his] dismissal of Hemans is based on her use of the sonic and acoustic paradigm.’ Perhaps Byron’s diminishment of the communicative power of the auditory reflects a common masculinist approach toward women’s poetry; additionally, Saglia notes several other, Victorian critics who disliked...
Hemans’s sound devices.27 Regardless, Hemans does more than simply infuse her poetry with auditory imagery: in some cases, sound meets the deep needs of the characters involved. For example, in ‘Gertrude, or Fidelity till Death’, Gertrude demonstrates the magnitude of her loyalty to her husband vocally:

The wind rose high,—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear: [...]  
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.28

In this stanza, sound conducts the deep communication of the soul, and Hemans emphasises Gertrude’s strength by revealing that her voice competes with the wind. This intimacy contrasts with the association of the visual and distance near the poem’s beginning when Hemans describes the heaven’s ‘pale stars watching to behold | The might of earthly love’ during a ‘clear and cold’ night (ll. 5–8). Though nothing exists to obscure the visual communication between heaven and the lovers on earth, words like ‘pale’ and ‘cold’ foster the idea of an unfeeling observer taking in a scene full of intense physical communication. Ultimately, Gertrude overcomes the miseries of her husband’s last minutes with her touch and kisses; Hemans juxtaposes her tactile imagery with her reference to the transcendent: ‘Oh! lovely are ye, Love and Faith, | Enduring to the last!’ (ll. 49–50) While Jacqueline Labbe reads this moment as a representation of the failure of the romance, I suggest instead that the moment is one of overcoming the limitations of the physically conventional with intentionality, using auditory and tactile communications imbued with transcendental significance.29

In many ways, Hemans’s use of sound overcomes the diminishment of the feminine through visual dominance because of sound’s enduring relationship to place. Saglia observes that her ‘poetry works to define a potentially strong subjectivity which, however, is either on the brink of dissolution or already beyond rescue yet is also intricately bound up with ideological frameworks, temporal markers, and geo-cultural coordinates’.30 Hemans presents place as having the unique quality of longevity, as opposed to human temporality, yet place somehow offers us the record of the finite human experience. For example, ‘Imelda’ begins with the musical narrative power of nature:

We have the myrtle’s breath around us here,
Amidst the fallen pillars;—this hath been
Some Naiad’s fane of old. How brightly clear,
Flinging a vein of silver o’er the scene,
Up thro’ the shadowy grass, the fountain wells,
And music with it, gushing from beneath
The ivied altar!—that sweet murmur tells
The rich wildflowers no tale of woe or death.31

In this stanza, Hemans constructs situational irony by toying with the idea of preservation. The myrtle’s breath preserves, in a sense, the naiad’s former presence...
by the spring; the fountain’s gushing creates music. While the landscape does not directly tell the violent story of Imelda and Azzo, Hemans does subtly suggest the idea of the landscape as witness and preserver of the lovers’ vows:

[...] They stood, that hour,  
Speaking of hope, while tree, and fount, and flower,  
And star, just gleaming thro’ the cypress boughs,  
Seem’d holy things, as records of their vows. (ll. 25–28)

Though the trees themselves do not repeat the vows back to the audience, they function as a conduit of preserved memory. Hemans continues to play with the idea of memory preserved and lost as Imelda searches for Azzo:

[...] a shuddering thrill  
Ran thro’ each vein, when first the Naiad’s rill  
Met her with melody—sweet sounds and low;  
We hear them yet, they live along its flow—  
**Her** voice is music lost! (ll. 69–73; original emphases)

Rather than alerting her audience to the inability of the landscape to preserve Imelda’s sorrow, Hemans instead emphasises that the sounds of the past live in the present landscape, that we are the ones who hear and interpret. The narrator of ‘Imelda’ performs this very function by offering guidance in recognising the romanticised history of place, imbeded in nature’s sounds, while simultaneously reconstructing a tragic moment for the reader’s benefit. Imelda becomes a kind of naiad herself, as the presence of her spirit permanently indwells the riverside thanks to the poetic preservation of her story. Likewise, ‘Edith, a Tale of the Woods’ reveals the necessity that nature preserve the human experience: ‘Awful it is for human heart to bear | The might and burden of the solitude!’

The physicality and temporality of humanity makes it insufficient to harbour the weight of the collective human experience, so Hemans leaves the history ‘Unto the forest oaks’ (l. 19). This emphasis on human insufficiency democratises the human experience as fragile and as fleeting as sound itself, favouring neither male nor female.

By technically and ideologically developing the auditory elements of her poetry, Hemans trains her audience to receive her dying-tales. Instead of consoling humanity merely with the knowledge that the story of human experience can surpass the corporeal, she demonstrates that the hearing of these tales produces a satisfying depth of spirituality. In a brief discussion of ‘Mozart’s Requiem’, Saglia notes that music [...] is an act of spiritual devotion, a spiritual investment clothed in, and conveyed by, music—the most immaterial of the arts [...] Music and, in metapoetic terms, the acoustic provide the kind of middle ground necessary for Hemans to create poetry that straddles the human and the divine.

Hemans clearly articulates this relationship in ‘Edith’, where, from the beginning, the sounds of nature suggest the ability of the earth to carry the weight of human emotion. After the poetic narrative has introduced the details of Edith’s solitary agony, the narrative voice offers a particularly enlightening apostrophe:
Ye have sad meetings on this changeful earth,
Many and sad! but airs of heavenly breath
Shall melt the links which bind you, for your birth
Is far apart. (ll. 49–53)

The spatial description of the births of love and death suggest that, on earth, they share a temporary and unnatural union. Ultimately, the power that will dissolve the links binding this union comes from ‘airs of heavenly breath’. Edith herself demonstrates this power at work; as her life fades away, her voice merges with the summer breeze:

Nor in vain
Was that soft-breathing influence to enchain
The soul in gentle bonds: by slow degrees
Light follow’d on, as when a summer breeze
Parts the deep masses of the forest shade
And lets the sunbeam through:—Her voice was made
Ev’n such a breeze; and she, a lowly guide,
By faith and sorrow rais’d and purified,
So to the Cross her Indian fosterers led,
Until their prayers were one. (ll. 126–35)

Edith’s passionate pursuit of the souls of her foster parents combines nature’s voice with the articulation of her spirituality; she appropriately sings mournful hymns at twilight when each element is most compelling (ll. 118–21). In these two passages, Hemans sets up corresponding unities: the more Edith’s voice becomes nature’s breeze, the closer she and her foster parents grow unified in prayer, to the point where Edith, having accomplished her purpose, can transcend the unnatural bondage between love and death. Edith almost imperceptibly dies as her foster father, now purified by his entrance into unity with Edith’s natural spirituality, sings a passing song. The poem’s speaker concludes: ‘The song had cease’d—the listeners caught no breath, | That lovely sleep had melted into death.’ (ll. 230–31)

Whereas, typically, the finality of the word ‘death’ might suggest a kind of negative separation, within this context, the word provides resolution with a positive separation. Aided by song, Edith’s physical passing literally accomplishes the melting of the bonds between love and death foreshadowed earlier in the poem by restoring them their appropriate status as distinguishable entities. The music enables the gracefulness of Edith’s passing by preserving her spiritual legacy, which itself is developed through the musicality of language and spirituality. As Robinson observes, Hemans’s poetics find ‘a way of temporarily solving the tension between the call of holiness and the call of poetry’.34

Saglia’s brief observation about the immateriality of music provides the key to Hemans’s strategic, democratising use of sound. For her, spiritual devotion does not necessitate empirical engagement, but she recognises the dangers of a visually dominant empirical practice, particularly in its tendency to foster a despotism that benefits from viewing women as intellectually disadvantaged. As a result, Hemans
reminds her readers that empiricism requires attention to every sensory experience rather than merely the visual. Susan Levins reflects similarly on Dorothy Wordsworth: ‘Her writing thus expresses an equipoise of self and the phenomenal world that challenges the inwardness projected on to the world and the notion of assertive self advanced by so many male writers of the romantic world’.

By viewing epistemology as organic and personal rather than restricted by objective linearity, Hemans creates in her *Records of Woman* a forward momentum reflective of the ethics of action. In her own comments on the relationship of the self and epistemology, Matchinske recalls Cleanth Brooks, who advocates that we ‘speak of the anticipation of retrospection as our chief tool in making sense of [historical] narrative, the master trope of its strange logic’. To employ the anticipation of retrospection in the study of Hemans frees us to understand her awareness of her didactic legacy, both in its effectiveness and in its malleability.

Hemans infuses her poetry with didactic power through her epistemic extension to the auditory, yet this epistemic move takes part in a much broader deliberate movement on Hemans’s part to shape the interpretation and conference of history. Hemans openly participates in a philosophical discussion over the nature of historical recordkeeping in the way that she frequently positions her poems in *Records of Woman* to follow a prose account of the original historical situation. Juxtaposed historical records speak to a modern conceptualisation of history. As Matchinske aptly points out:

> We require at least two separate versions of what has happened to recognize history as history. Whenever we write new narratives we are constructing stories that are at odds with or in contrast to something that has preceded them. We are responding to explicit or imagined counter-histories. This means we are also always dealing with the matter of multiple truths.

In some cases, historians strategically rely on the separate versions Matchinske describes in order to defend their objective conclusions regarding the truth of history. However, as historians continue the pursuit of preserving the past, the multiplicity of narratives confounds rather than ensures objectivity. Hemans reveals a sensitive awareness of historicity in her construction of *Records of Woman*: pairing the poems with their corresponding prose accounts lends an aura of accuracy to the poems themselves, as though satisfying our need to confirm the facts before subscribing wholeheartedly to the poems’ rhetoric. Likewise, Hemans chooses to combine distantly removed historical figures such as Joan of Arc, Arabella Stuart, Edith and the Greek bride into the *Records*, a narrative sequence with recurrent patterns of youth, love and death that require ideological fashioning either correspondingly or antithetically to Hemans’s women.

Furthermore, Hemans also situates herself in the discussion of the nature of the historical record by critiquing the idea of objective history through a revelation of the insufficiency and instability of memory in ‘Arabella Stuart’. Hemans metaphorically sets up Arabella as the first in Records to illustrate the impossibil-
Hemans’s use of the verbal ‘known’ in this passage introduces an idea that she will continue by using Arabella’s own words. Here, ‘known’ simultaneously justifies Hemans’s Romantic elaboration of Arabella’s thoughts and calls into question the stability of their authenticity. Duncan Wu’s footnote on Hemans’s introduction wonderfully extends her irony: ‘In Hemans’s time it was thought that Stuart went mad in prison, but today it is believed that she remained sane and was party to several escape plots’. While Hemans may not have foreseen the abandonment of the theory of mental debilitation that fuelled the emotion of her poem, she likely would have approved of its further destabilisation of the historical record. In Hemans’s version of the beginning of Arabella’s captivity, Arabella states confidently: ‘I know, I know our love | Shall yet call gentle angels from above | By its undying fervour; and prevail’ (ll. 34–36). The repetition of the phrase ‘I know’ asserts Arabella’s absolute confidence in her epistemology, which Hemans’s audience recognises as doomed from the beginning.

Later in the poem, Hemans complicates Arabella’s epistemic assertion: ‘Thou hast forsaken me! I feel, I know, | There would be rescue if this were not so’ (ll. 187–88). Perhaps with less confidence, Arabella asserts her knowledge, this time a reversal of her previous avowal. Whereas she first combines faith with fact in full confidence of her reunification with Seymour, she now attempts a somewhat different combination of feeling and certainty. In a way, Arabella’s grasp at feelings concludes her confidence in knowledge; as the poem continues, she recognises her mind’s instability when she begs heaven to ‘controll | These thoughts’ and finds in her soul ‘fierce forms crowding it’ (ll. 207–10). Hemans’s destabilisation of knowledge prepares her audience for a significant conclusion based on Arabella’s tragic story: not only does memory fail at preserving the past, but it also fails to carry the present. Just as Arabella’s memories of Seymour cannot sustain her prolonged imprisonment, memory in general, as representative of history, cannot accomplish the action necessary for positive change. Hemans’s first poem in Records of Woman functions allegorically as a warning to her readers, who must shape, renew and refashion historical memory to avoid the degeneration inherent in the attempt to preserve it.

In its own articulation of failed preservation, Cary’s dying-tale plays with the impossible desire to retrieve physical bodies as the original source of historical memory. In a pitiful, arguably ridiculous response to Nuntio’s assertion that Mariam’s ‘body is divided from her head’, Herod wonders: ‘Why, yet methinks there might be found by art | Strange ways of cure; ’tis sure rare things are done | By an inventive head, and willing heart’ (Mariam, v. 2. 91–93).
Of course, no reasonable cure for decapitation exists; however, Herod’s despair causes him to vocalise hopes of reanimation. Later in his conversation with Nuntio, Herod synecdochically fixates on Mariam’s hands as representation of the sweetness and beauty that should have prevented her execution. As Nuntio recalls Mariam’s resolve in the face of death, he preserves for Herod a historical record unsatisfying because it cannot reproduce Mariam’s physical body. Hemans also delves deeply into this problem of representation. As Elliot explains:

These elegiac musings on the emptied and refigured images lead naturally to a concern with immortality, particularly the failure of the individual to continue after death. The conspicuous sense of loss and absence in the poems displays the anxiety surrounding an afterlife dependent on material representation.

However, Hemans, like Cary, does not problematise the representation of the past merely to muse on what might have been. Instead, Cary’s dying-tale provokes Herod to repentance and thus changes history, as suggested by Herod’s new epitaph, which promotes social justice for the devastation inflicted by a patriarchal system: ‘Here Herod lies, that hath his Mariam slain’ (v. 1. 258). Likewise, Hemans’s Records of Woman provokes her audience to pursue a new and infinitely more useful record that promotes social justice by avoiding the linear objectivism of masculine epistemology and democratising approaches to the creation of knowledge. Just as Herod knows how Nuntio’s dying-tale will end, we know how the Records end, yet Hemans offers us the ability to remake the future.

Hemans demands collective action from her audience, but rather than requiring their individual martyrdom, she weaves the performativity of martyrdom throughout her Records to sacrifice the women of the past for the sake of the women of the present. Through their tragic deaths, her women shatter the injurious intellectual–emotional binary, so often applied to Hemans herself, with dauntless willpower. As Wolfson argues, ‘[a] heightened consciousness of the fatal binding of female freedom and female death informs the implicit historiography of Records of Woman.’ Wolfson does not label these necessary deaths as martyrdom, and perhaps she does Hemans some disservice to women like Eudora, who, according to Wolfson, dramatises female liberation:

[N]othing is more typical of Hemans than the death sentence on this symbolic drama and its seeming female apotheosis. The pattern of Staël’s Corrine (female genius must die unhappy) was not just a cultural fad; it was Hemans’s inner ‘feminine’ calculus: the more rebellious a woman, the more vivid the aesthetic fireworks, the more necessary her death.

This reading restricts the rhetorical effectiveness of poems like ‘The Bride of the Greek Isle’, creating instead tragic exempla of society’s rejection of female genius and reinforcing their ‘impotent defiance’. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that these women will themselves to die.

Eudora’s martyrdom combats the enslaving commodification of women with a will that cannot be contained by human constraint. Arabella prays for death to
end an existence without the intellectual capacity to think freely and rationally. Imelda chooses death rather than a life subjected to the petty jealousies and rivalries enforced on her family by her male relatives. Pauline sacrifices herself for a daughter’s life that she privileges above her own. Hemans’s women do not mistakenly or powerlessly lose their lives. Instead, they claim the ultimate self-determination by trading their bodily existence, which Hemans consistently represents as transient and violently susceptible to death, for the memorialisation of the human will. As such, Matchinske’s Women Writing History in Early Modern England articulates a historical praxis that we must not forget: history lessons are never rote or purely mimetic [...] What we learn from history is multiple and contingent, having more to do with finding a way to ask questions about human responsibility, about what we want our lives to mean, than actually discovering how to accomplish those ends via some sort of analogic experience. Elizabeth Cary and Felicia Hemans preserve affective histories of female martyrdom, not for the sake of historical accuracy, but in order that their dying-tales will enable their audiences to shape their futures.

Notes
2. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Ibid., p. 111–12.
9. Elizabeth Cary, The Tragedy of Mariam: The Fair Queen of Jewry, Renaissance Texts and Studies (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), V. 1, 17–18. All further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
11. Ibid., p. 138.
12. Ibid., p. 154.
13. Ibid., p. 158.
Ibid., p. 27; Lundeen and Elliot emphasise that, in contrast with Keats’s praise of artistic detachment or ‘negative capability’, Hemans instead persists in collapsing the distance between herself and her poetry.

In 1818, after six years of marriage, Irish army Captain Alfred Hemans left Felicia to care for their five sons. They separated the following year.

Matchinske, *Women Writing History*, p. 156.


Ibid., p. 33.


Felicia Hemans, ‘The Switzer’s Wife’, in *Records of Woman with Other Poems*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1999), p. 25, l. 66. All further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.

Cited in ibid., p. 25.


Cited in ibid., p. 212.


Ibid., p. 370.

Felicia Hemans, ‘Gertrude, or Fidelity till Death’, in *Records of Woman*, ed. by Feldman, pp. 34–35, ll. 33–40. All further references will be given parenthetically in the text.


Felicia Hemans, ‘Imelda’, in *Records of Woman*, ed. by Feldman, pp. 35–36, ll. 1–8. All further references will be given parenthetically in the text.

Felicia Hemans, ‘Edith, a Tale of the Woods’, in *Records of Woman*, ed. by Feldman, p. 39, ll. 7–8. All further references will be given parenthetically in the text.


Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry*, p. 188.


Cited in Matchinske, *Women Writing History*, p. 156.

Ibid., p. 150.

Cited in Hemans, ‘Arabella Stuart’, in *Records of Woman*, ed. by Feldman, pp. 7–8. All further references will be given parenthetically in the text.


Wolfson, *Borderlines*, p. 60.
42. Eudora was a Greek maiden whose wedding to Ianthis is interrupted by raiding pirates. Ianthis is killed and Eudora captured. To free herself from captivity, she sets fire to the ship and burns along with it.


44. Pauline’s daughter Bertha dances in riverside festivities when fire breaks out. When she sees Bertha’s body in flames, Pauline rushes to her daughter and perishes alongside Bertha.


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**Date of acceptance:** 18 September 2019.
Sydney, May 1834. A rapidly growing metropolis on the edge of the British world, and the site of a largely forgotten episode in the history of Romantic drama. Edward Smith Hall, editor of the radical Sydney Monitor, is sitting in his office, when the twenty-year-old Charles Harpur enters brandishing a manuscript. A few days later, Hall describes the incident with some bemusement: ‘[Harpur] held in his hand a play of his own composing; and not a play only, but a tragedy; and not a tragedy only, but a tragedy composed in blank verse!’ It was indeed ‘the first tragedy in blank verse composed on this side the equator, which we ever heard of.’¹ The play was The Tragedy of Donohoe, one of the earlier, and certainly one of the best plays written in Australia during the nineteenth century. Hall was impressed by the young author’s first attempt, commending it publicly to Barnet Levey and Joseph Simmons, proprietors of the city’s only licensed theatre. This play was ‘superior to half the stuff that “His Majesty’s loyal servants of the Theatre Royal Sydney,” have performed there, and will continue to perform there.’² Messrs Levey and Simmons seem to have been unmoved by this snide recommendation. Neither they, nor indeed anyone else, has ever professionally produced this early Australian drama. Hall did give Harpur some more practical help, publishing substantial excerpts of the play in his paper over five issues in 1835.

Undeterred, Harpur set to work on another, altogether more ambitious play. King Saul was to be a biblical tragedy of the highest order. It would depict Saul’s rise to the throne, the corruption and madness of power, and his final destruction at the Battle of Gilboa. For whatever reason Harpur appears to have abandoned the project in 1838. He wrote out a fair copy of some of the completed scenes, and excerpted a song or two for separate publication, but the play remained incomplete and apparently unrevised among his papers at his death. There it has lain, unperformed and essentially unstudied, until now. Some years later, however, Harpur did revisit The Tragedy of Donohoe, when he revised it substantially for the press, publishing it in 1853 as The Bushrangers.³

These two plays, The Bushrangers and King Saul, are remarkable texts that challenge our ideas about Romantic tragedy. In Australia, Harpur is often seen as the founder-poet of a distinctive Australian Romanticism,⁴ though he was also one of the first writers to question whether an original Australian literature was even possible.⁵ Outside Australia he is unrecognised as a Romantic poet. Full
Study of Harpur has been hampered in the past by a lack of quality texts, but this problem has recently been eliminated with the publication of the *Charles Harpur Critical Archive*, the first full critical edition of his poetry. In what follows, I make the case for these plays as original, thought-provoking examples of the tragic genre in the Romantic period. In the first section, I describe the literary and theatrical scene in Harpur’s New South Wales. In the second, I offer a description of Romantic tragedy and briefly explain its place in the genre-system of Romantic theatre. In the final three sections, I consider three aspects of these plays that set them apart. In an age when plays were increasingly allegorical and exotic, Harpur’s were topical and direct (Section III). Apparently fearless of censorship, Harpur satirised his contemporaries in *The Bushrangers*, and in *King Saul*, he boldly reworked a controversial story from the most ideologically sensitive book of his time. Secondly, these plays were radical (Section IV): both advocated an egalitarian society, where the right to rule could come only from inborn talent and self-cultivation. Finally, these plays were mystical (Section V): Harpur was deeply invested in mystical ideas, and with their supernatural elements, *The Bushrangers* and *King Saul* pose deep questions about the possibility of mystical experience for the modern mind.

I. Writing Life in Harpur’s Australia

Harpur was born in 1813 in the small town of Windsor, northwest of Sydney. His parents were convicts: his Irish father Joseph had been transported for highway robbery in 1800, his mother Sarah for larceny in 1805. In Australia they flourished—when Harpur was born his father was the local schoolmaster and parish clerk. Windsor itself is a pretty Georgian township on a hill overlooking Deerubbin, the winding estuarine river that curls around Sydney’s north and west, and which the settlers renamed the Hawkesbury. The rich alluvial soils on either bank fed the colony in its early years, but they were dangerously flood-prone, and we will see how the water, with its terror and its beauty, flows through Harpur’s plays. By 1834 at the latest, Harpur had moved to Sydney. He began to publish in newspapers, and appears to have had a short and ignominous acting career at Sydney’s new Theatre Royal.

Theatre had come to the colony with the First Fleet in 1788. In 1789, the first-known theatrical performance took place, when a group of convicts performed *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) for King George III’s birthday. It was only in 1833, however, that the colony received its first permanent licensed theatre, in the form of Barnett Levey’s Theatre Royal. The colony of New South Wales was still a tiny society, though it was growing fast. The First Fleet had brought 1,480 men, women and children ashore; by the time Harpur published the first extracts of *The Tragedy of Donohoe* in 1835, there were nearly 72,000 settlers in New South Wales, and Sydney had become an energetic port town. More and more free settlers were arriving, and respectability was becoming a key virtue in the increasingly urban Sydney. Theatre in the early years had been largely a convict affair. Temporary playhouses popped up all over the colony, normally
supported by wealthy landowners but usually with a cast and crew entirely drawn from the convicts. This changed abruptly in 1833, when the Governor of NSW ceased to permit such rowdy entertainments and the Theatre Royal was licensed with the explicit proviso that no convict was to tread the boards. Censorship was strict. The Colonial Secretary—the chief minister in the colony—personally licensed every play for performance until the 1850s. The preference was for sound British drama, imported from the metropolis.

Harpur was thoroughly exposed to current trends in the theatre and to the poetry of the preceding generation. As a child, he could well have seen plays at the convict theatre in nearby Emu Plains, where the latest Romantic melodramas were performed. A ‘Mr Harpur’ is listed as an actor in three plays at the Sydney Theatre Royal in October 1833, including two melodramas: Douglas Jerrold’s *The Mutiny at the Nore* (1830) and Isaac Pocock’s gothic classic, *The Miller and his Men* (1813). We cannot be sure this ‘Mr Harpur’ was Charles Harpur, but it is likely. He was of course a great reader, and in the 1830s already had a deep knowledge of the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton and Byron. The local newspapers, including the *Monitor*, *Australian*, *Sydney Times* and *Currency Lad*, fostered local literature by publishing poets and prose writers. Harpur may have been writing on the far edge of the European world, but he was immersed in the literature and the theatre of home and abroad, as both his plays demonstrate.

*The Bushrangers* was a gothic tragedy in the tradition of Schiller’s *Die Räuber* (1781), about a rebellious band of outlaws in the woods. His hero was originally based on the real-life bushranger Jack Donohoe, whom Harpur transformed into a Byronic hero rebelling against a snobbish colonial order. In the 1853 book version, he changed not only the title but aspects of the plot and many of the characters’ names, including that of the protagonist. In this and all later versions of the play, the real ‘Donohoe’ became the fictional ‘Stalwart’. At the beginning of the play, Stalwart is riding high: his gang is on the loose, and the Windsor magistrates, led by the craven Roger Tunbelly, are powerless to stop him. Accordingly Dreadnought, the chief constable from Parramatta, arrives in the district to quell the disturbance. He injures Stalwart in a firefight and leaves him for dead. Stalwart creeps off into the bush, where he is nursed back to health by the innocent Ada. As he recovers, he lusts after her, eventually murdering her fiancé Abel in a fit of jealous rage and catapulting himself towards his final, fatal confrontation with Dreadnought. Harpur tinkered with the play to the end of his life, leaving at least two further complete versions in manuscript. Neither of these was published until 1987, when a critical edition of the final 1867 version appeared, with the 1835 newspaper extracts included. In what follows I focus on the 1853 edition, the earliest complete version of the text.

*King Saul* is a biblical drama apparently inspired by Byron’s *Cain: A Mystery* (1821) (see Section 111, below). In the manuscript, preserved in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, Harpur claims to have finished work on the play in 1838, but there is no corroborating evidence, and it is not clear when Harpur wrote out the fair copy in which this date is given. At any rate, we can be sure the play...
was a product of his youth, when he was a bachelor, a jobbing writer and a member of Sydney’s radical circles. In Harpur’s version of Saul’s story, the prophet Samuel is a radical republican, who believes monarchy is an unnatural form of government, and Saul is a man destroyed by his own wealth and power. At the beginning of the play, Samuel is alone in his house, and receives the prophecy of Saul’s coronation. Saul arrives and Samuel proclaims him king. Time passes, and Saul becomes increasingly power hungry and paranoid: he forsakes Druma, his early love, becoming obsessed with the idea that his young courtier David will take his crown, and as war engulfs Israel, he begins to lose the support of the elders. Eventually, as in the Bible, Saul is slain at the Battle of Gilboa. In the event, Harpur only completed about a third of the play, although the fragments do add up to about 1200 lines of verse, and he left behind two ‘Plans’ of his overarching design.

With these plays Harpur hoped to conquer the stage and prove himself a poet. In some ways he was a provincial British author with his eyes on London. In other ways he was a Romantic nationalist. Like his contemporaries Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Adam Mickiewicz and Aleksandr Pushkin, he aimed to create a new national theatre. Like them, he drew heavily on Shakespeare. Like them, he felt tragedy was the crucial genre for the reform of the stage. Like them, he created passionate, Byronic characters. Unlike them, however, he was a colonial subject of uncertain nationality, and had a profoundly ambivalent attitude towards Britain and its traditions. He was a nationalist who spoke a foreign tongue. These ambivalences give his early plays a raw and searching quality not normally associated with the highly conventionalised world of Romantic tragedy.

II. Characteristics of Romantic Tragedy

Popular theatre and literary drama diverged in the Romantic period. For literary playwrights, tragedy ‘present[ed] the highest phases of creative art’, as Harpur’s friend Dan Deniehy put it. While Romantic poets strove to write austere tragedies, however, a different kind of play, the melodrama, was sweeping the theatre. Like other literary playwrights of the day, Harpur responded to the rise of melodrama by adopting and transforming many of its elements.

It was the age that Jane Moody describes as ‘the theatrical revolution’. Theatres began to transform and proliferate. The old patent theatres of London were rebuilt on a larger scale. There were ever more new ‘illegitimate’ theatres, which operated without a licence and could not stage spoken drama. All these new theatres demanded new kinds of drama: ‘tragedy and comedy’ gave way to “‘illegitimate” forms such as burletta, extravaganza, pantomime and melodrama’. It was a rapid and dramatic shift, as Figure 1 (overleaf) shows. Figure 1 uses data from the Eighteenth-Century Theatre database to display the shifting genresystem of Romantic theatre. It shows the number of tragedies, comedies and melodramas submitted to the English Inspector of Plays, for licensing between 1737 and 1823. Since all plays performed in London’s patent theatres had to be
submitted for censorship, this collection gives us a rich, though incomplete, view of what kinds of plays were being written or produced in Britain across the period. The plays have been categorised according to their subtitles: plays with ‘tragedy’ or ‘tragic’ in the subtitle have been classed as ‘tragedies’; plays with ‘comedy’ or ‘comic’ are ‘comedies’; and plays with any combination of ‘play’, ‘drama’, ‘romance’ or ‘melodrama’ in the subtitle have been placed in the third category. Of course, a subtitle alone does not reveal the actual content of a play: a playwright or promoter could rename a ‘sentimental comedy’ a ‘grand romance’ if it would draw the crowd. But the changing subtitles do reveal how theatre professionals’ attitudes towards the different genres changed over the period.

![Fig. 1. Number of Plays Submitted for Inspection, 1737–1823. Source: Adam Matthew Digital.](image)

![Fig. 2. Percentage of Submitted Plays in Each Category, 1737–1823. Source: Adam Matthew Digital.](image)

The data bring into question Moody’s claim that tragedy and comedy were displaced by the new melodramas—the truth is subtler. When Harpur turned to write his two tragedies in the 1830s, tragedy was as popular (or unpopular) as ever, but melodrama had replaced comedy as the main alternative to it. By 1823, less than 5 per cent of submitted plays were subtitled ‘comedy’, while nearly a
quarter were labelled as melodramas. If melodrama was the theatre of freedom and escape, Romantic tragedy was the theatre of entrapment, of what Jeffrey Cox calls ‘frustrated development’. To portray such frustrated development, writers of tragedy drew on many major tropes of contemporary melodrama: the mixture of genres and styles, the distant and exotic settings, and the recourse to the supernatural. Beyond these more superficial similarities, however, there were two deep affinities between tragedies and melodramas, which can help us to see Harpur’s achievement in perspective.

Firstly, as Burwick has argued, Romantic melodramas in Britain had a pervasive ‘duality’. They took place in foreign lands, but clearly represented Britain. They featured marvellous or impossible events, but their sets and special effects were convincingly realistic. Critics demanded a more natural style of acting, but actors were celebrities who won the crowd with grand, stylised gestures. Burwick never theorises ‘duality’, but it emerges from his examples that ‘duality’ is an opposition between nature and artificiality, between a theatrical, imagined world and the real one hidden behind the scenery. This is a compelling idea. The early nineteenth century was a febrile period of war, class politics, strict censorship, and intense competition in the theatre industry. To appeal to a divided audience and escape the censor, playwrights and theatre managers erected a gorgeous screen of spectacle between their plays and the world. Many writers of tragedy adopted the same tactic. Although Friedrich Schiller and Joanna Baillie, for example, raised controversial issues of individual liberty, national liberation and the constitution of crown and church in their plays, they nearly always set them in a distant, theatrical location: eighth-century England, fourteenth-century France, ancient Rome, pagan Sicily. As we will see, Harpur took a different approach—despite the censorship of the Colonial Secretary and the wide divisions of his convict society, he chose to represent his controversial content directly on stage.

Secondly, subjectivity was a key theme of both popular melodrama and literary tragedy in the period. This may seem a striking claim. It is commonly argued that melodramas paid little heed to subjectivity or ‘character development’ at all. But even Michael Booth admits that the mental ‘agony’ of the gothic villain was a key theme of melodrama in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Paul Ranger has demonstrated how melodramas used music to heighten emotion. Writers of melodrama were fascinated by the dark passions of the human mind—a fascination that carried over to the tragic playwrights of the period. No critic has ever denied the subjectivity of Romantic tragedy. Indeed, since Hegel, the ‘principle of subjectivity’ has been considered central to the genre. Earlier tragedies had depicted a religious world of objective meaning, but in the Romantic world-view, meaning could only come from the mind: the Romantics ‘close[d] the doors of hell’; they portrayed a universe ‘without the gods’; they wrote for a ‘mental theater’; they invented the tragedy of ‘self-awareness’ or of ‘pure consciousness’; they advocated a ‘closet drama’ of intimacy, privacy and sympathy. It is undeniable that gothic passion and
complex subjectivity were key themes of Romantic drama, but this great tide of criticism does tend to overlook the public and religious quality of many Romantic plays, including Harpur’s. He certainly did not close the doors of hell—both Saul and Stalwart end up there. In what follows, we will see how Harpur brings into question both the duality and the subjectivity of Romantic drama.

III. ‘Directness’

Harpur’s plays rent the screen of duality in different ways: The Bushrangers was a satirical play about a controversial news item and satirised living people, whereas King Saul worked out the moral and political implications of a difficult Bible story. These plays were direct, and, instead of erecting a screen of theatricality to separate their fictional worlds from reality, they were to confront Harpur’s Australian audience with their most pressing anxieties. To prove the ‘direct’ nature of these plays, I compare them to two contemporary examples, Douglas Jerrold’s The Mutiny at the Nore (1830) and Byron’s Cain (1821).

Harpur later claimed that it was The Bushrangers’ controversial subject matter that made it impossible to stage. He was probably right, though there is no evidence that the play ever made it to the Colonial Secretary’s desk. In 1844, the Secretary would disallow Jackey Jackey the N.S.W. Bushranger, and few other bushranger plays made it to the stage before the end of the century. Moreover, two of Harpur’s villains, Roger Tunbelly and Wealthiman Woolsack, were thinly veiled caricatures of Windsor worthies, and the Secretary was known to ban plays that satirised important members of society, as when he disallowed Life in Sydney (1843). It is unlikely that Harpur’s satire would have passed unnoticed.

In Britain it was actually quite common to stage ‘docudramas’ about real-life criminals. But such melodramas took a very different approach to Harpur’s, carefully shielding the audience from unpleasant ramifications. We can see this by comparing The Bushrangers to The Mutiny at the Nore, a docudrama Harpur appears himself to have acted in. There are striking parallels. Both Stalwart and Richard Parker (the lead mutineer) are innocent victims of tyranny who are driven to murder: ‘we have risen against the tyrant, what heed we then of the bully?’ cries Parker to his erstwhile captain. Stalwart the bushranger explains himself in more detail:

A villain’s dupe at first, I found myself
An exile, and a tyrant’s bondman;—one,
Who for some reason I could never learn,
Both feared and hated me;—and who, with all
The petty fretfulness of power so placed,
Was wont to solace the meanness of his hate,
And mask its utter cowardice, the while,
With hourly hurling the opprobrious term
Of convict in my teeth! (1853, p. 20)

Both Parker and Stalwart become killers, but the tyrannies they suffer are different: Parker decries the abstract tyranny of ‘the tyrant’ and ‘the bully’, whereas
Stalwart decries the everyday tyranny of the particular society he occupies, in which a whole class of people are ‘exiles’, held as ‘bondmen’ by free settlers, who are in turn ‘so placed’ that power embitters them. It is a society where a great mass of the population are convicts or their descendants, and yet the very word ‘convict’ is an ‘opprobrious’ taboo. Through the 1830s and 40s, Sydney was indeed becoming increasingly snobbish, as more free settlers arrived who found the colony’s convict heritage shameful. Harpur’s play documented what they would rather forget.

While Harpur made clear that the world of his play was the real world, Jerrold strove to remove his play from reality. Nore premiered in 1830, thirty-three years after the actual mutinies at Spithead and on the Thames. By contrast, bushranging and convict transportation were raging topics in Harpur’s Sydney. Nore’s main authority figure, Arlington, is a shadowy character with only few lines, and defends himself stoutly: ‘I acted but according to my duty. Even when I punished, I did not wrong you.’ (p. 33) Tunbelly, the main authority figure in The Bushrangers, is verbose, lazy and self-centred, and complains endlessly about insubordination in woozy pentameters: ‘But seriously, these underlings are all | A-wanting in respect.’ (p. 34) In Nore, Parker repents of his crimes as he patriotically climbs the scaffold: ‘I have been a mutineer, my name will be stained with rebellion—murder! I leave to my king and country my child, my only child. From this moment he is England’s.’ (p. 44) Stalwart never repents, and dies in hellish remorse after a stormy gunfight with the police: ‘Guilty! Guilty! | I do not plead Not Guilty! Mercy!’ (1853, p. 59) He is the violent, lurid, morally ambiguous consequence of the colony’s unequal society.

King Saul is direct and provocative in a different way. Biblical themes were common in the theatre of the preceding century—but the story of King Saul was not. Not one play in the Larpent collection has ‘Saul’ in the title. Saul is a bad king, possessed by an ‘evil spirit’, yet he is also God’s anointed. His legitimate succession is usurped by a rebellious shepherd, David, who is also God’s anointed. Harpur’s play lays bare the contradictory implications of this story. In this way King Saul resembles Cain, one of Byron’s most controversial works: both plays are literal retellings of Old Testament narratives embellished with philosophical speeches that make their meaning plain.

Cain’s reception can give us an indication of how King Saul might have been received had Harpur finished and published it. Byron’s play broke like a thunderclap in the polite drawing rooms of England: ‘a more direct, more dangerous, or more frightful production, than this miscalled Mystery, it has never been our lot to encounter’, wrote one reviewer. Another wrote: ‘This is unquestionably one of the most pernicious productions that ever proceeded from the pen of a man of genius’, John Galt thought ‘boldness’ the play’s key characteristic. Tom Moore was enthusiastic: ‘Cain is wonderful—terrible—never to be forgotten. […] while many will shudder at its blasphemy, all must fall prostrate before its grandeur.’ It was still controversial thirty years later, when Charlotte Brontë cautioned that though the play was ‘magnificent’, it was also unreadably wicked.
What these readers found ‘direcți’, ‘bold’ or ‘blasphemous’ about Byron’s play was the character of Cain, who questions God’s order and pays heed to Lucifer. Byron embellished the story, of course: Lucifer does not appear in Genesis—but Cain’s transgression is the Bible’s literal truth.

Harpur too laid a literal Bible-truth before his readers. God is a cruel punisher of wealth, power and monarchy. Like Byron, he took this straight from the text:

> And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Samuel 8. 7; my emphasis)

**Spirit of the Lord.** […] But, having rejected God As their sole Sovereign, what merit they Of good in this their King? (King Saul, p. 586)

God loathes monarchy, so when Israel request a king, he curses the man he raises to the office. Druma describes the young Saul as a man who would ‘sit in some green shade | And wind his fingers in [Zillah’s] golden hair’ (p. 594). After becoming king, however, loathly passions consume him, and he is alienated from the God that crowned him: ‘I cannot lift my thoughts as thou wouldst have me | To God above’ (p. 575). To a respectable audience, who were virtuous Christians and loyal subjects of the Crown, Saul’s cruel fate would have made for disturbing viewing.

Harpur’s two plays, in their different ways, are direct and provocative. *The Bushrangers* represented contemporary society directly, and showed its seamy underside. *King Saul* was a highly literal portrayal of the Bible that made no attempt to hide or smooth its contradictions. They are plays of ‘radical instability’, as Veronica Kelly puts it. Harpur did not resolve this instability by displacing his dramas into a theatrical, morally consistent world, as Jerrold did. Instead, in Byron’s manner, he portrayed the colony and its most important book directly and without compromise. These plays could never have passed the censor, which is perhaps why Harpur abandoned playwriting in the 1830s. When *The Bushrangers* was finally published as part of Harpur’s 1853 collection, the reaction was almost universally negative: ‘Mr. Charles Harpur’s great Play, (upon words!) “The Bushranger” [sic] has had an effect upon the younger portion of the community similar to that caused by Schiller’s “Robbers.” Several juveniles have “taken to the road”—to get out of the way of it.’ Even Harpur’s friend Deniehy thought it his weakest work. Twenty years after its original composition, it seems that Harpur’s first play could still make for unpleasant reading.

**IV. Radicalism**

Harpur’s plays were not only designed to provoke: they also put forward positive ideas about what would make for a just society. Harpur was an elder statesman of the New South Wales republican movement, which achieved full male suffrage
in the colony in 1858 (at least in theory). Both *The Bushrangers* and *King Saul* espouse Harpur’s egalitarian beliefs by portraying different kinds of authority figures. True authority derives from subjectivity, from talent and imagination. His plays vigorously satirise the authority of wealth and status, and suggest that legitimate authority can only derive from mental acquirements which are open to anyone.

We have already encountered the main malign authority figure in *The Bushrangers*, Roger Tunbelly. His keyword is ‘respect’—Tunbelly advocates a society of simpering condescension, in which the lower orders fawningly ‘respect’ their betters. Harpur quite luridly satirises this notion. Tunbelly’s favourite constable is brave Ned Bomebard, ‘for Ned is not wanting in proper respect’ (1853, p. 4), but when we meet Bomebard, we discover that he is nothing more than a boastful, brown-nosing snob:

> Well then, to show yous that I ain’t too proud o’ my dig-nitty, I don’t care if I takes a dram with the pair o’ yous—purwiding one o’ yous stands flat. I’ve been on the sfree all night myself, my dymons o’ goold, though I am a hofficer. But what then? A hofficer is a mortal man, and mu$h git drunk now and then, like a man o’ mortality—mu$htn’t he? (1853, p. 16)

Tunbelly and Bomebard are both bureaucratic authoritarians, whose power derives from the ‘dig-nitty’ of their office. Bomebard’s energetic language shows how unreal their worldview is: he cannot complete a sentence without contradicting himself; he is not ‘too proud’ of his dignity, but demands that the carpenter and shoemaker buy his drinks; he is a respectable ‘hofficer’, but perfectly entitled to be drunk in the street. This false worldview debases the English language. Bomebard stitches together colloquial expressions and legalistic jargon in an attempt to impress, but winds up actually saying very little at all. Most critics in the last 150 years have dismissed Harpur’s satirical characters. Deniehy argued that Tunbelly and Bomebard were ‘incongruities’ who demonstrated the play’s lack of ‘fusion’, while Leslie Rees finds them poor imitations of Shakespeare’s comic-relief characters. But they serve an important purpose: Harpur had a keen sense of the social aspects of language, and the clichéd, jargonistic speech of Tunbelly, Bomebard and their ilk contrasts strongly with the terse, philosophical poetry of legitimate authority.

Stalwart’s authority over his men derives from his mental power, as one of his men admits: ‘He has that hold of me I cannot but follow’ (1853, p. 55). He is intelligent, able and self-reflective. He cultivates himself, carefully sifting through the contents of his mind: ‘Now, methinks, | Could I but see my villain face, it were | Enough to shame me hence.’ (p. 23) And most importantly, he rules democratically: when the band think Stalwart is dead, they decide to ‘vote freely’ for his successor (p. 36). The only other figure who wields this kind of authority in the play is Dreadnought, the visiting constable from Parramatta. He is a brave and effective warrior, and sees straightaway that Bomebard is ‘a mere
He and Stalwart respect one another, and it is Dreadnought who finally tracks and kills the bushranger.

Mental power is also the source of Samuel’s authority in King Saul. What makes Samuel powerful is his ability to see God’s purposes: ‘for even now, within my soul | The shadow of his purpose lengthens out’ (p. 585). Samuel feels prophecy ‘within his soul’, through the power of his own imagination. When the Spirit of the Lord comes with a message, He does not deliver it. Instead, He requests Samuel to ‘Look forth now in the vision of thy soul, | And tell me what thou seest. (after a pause) What seest thou, Samuel?’ (p. 586) All the meaning of the prophecy is encapsulated in Samuel’s vision, and the Spirit simply helps him to interpret it. Like Stalwart, Samuel is introspective and perceptive. He speaks clearly:

Man was not made for Kingship; let him dream,
Dream only that he is a King, and lo
That dream denatures him: he is no more
A man; no longer human in his thoughts,
Nor will, nor virtue. (p. 593)

Samuel speaks the language of the cultivated intellect. The aphoristic opening phrase, the repetitions of ‘no’ and ‘nor’, even the placement of colons and semicolons, all give the impression that he is a calm and careful thinker. By contrast, Saul’s language becomes increasingly irrational and contorted when he is crowned:

A hateful dream, yet happily a dream,
Hath play’d the ramping lion in my brain,
And all my senses scatter’d, like a flock
Of weanling kids, that on the borders graze
Of the drear wilderness:—’twas strange! and yet
I’m proud to find it but a dream—yet fear
This dream portendeth much!—even too much. (p. 560)

Like Bomebard, Saul toggles between contradictory views of things, marked in this case by the conjunction ‘yet’. The humble Samuel’s visions are clear and meaningful. Saul’s imagination, diseased by grandeur and ambition, tortures him with meaningless noise.

Many Romantic poets extolled the power of the imagination. What makes Harpur radical is the way he extolled the imaginative power of ordinary people: Stalwart is a convict; Samuel lives in a humble house in the desert. We can see how significant this is if we consider the most famous gothic bandit of French literature, the eponymous hero of Victor Hugo’s Hernani (1829):

I am Juan of Aragon, Grandmaster of Aviz, born
In exile, the outlawed son of an assassinated father—
Under your sentence, King Carlos de Castile!
Murder, between us, is a family matter.
You have the scaffold, we have the sword.
So heaven made me a duke, and exile a mountain-dweller.55
Hernani and Stalwart are extremely similar, exiles who blame law and authority for their loss of honour. But while Hernani defines himself by his birth and parentage and heaven-given rank, Stalwart has no heritage to defend: ‘at first’ he was not a duke but ‘a villain's dupe’. Hernani wants his wealth and titles back; Stalwart only wants to be ‘free’ (1853, p. 20). In Harpur’s radical vision, self-conscious, imaginative power is available even to the most humble and downtrodden. Stalwart and Samuel are not wise idiots like Wordsworth’s peasants, but the wielders of righteous authority.

Stalwart and Samuel wield mental authority. Tunbelly and Saul wield monarchical or aristocratic authority. There is a third kind of authority in Harpur’s plays, which we might call ‘feminine’ authority. Stalwart’s sweetheart, Mary Fence, wields it:

Mary. I ask not what you are: to me you seem
Only unhappy, like myself; and very—
Yes, very gentle—at least to me; and this
Aye makes me weep to think on when you are gone.

Stalwart. This kindness kills me! (1853, p. 8)

Deniehy argues that Mary’s power derives from her ‘gentleness’ and ‘pathetic helplessness’.\textsuperscript{56} It would be more accurate to say that her power derives from empathy; rather than wielding mental power like a prophet, she draws people in by seeing herself in them. In both his plays, Harpur suggests that such feminine authority is weak: Mary cannot persuade Stalwart to ‘reform’ (1853, p. 9); nor, later on, can Ada. In \textit{King Saul}, Saul’s childhood sweetheart Zillah is unable to warm his heart once he is crowned, and he turns her away. At first, the gentle David can dispel the ‘haughty gloom’ of the king with his song (p. 595), but later Saul turns on him in envious rage. In both these plays, feminine authority is crushed: Mary Fence, Ada and Zillah die, and David is transformed from songster to warlord. Indeed, it seems that women are more powerful dead than alive: Stalwart is tortured in his final moments by the memory of his female victims, and we can be sure that if Harpur had finished \textit{King Saul}, Saul would have died with the spurned Zillah on his mind.

Despite his democratic faith, it may appear that Harpur was no feminist. As Michael Ackland observes, in Harpur’s poetry women are usually ‘a regenerative ideal’, rather than ‘genuinely autonomous’ people.\textsuperscript{57} One character stands out as an exception—Mrs Fence, who owns the house in \textit{The Bushrangers} where Stalwart and his gang carouse, and is Mary’s mother. Both Stalwart and Mary call her a vicious parent, but she is a robust character with an attractively realistic worldview:

Mrs. Fence. Well; ’twas his fate, as the saying is, and has been the fate o’ many a good man afore him. Ods! gal—\textit{(to Mary)}
you do nothing but mope, an’ hang your head, an’ stare when you’re spoke to! What the dickens! was he the only man i’ the world? Have a good hearty cry, and ha’ done with it. (1853, p. 22)
She lacks the empathy of other female characters, telling Mary to stop ‘mopping’ when her lover seems to have died. Instead, she has something of the clear vision and masterful persona of a Stalwart or Samuel. Though she speaks in rough-and-ready prose, she is no Bomebard, and steps logically from her notion of ‘fate’ to her advice for Mary. Her husband admires her potency: ‘You can do it, old ’oman; you’re the one that can do it, and no mistake’ (p. 10). She enforces the bushrangers’ honour code, deciding when it is ‘proper’ to perform certain rituals (p. 22). Grace Karskens has written about the role convict women had in the early rural settlements, not only managing their households, but sheltering runaways, running brothels and distilling illegal liquor. Harpur recognised, even if he did not fully condone, this kind of female working-class freedom, just as he recognised the male working-class freedom of bushranging.

The other limit to Harpur’s radicalism is race. Elsewhere, Harpur wrote movingly about the plight of Aboriginal men and women coping with the invasion. But in *The Bushrangers*, the only Aboriginal people are the ‘dusky savages’ whom the white characters mention from time to time. It is also significant that Harpur includes only Israelites in *King Saul*, and never characters from among their conquered foes. In these early plays, Harpur’s dream of democracy had a national—perhaps an ethnic—boundary. Nonetheless, the dream of democracy is there: Harpur’s criticism of the class system is powerful, and his concept of mental authority, embodied by Stalwart and Samuel, is potentially universal, even if his early plays do not achieve the universality of later masterworks like ‘Aboriginal Death Song’ (1858) or *The Witch of Hebron* (1867).

**V. Mysticism**

The final remarkable element of Harpur’s Romantic tragedies is their mysticism. Magic, prophecies and supernatural beings are common in Romantic drama. What is striking about Harpur’s plays is how deliberately he works through the problems of mystical experience in a secular age. What are the sources of such experience? How should we relate our dreams to our lives? These problems are especially urgent in Harpur’s plays, because as we have seen, he suggests that mental or mystical power is the only source of legitimate authority in a free society.

The debate about the possibility of mystic experience is more obvious in *King Saul*, because the characters have the debate out loud. When Saul dreams of David taking his crown, Ziba argues that dreams merely express our anxieties:

> [...] [dreams are] but
> The vap’ish steam of an o’er-heated brain,
> In which the toil-drows’d, yet half-conscious mind’s
> Refracted glances paint its apprehensions,
> In dim-drawn scenes, incongruous, and yet mask’d:—
> Nay, oft'times, with an undertouch of such
> Significance, in that each wild effect
> Seems faithful to its own prefigur’d cause
So rationally sequent, as might well
Engage belief in sob’rest minds. (p. 560)
Ziba argues that dreams have a purely psychological meaning; they are ‘mask’d’
allegories of the mind’s ‘apprehensions’. If a dream seems to be prophetic, it is
not because it is a divine message of truth, but because it has a compelling
internal logic. Ziba’s theory seems at first to be borne out. David is not plotting
against the paranoid Saul: the dream is a self-fulfilling prophecy, driving Saul
to commit the foul deeds that will cause David to rebel and his monarchy to
crumble. We could likewise interpret Samuel’s vision from the beginning of the
play as a self-fulfilling prophecy: he dreams a young man will come to him and
be crowned, so he makes Saul king. Nonetheless, according to his ‘Plan’, Harpur
intended to show Saul being possessed by an ‘Evil Spirit’ before his dream, as in
the biblical text (p. 587), and we have seen how a Spirit of the Lord visits Samuel
in the opening scene. In any case, if dreams can be so ‘rationally sequent’ that
they do predict the future, then what is truly the difference between dream and
prophecy? The play is deeply ambivalent.

Harpur significantly revised the mystical aspects of The Bushrangers. In the
published extracts of The Tragedy of Donohoe, he had included two supernatural
scenes. In one, ‘Mary O’Brien’ (Ada in the 1853 version) dreams that Donohoe
has killed ‘William’ (Abel) on the very night he does so: ‘Pray heaven my fears
Prove phantasms, and not presentiments!’ (1835, p. 100). In the other super-
natural scene, the Furies descend during a storm to announce that Donohoe/
Stalwart will be punished for murdering William/Abel. Unlike Macbeth’s
witches, however, these Furies never communicate with humans:

Furies. Thus we carry darkness with us,
Hiding us from mortal ken;
Thus in hellish dance we writhe us,
When we’d touch affairs of men. (1835, p. 106)

What makes Mary’s dream and the Furies so striking is their ambiguity. Is Mary’s
prophetic dream a mere coincidence? What place do these ‘hiding’ and ‘hellish’
Furies have in the order of things? We are never told the provenance of Mary’s
dream, and Harpur suggests that these Furies are simultaneously good and evil,
simultaneously the source of truth and yet utterly invisible and unknowable.

The problem in The Bushrangers and King Saul is the classic Romantic prob-
lem of subjectivity. If there is another, spiritual, meaningful world, then our
senses are likely too gross and material to perceive it. Harpur came to feel that
the Furies and Mary’s dream were crude symbols of this problem. He deleted
the supernatural scenes from The Bushrangers, and the dark energy of the Furies
returned in the form of metaphor:

Stalwart. But I ever was,
And ever shall be, the accursed slave
Of lawless passion!—She has given me health
And liberty, but with those gifts evoked
Desires iniquitous, that from their dark
Impulsive depths, like monstrous sea-swells, keep
Blindly upworking [...] (1853, p. 28)
Now, the ‘hellish’ and ‘hiding’ Furies have buried themselves in the human mind, in the ‘lawless’, ‘impulsive’, ‘dark’ and ‘blind’ depths of our own natures. Perhaps these ‘monstrous sea-swells’ harken back to the terrible floods of Harpur’s early childhood, when the tidal Hawkesbury repeatedly broke its banks and engulfed the district’s farmland. Certainly Stalwart’s water imagery contrasts with Abel’s description of this same ‘shining river’ in another scene:

[...] Then, my fairest,
We’ll mark the spangled fishes throng about
In happy revel, and compare them well
To swarms of brilliant love-lights flashing through
The silver vision of some glorious Bard,
When, flowing forth in everlasting verse,
It greens the course of time. (1853, p. 24)

*The Bushrangers* presents humanity as a ‘battleground of contradictory impulses’, argues Ackland. On the one hand are the ‘monstrous sea-swells’ that sweep up from the deaths and drive men like Stalwart and Saul to madness. On the other hand is the ‘silver vision’ of Abel when he gazes on the water. These impulses remained mysterious. Harpur was sure that we could reach a ‘cloudier region of [the] soul’ (1853, p. 49), but could never settle on a theory of how such mystical experience was possible. Even in the late 1850s, when revising ‘The Tower of the Dream’, he was still asking whether dreams are just ‘the thin disjoining shades’ of memory, or whether they are ‘glimpses oft, though vague, of some wide sea | Of mystic being’ (h642c, ll. 2, 10 and 22–23).

What is remarkable is how explicitly Harpur worked through these problems in his plays. The plays repudiate the ‘duality’ of Romantic theatre in all their aspects. Reality was their subject. They would portray the literal truth of colonial New South Wales or of Biblical history, regardless of censorship or the demands of respectable opinion. Their ghosts and dreams and strange coincidences were not allegorical or theatrical, but were careful attempts to work out whether mystical experience was possible in the real world. With their melodramatic elements, *King Saul* and *The Bushrangers* may not seem so realistic today, but it may be remembered that in Harpur’s world, the Bible was still factual and gothic bandits actually did range the bush. Like other Romantic tragedies, these two were highly subjective; the language was tuned to reveal different styles of thought, from the ideological ramblings of Tunbelly and Bomebard, to the passionate raving of Saul and the powerful reflections of Stalwart and Samuel. Harpur believed that all persons had equal subjective capabilities, and his plays look forward to a just society where wealth and privilege no longer shackle the human mind. But they were not ‘subjective’ plays in the way theorists of Romantic tragedy often use the word: there is an underlying vision of the ‘mystic sea’ of human impulse that gives meaning to the characters’ words.
and deeds. Harpur spent his life trying to chart this sea, and was never sure he had finally succeeded.

Harpur hoped all his life to be published in London, and to be recognised internationally as the founder of his nation’s literature. He was extremely conscious of his place in the literary tradition, and it is perhaps for this reason that in his first major works he took such a bold and inquiring approach to tragedy, the most prestigious literary genre of his time.

Notes

2. Ibid.
6. Charles Harpur Critical Archive <http://charles-harpur.org> [accessed 31 July 2018]. Each version of each poem has a unique h-number, which I will use to refer to them.
13. These advertisements can be found in the Sydney Gazette for 3, 8 and 10 Oct 1833, which are freely available on the National Library of Australia’s Trove database <http://trove.nla.gov.au>.
14. Charles Harpur, Stalwart the Bushranger, with the Tragedy of Donohoe, ed. by Elizabeth Perkins (Sydney: Currency Press, 1987). I refer throughout this essay to the play’s various versions by year and page number. ‘1835’ refers to the original newspaper publication of The Tragedy of Donohoe, which appeared in instalments from 7 to 28 Feb 1835 in the Sydney Monitor. I refer to Perkins’s reprint rather than the original newspaper version, though the originals are freely available on Trove. ‘1853’ refers to the the book version published in Sydney in 1853—which is,
at the time of writing, freely available on Google Books. ‘1867’ refers to the final manuscript version printed by Perkins as the main text of her edition.

15. Sydney, Mitchell Library, Charles Harpur Manuscript Volumes (c. 1837–1868), A87-2, f. 559. All the fragments of King Saul appear in MS vol. A87-2, so hereafter I simply give the page number. Harpur’s manuscripts can be viewed for free at the Harpur Critical Archive—see n. 6, above.


23. Booth, English Melodrama, ch. 3.


25. Ibid., pp. 2 and 91.

26. Ibid., ch. 4.


28. Ibid., p. 80.


36. Harpur, ‘Note to Stalwart the Bushranger’, in Stalwart, ed. by Perkins, p. 84.

40. Burwick, Romantic Drama, pp. 69–79.
43. Bushranging was endemic in the Sydney region till at least the 1840s (ibid., p. 306).
44. 1 Samuel 16. 14, 15, 23; 18. 10; 19. 9.
45. ‘Cain, a Mystery’, Literary Gazette, 22 Dec 1821, pp. 808–12 (p. 808; my emphasis).
56. Deniehy, ‘Review’, p. 120.

Referring to This Article

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Date of acceptance: 9 September 2018.
This article provides a textual analysis of some of the most striking features of the 1807 edition of The Book of the Duchess, as compared with its predecessors. The 1807 edition of The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, in which The Book of the Duchess features, has only come to light in recent years, and it reveals an important stage in the development of the modern editorial process. The Book of the Duchess has been chosen for this analysis because, in a practical sense, it is limited enough to be manageable, but more importantly, it is a significant poem in Chaucer’s oeuvre, and yet not drawn from The Canterbury Tales. The Canterbury Tales, as will be explained, has a very different editing history from the other works of Chaucer. In addition to these reasons, The Book of the Duchess is a poem the authority of which has never been questioned, and thus it has appeared in every printed edition of the works of Chaucer, providing this study with extensive points for comparison.

The 12.4-volume edition of The Poets of Great Britain, containing The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, came into being when, in 1807, a group of thirty-three London booksellers began publication of a work that claims from its title page to be a reprint of John Bell’s 1782 series The Poets of Great Britain (see Figure 1). The more popular poets within the 1782 series had been reprinted from time to time during the twenty or so years after its initial publication: notably, the works of John Dryden were reprinted twice. Thus, in 1807, it must have seemed a financially safe venture to reproduce the entire series. Volumes 1–14 (or 1–7, as it was also bound) comprise The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Each volume is prefaced with an engraved image illustrating Chaucer’s works (see Figure 2), and the title page explains that along with the poetical works is included The Life of the Author: A Critique by Thomas Warton and Essays, Notes, and a Glossary by Thomas Tyrwhitt (see Figure 3).

An advertisement in The Monthly Literary Advertiser, a booksellers’ trade magazine, from 9 May 1807 gives some significant information regarding the circumstances of the publication (see Figure 4). According to this advertisement, the 1807 edition purports to be a combination of the earlier editions of Johnson and Bell, including the best parts from each. For this article, it is important to note that Chaucer’s works are regarded both as an important inclusion in this collection; they are, however, now very difficult for the reader to understand.
FIG. 1. FRONTISPICE AND FIRST TITLE PAGE FROM THE POETS OF GREAT BRITAIN (LONDON: CADELL & DAVIES, 1807). PHOTOGRAPH: AUTHOR’S OWN.

FIG. 2. ENGRAVING OF CHAUCER’S IMAGE AND SECOND TITLE PAGE (BELL EDN) FROM POETS OF GREAT BRITAIN (LONDON: CADELL & DAVIES, 1807). PHOTOGRAPH: AUTHOR’S OWN.
FIG. 3. THIRD TITLE PAGE FROM THE POETS OF GREAT BRITAIN (LONDON: CADELL & DAVIES, 1807).
PHOTOGRAPH: AUTHOR’S OWN.

FIG. 4. ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE MONTHLY LITERARY ADVERTISER, 9 MAY 1807.
There is an enlarged glossary and punctuation has been ‘deliberately considered’, all with a view to removing the ‘veil of obscurity’ from the language. Of importance here is that the works of Chaucer have been sufficiently re-examined that they constitute a new edition of his works.

*The Editorial Assertions of the 1807 Edition*

The editor of the 1807 edition begins with a General Advertisement, which is divided into two sections, one entitled ‘The Canterbury Tales’ and the other ‘The Disputed Tales and Miscellaneous Poems’. The division here is important, as it reflects the distinction made by earlier editors, most notably John Bell and Robert Anderson. Both Bell’s and Anderson’s editions had used (without permission) Thomas Tyrwhitt’s first edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, while using John Urry’s 1721 edition of Chaucer’s works for the remainder of the poems. Thus the 1807 editor’s distinction is a clear indication that he, too, is in some way conceiving of his enterprise in relation to the efforts of his predecessors.

It is beneficial, for accuracy’s sake, to quote extensively from the Advertisement. Of *The Canterbury Tales*, the editor says:

> The Canterbury Tales are printed from the second edition of Mr. Tyrwhitt’s publication, [2 vols. 4to, 1798]. In conformity with Mr. Tyrwhitt’s evident intentions, the present Editor has introduced in the places to which they belong, several important revisions, by that learned critic of his own notes and opinions; the following Abstract from the Advertisement prefixed by the delegates of Clarendon Press, tends to explain what the revisions are:
> ‘In a copy of the work, which Mr. Tyrwhitt had reserved for his own use, it was found that he had inserted several emendations and additions; in parts of the work having written some things otherwise than as he first gave them to the world.
> It is according to such corrections, therefore, that the work is now printed [...]’

Still, however, in the edition from the Clarendon press, the principle of incorporation does not seem to have been carried so far as is desirable and as useful attention to method may safely urge it; for the more deliberate opinions of the learned Editor are left in the promiscuous places where they happened to be penned. It appeared, therefore, to the present Editor, that he should essentially promote the design of Mr. Tyrwhitt [...] The present Editor has, therefore, altered every retracted or connected passage, making it correspond with the opinion subsequently pronounced by Mr. Tyrwhitt.

The editor, then, has apparently expanded on the work of the editors of the second edition of Tyrwhitt’s *Canterbury Tales*, thus completing the work that he would have done, it is assumed, had he lived long enough to do so.
Following this, the editor then introduces his approach to editing the remaining texts in the edition, under the title of ‘The Disputed Tales and Miscellaneous Poems’:

The Edition in 1721, by Mr. Urry, has been hitherto the best, of that part of the works ascribed to Chaucer to which the late able Editor of the Tales did not extend his labours: but the blemishes imputed to the edition of 1721, are considerable.

Mr. Tyrwhitt, Mr. Todd, and other competent critics, have concurred with Dr. Hickes in the censure (Sax. Gram. p. 29.) of Mr. Urry, for changing the old English *hir* into *their*, and *hem* into *them*, without the authority of a single manuscript. The words so unwarrantably supplanted have been restored in this edition.

Mr. Urry has been further blamed (Tyrwhitt’s Essay, n. 68,) for spelling nouns plural as *dremis, rockis*; whenever he wished to denote that, to complete the metre, the word must be pronounced with a factitious syllable; he followed a similar practice in the termination of the preterite of verbs, transforming *lived, limped*, to *livid, limpid*. This mechanical mode of indicating an extra syllable disguises the meaning of the word, and misrepresents the state of English orthography, when Chaucer wrote; it is therefore, in the present impression, discarded as an unjustifiable innovation.

Another approximation to the manuscripts has been made, by rescinding the sign (’) of the genitive case, and by restoring the spelling where *es* has been without authority converted into *is*.

In many words diversely spelt, the Editor has followed the orthography of Tyrwhitt, to prevent the multiplication of articles in the Glossary.

The punctuation has been throughout revised. Chaucer was aware that the power of punctuation, as differently exercised, may often occasion or supersede a commentary.\(^1\)

The editor, noting the criticism of others, has also acknowledged the errors within Urry’s edition, which will apparently be corrected in his own edition. It is perhaps pertinent to consider briefly the specific features of Urry’s edition, to reconcile the 1807 editor’s need to avoid his predecessor’s errors.

The 1721 edition of John Urry has been much maligned over the centuries, and for many different reasons but, as William Alderson points out, it is an edition that has much to recommend it, and, even acknowledging its failings, one must accept that it is an edition that continued to have a great deal of influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\(^2\) Problems arose with the edition during the process of its creation with the sudden death of Urry in 1715, long before the work was near completion. The friends and associates who then took up the work and brought it to completion seem to have done so grudgingly, and clearly there was a great deal of frustration at the state in which Urry had left his work.\(^3\) The biggest difficulty was that Urry had not left any documentation.
indicating his editorial methods, and so those continuing the work were left to guess at his intentions. From the information Urry did leave, it is clear he had intended to consult as many manuscripts as possible to use for comparison for his edition, and indeed he left a list of those he did consult. It is not clear, however, how he intended to use the manuscripts, and the resulting texts do not show many instances of influence from manuscript readings.

Perhaps one of the biggest failings of Urry’s edition, however, was his method of emending the text. There was, without doubt, a logic behind his process, but he left no explanation for this. It seems that Urry supposed that Chaucer’s metre must have been regular, and thus any irregularities must have been the result of poor work from scribes and/or previous editors. As such, Urry undertook to ‘correct’ the metrical errors through a series of different means. It is this act primarily that led to numerous negative charges against the edition—Tyrwhitt infamously described Urry’s edition as ‘by far the worst that was ever published’.14 There are four features specific to Urry’s method of editing. The first is Urry’s habit of including a grave accent ‘to distinguish those medial or final -e’s which should be pronounced in a Chaucerian line’.15 As noted above, Urry was convinced that Chaucer, as a great poet, must have used a regular metre in his verse, and thus whenever he encountered lines that did not agree with this pattern, Urry would insert whatever was required to ‘correct’ the metre. Frequently this amounted to a grave accent on an ‘e’, although he employed other methods as well. The second feature of Urry’s method is to alter the spelling of words ending with -en, -ed, -es, -est and -eth, to -in, -id, -is, -ist and -ith whenever he considered such words require a more strongly pronounced syllable. Third, Urry at times has added entire prefixes and suffixes to complete the metre. As Alderson says, Urry seems to have regarded these ‘as free counters in his metrical game’.16 Finally, Urry has sometimes added or omitted whole words, again to ensure the metre complies.

The editor of the 1807 edition gives every impression of agreeing with Tyrwhitt’s assessment of Urry’s edition. There is, however, another factor to be considered here. Previous scholars who have examined Urry’s edition have tended to compare it with other early printed editions of Chaucer and with many of the surviving manuscripts of Chaucer’s works.17 However, to my knowledge, none have examined Urry’s edition alongside the many modernisations or translations of Chaucer’s works, which became increasingly popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Modernised editions of Chaucer’s works were produced for several reasons: there were certain parts of Chaucer’s works deemed unsuitable for public consumption, such as The Miller’s Tale, with its high level of crudity. This tale was often published on its own; while in collections of Chaucer’s works, it was frequently omitted altogether. Modernisers of Chaucer believed they were improving Chaucer’s works by bringing the language up to a modern level of sophistication. Perhaps surprisingly to us today, the modernised editions of Chaucer’s works were not necessarily intended for those who could not read the Middle English texts. Rather, there is an assumption that readers of the modernised texts were already familiar with the poems in Middle English,
and the modernisations, often completed by prominent poets, were considered an enhancement of the works.

Considering Urry’s edition alongside modernised editions of Chaucer reveals that, while Urry’s premature death resulted in an unclear methodology to his editing process, he was incorporating many of the motivations and reasoning of the modernisers of Chaucer’s work into his own. Perhaps one ought not to compare Urry’s edition with other Middle English editions of Chaucer, but rather with modernised editions; it might, at the very least, be pertinent to consider his work alongside both. This would account for the significant changes that he introduced to his text, which are very much in keeping with other modernised editions. This line of argument is important for this article because it seems to me that the 1807 editor may have been influenced by the same motivations, though perhaps not deliberately. The 1807 editor, while generally complying with Urry’s and Tyrwhitt’s texts, has made one significant alteration that does not reflect any known exemplar, introducing considerably more punctuation into his text, which is much more in keeping with late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century punctuation use. Given the editor’s explanation that he would indeed modify the punctuation, this does not seem to be accidental, but rather a concerted effort to produce a text that was easy to read, perhaps in line with Urry’s emendations.

Contents of the 1807 Edition

One significant feature of The Book of the Duchess as it appears in the 1807 edition is found in a footnote at the beginning of the text:

This Poem, which in the editions is called the Dreme of Chaucer—a title calculated to confound it with Chaucer’s Dreme, is in the Leg. of G. W. 418. denominated by our Poet, the Deth of Blaunche the Duchess. In the MSS. Fairf. 16, and Bod. 638, it is called ‘the Booke of the Duchesse’.18

Here we learn that the editor did indeed refer to at least these two manuscripts when preparing the text of The Book of the Duchess, despite his rather vague attitude towards the manuscripts as stated in the introduction.19 Steve Ellis remarks that the first published use of The Book of the Duchess as the poem’s title is in the Chiswick 1822 edition of the work.20 Prior to this, as the 1807 editor notes, it was known as Chaucer’s Dream or The Dream of Chaucer.21 This title caused considerable confusion among early editors as another poem—The Isle of Ladies, as it is now entitled, though not thought to be authored by Chaucer—was also known by this title, and certainly editors did confuse them on occasion.22 Here, then, we have a clear example of the work being published under the title of The Book of the Duchess as early as 1807.

As already noted, from the footnote at the start of the text, we learn that at the very least the editor was aware of and had seen the Fairfax and Bodley manuscripts in which the poem occurs. The editor seems not to have been aware of the third manuscript occurrence of The Book of the Duchess, in MS Tanner
despite it also being housed with the Fairfax and Bodley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Differing from the others, the Tanner manuscript has the title as Chaucer’s Dreme.

A line-by-line comparison with each of the three manuscript editions of the poem, as well as with the printed editions of William Thynne (1532, 1542, c. 1550), John Stow (1561), Thomas Speght (1598, 1602, 1687), John Urry (1721), John Bell (1782), Robert Anderson (1798) and Alexander Chalmers (1810), indicates that the 1807 editor has largely imitated Urry’s text, but with some significant amendments. Perhaps the most notable change that the 1807 editor has made throughout his text is to remove the -in, -id, -is, -ist and -ith endings that Urry first inserted (and which Bell retained) into the text. Just as he had claimed in his introduction, he has changed these word endings to -en, -ed, -es, -est and -eth respectively. The instances that do agree are examples such as the words ‘other’ (changed from ‘othir’), ‘ever’ (changed from ‘evir’) and ‘wonder’ (changed from ‘wondir’). The instances where the 1807 text does not agree with
the manuscript or with Thynne’s edition are words such as ‘withouten’ (changed from ‘withoutin’), which occurs in the manuscripts and in Thynne as ‘withoute’; ‘slepen’ (changed from ‘slepin’), which occurs as ‘slepe’; and ‘asken’ (changed from ‘askin’), which occurs as ‘aske’. Thus, we can see a common trend: Urry has added -in to words that originally had an -e ending, and so it is clear the 1807 editor has consulted neither the manuscripts nor Thynne; he has, in all 513 instances, simply altered his text to agree with the general criticism as noted by Tyrwhitt and other critics.

This appears to be a feature of the 1807 editor. It seems to me that even he were aware of and had access to the manuscripts (as he appears to have done for two of those containing The Book of the Duchess), he has not used the manuscripts’ orthography, preferring instead to rely on other critics’ views of the text. And, if one considers how the editor explains his concerns about Urry’s use of the -in, -id, -is, -ist and -ith endings, his argument is in fact sound: ‘This mechanical mode of indicating an extra syllable disguises the meaning of the word, and misrepresents the state of English orthography, when Chaucer wrote; it is therefore, in the present impression, discarded as an unjustifiable innovation.’ As the editor explains, Urry’s intention behind altering the text to use these endings is to outline clearly to the reader (perhaps one not familiar with Middle English, as was often the case by the eighteenth century, or who was more familiar with modernised versions of Chaucer) that some syllables were to be pronounced if the line of verse were to agree with the poem’s metre. The 1807 editor admits this as an ‘innovation’ to the text, and does not disapprove of the text on these grounds. Rather, his concern is that the reader may inadvertently introduce other incorrect assumptions about the text so written. They may assume, for example, that this spelling is an accurate indication of orthography as used by Chaucer, and further misunderstand the meaning of these altered words. The editor’s concern seems understandable, and his method of correction has been thorough: the difficulty for a modern editor, however, is that the editor’s changes have no provenance in the manuscripts.

The 1807 editor also criticises Urry’s edition for its odd use of personal pronouns. All three of the fifteenth-century manuscripts tend to use ‘hir’ as the third-person feminine objective pronoun. In the 1532 Thynne edition, the pronoun is spelt ‘her’, and in the Urry edition the pronoun is also spelt ‘her’; there are 112 instances where both editions uses ‘her’. The 1807 editor has consistently emended this pronoun to ‘hire’, even though this spelling appears in no other earlier edition or manuscript. In addition, Urry has consistently used the third-person possessive pronoun spelt ‘ther’, when it appears in all the manuscripts and Thynne as ‘her’. In the 1807 edition, the word is spelt ‘hir’ throughout; it is difficult to understand the 1807 editor’s reasoning for his emendations of these pronouns, as they clearly bear no resemblance to earlier editions or manuscripts. I would suggest that this is an instance of the editor following the orthography outlined by Tyrwhitt in the glossary to his edition of The Canterbury Tales, which has the following entries:
This agrees entirely with what the 1807 editor has used in his text, and it seems very likely that Tyrwhitt’s glossary is the origin of this emendation. Interestingly, Tyrwhitt’s glossary in his second edition acknowledges Urry’s glossary as being well crafted, and in fact goes so far to indicate that it was the basis for Tyrwhitt’s own glossary: ‘It would be injustice to the learned author of the Glossary to Mr. Urry’s edition, not to acknowledge, that I have built upon his foundations, and often with his materials.’ Despite this, Tyrwhitt concludes by stating that ‘Mr. Urry’s edition should never be opened by any one for the purpose of reading Chaucer’. Perhaps with such an attitude, it is not surprising that the 1807 editor chose to follow Tyrwhitt’s orthography.

Further in agreement with Tyrwhitt, it seems likely that the 1807 editor has elected to use the spellings of ‘hire’ for ‘her’ and ‘hir’ for ‘their’ in accordance with Tyrwhitt’s explanation of Chaucer’s use of these words in *The Canterbury Tales*:

*Hir; Their. The Possessive Pronoun of the third Person Plural is variously written, *Hir, Hire, Her,* and *Here*; not only in different Mss. But even in the same page of good Mss. There seems to be no reason for perpetuating varieties of this kind, which can only have taken their rise from the unsettled state of our Orthography before the invention of Printing, and which now contribute more than any real alteration of the language to obscure the sense of our old Authors. In this edition therefore, *Hir* is constantly put to signify *Their;* and *Hire* to signify *Her,* whether it be the Oblique case of the Plural Pronoun She, or the Possessive of the same Pronoun.*

This note is made specifically with respect to Tyrwhitt’s grammatical analysis of the first eighteen lines of *The Canterbury Tales*. The 1807 editor had noted with respect to his edition of *The Canterbury Tales* that he would ‘promote the design of Mr. Tyrwhitt’, and it seems that this has followed through into the other texts within his edition. As the note above explains, Tyrwhitt has decided which spelling to use for these specific pronouns, and has applied them consistently throughout. The 1807 editor, it would seem, has done the same, regardless of the spelling used in any of the earlier editions of *The Book of the Duchess*.

The use of the apostrophe is a notable feature of Urry’s text that had not been used in previous editions and which does not occur in the manuscripts containing Chaucer’s works. In his introduction, the 1807 editor complained about Urry’s use of this piece of punctuation and indicated his method of correction: ‘Another approximation to the manuscripts has been made, by rescinding the sign (’) of the genitive case, and by restoring the spelling where *es* has been without authority converted into *is*. In *The Book of the Duchess*, there are eleven such instances in Urry’s text where the genitive case has been represented by an apostrophe, and on each occasion the 1807 editor has emended these in the manner indicated above. For instance, Urry’s text has ‘slep’is’, ‘bedd’is’
and ‘world’s’, and this is emended in the 1807 edition to ‘slepes’, ‘beddes’ and ‘worldes’. The editor has suggested that this emendation is an ‘approximation to the manuscripts’, which broadly speaking is correct. On this point, the three manuscripts rarely agree with each other, but frequently they will reflect a spelling that is either the same or like that chosen by the 1807 editor. Interestingly, however, on every occasion the 1807 text agrees with Thynne’s 1532 edition. In the case of the examples given above, the manuscripts present the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>1807</th>
<th>MS Tanner 346</th>
<th>MS Bodley 638</th>
<th>MS Fairfax 16</th>
<th>Thynne 1532</th>
<th>Urry 1721</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>slepes</td>
<td>slep</td>
<td>slepes</td>
<td>slepes</td>
<td>slepes</td>
<td>slep’is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>beddes</td>
<td>beddis</td>
<td>beddys</td>
<td>beddys</td>
<td>beddes</td>
<td>bed’dis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>worldes</td>
<td>worldis</td>
<td>worldes</td>
<td>worldes</td>
<td>worldes</td>
<td>world’is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See also Figures 6 and 7). Unfortunately, with so few examples in total to judge, it is difficult to know if this indicates that the 1807 editor was using Thynne’s text for these emendations or some other model, or if this agreement is entirely coincidental.

The use of apostrophes is, however, an interesting and unusual feature of both Urry’s and the 1807 text. While there are eleven identifiable instances, as noted above, that correspond to the 1807 editor’s emendatory practice, there...
are in total 119 apostrophes in *The Book of the Duchess*. Aside from the eleven mentioned already, there are forty-one instances where the apostrophe is used to indicate a contraction or abbreviation of a word, such as ‘so’rowful’ and ‘’hem’. The remaining sixty-seven instances of apostrophes are less easy to explain, but appear to relate to Urry’s method of indicating the metre of the verse. The 1807 editor has described this method of spelling as an ‘unjustifiable innovation’. Perhaps he is being polite, but it seems to me that this statement reflects the fact the Urry’s alterations to the text were indeed innovations intended to aid the reader otherwise unfamiliar with Middle English verse. William Alderson, too, notes that despite the severe criticisms of Urry’s edition, it does indeed make a genuine effort to improve the texts of Chaucer, and in fact its greatest weakness seems to be that Urry died before he was able to leave an explanation and justification for his editorial methods. Just as Urry’s spelling is described as an ‘unjustifiable innovation’, one could similarly describe Urry’s method of correcting and indicating metre. It seems that Urry’s use of apostrophes, when they do not correspond to either the genitive case or to contractions or abbreviations, indicate an unstressed vowel in the line of verse. For instance, ‘And many’ an hart, and many’ an hinde’ (l. 427) shows that the metre is four stressed syllables per line; while ordinarily, Urry believes there will be correspondingly four unstressed syllables in the line, here he is indicating that there
are two extra unstressed syllables. As mentioned, this use of the apostrophe occurs on sixty-seven occasions in *The Book of the Duchess*, but it is completely removed by the 1807 editor.

Urry added another feature to his text to aid the reader in the pronunciation of the Middle English. Throughout his text, he has inserted the grave accent above certain syllables in words to indicate to the reader where syllables are to be pronounced. This action is entirely Urry’s invention and does not appear in any of the manuscripts or earlier editions, but it appears to be a feature that the 1807 editor has adopted throughout his text. Thus, despite his criticisms of Urry’s text, the 1807 editor has been happy to accept many of his innovations. For example, in line 20, agreeing with Urry, the 1807 editor has ‘Not longè tymè to endure’. The two accents indicate that the terminal -e on ‘longe’ and ‘tyme’ is to be pronounced, to complete the four-stressed line metre. The terminal -e on the word ‘endure’ remains silent. The 1807 editor, however, may have used another source for the punctuation of his edition. As noted, Urry’s text does not provide a watertight comparison with the 1807 edition’s punctuation, and yet it is clearly related. But it is helpful to consider Tyrwhitt’s edition. As mentioned, Tyrwhitt edited only *The Canterbury Tales*, but provided copious notes about the authorial status of the other texts attributed to Chaucer, and it is clear the 1807 editor made considerable use of these notes. However, there is another feature of Tyrwhitt’s edition that demands some attention: his process of editing is often identified as among the earliest that could be recognised as a modern process of editing. He consulted as many manuscripts as he could, and is often regarded as the first to describe Chaucer’s metre accurately. Nevertheless, it is well known that, while consulting the manuscripts, Tyrwhitt recorded his annotations on to a copy of Thomas Speght’s 1602 edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. As a result, the publishers of Tyrwhitt’s first edition, Bowyer and Nichols, prepared their text according to the corrections and alterations that Tyrwhitt had entered on to this copy. Where nothing was entered, the publishers followed the text as printed in Speght’s edition—this is not so significant as far as the text and metre go, but it is quite significant where the punctuation is concerned. Despite his suggestions elsewhere, Tyrwhitt devoted little attention to the punctuation in his edition; thus, that which is printed, in both his first and second editions, is nearly identical to that of Speght’s 1602 edition, even in the occasional instances where the punctuation no longer makes sense with the text. As a result, it is possible to argue that the 1807 editor, so heavily reliant on Tyrwhitt’s second edition, has inadvertently imitated Speght’s punctuation, while thinking that he is drawing on Tyrwhitt’s.

**The Impact of the 1807 Edition**

From this examination of *The Book of the Duchess*, it appears to me that the 1807 editor, at the very least, fully intended to present an edition of the work that was an improvement on all previous texts. The extent to which he has achieved this, however, is less easy to determine, and hinges considerably on what one regards
as an ‘improvement’. Unlike Urry’s edition, we can infer a clear and logical editorial process throughout, making his decisions understandable. The editor’s deference to Thomas Tyrwhitt is clear throughout, but it seems unlikely that we should regard the 1807 edition as the version that Tyrwhitt himself would have produced, had he lived long enough to do so. The scrupulous care and powerful intellect behind his edition of *The Canterbury Tales* is not found to the same degree in the 1807 text. What we do see, however, is a gesture towards Tyrwhitt’s style, rather than an example of rigorous editing. The 1807 editor appears well versed in the work of Tyrwhitt, as well as the 1721 edition of Urry; however, despite the superficial impressions he gives, it does not appear that he has undertaken the same degree of research as Tyrwhitt in examining the manuscript editions of the poems. To be fair, this study considers only *The Book of the Duchess*: it is entirely possible that the editor’s efforts were inconsistent across the works of Chaucer, or indeed that it is not the work of one individual. We have no sense of the period over which the editorial labour took place, and thus there is no way to estimate if it was feasible for a single person to conduct the editing process alone.39 What we can determine from examining a single poem, though, is that it is fair to consider the work a new edition—sufficiently different from all previous editions—which demonstrates commendable efforts at advancing the quality of the text and anticipating more recent approaches to textual criticism.

**Notes**


4. See Appendix 1 for publications details of *The Book of the Duchess*.

5. John Bell (ed.), *The Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill*, 109 vols (Edinburgh: Apollo, 1782–83); for a full list of booksellers contributing to the 1807 *Poets of Great Britain*, see Appendix 11.

6. According to Thomas Bonnell: ‘To save customers money on binding, they marketed the set in two forms, taking the trouble to print different series title-pages listing different contents, one headed *The Poets of Great Britain, in One Hundred and Twenty-Four Volumes*, the other *The Poets of Great Britain, in Sixty-One Double Volumes*’—see *The MoSl Disreputable Trade* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp. 293–94.
7. The 1807 series included fifty-four poets in total; three from Bell’s series were removed, while seven new poets were added. I have not attempted to investigate whether the works of poets within the series have been similarly re-edited for the 1807 edition, although this would warrant future investigation, especially regarding the works of Spenser. For a full list of poets included in the 1807 edition, please see Appendix III.


9. Tyrwhitt was most aggrieved by Bell’s actions in particular: ‘The Assured manner in which my name is used, may lead people to imagine that I have been at least consenting to this republication of my book; and therefore I beg the favour of you, and all my other friends, to take every opportunity (the more public the better) of declaring for me, that the whole transaction has passed without my consent, approbation, or knowledge’—see Gentleman’s Magazine, 53.1 (1783), 461–62. See also Thomas Tyrwhitt (ed.), The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, to which Are Added, an Essay upon his Language and Versification; an Introductory Discourse; and Notes (London: Payne, 1778), STC T76519; John Urry (ed.), The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Compared with the Former Editions, and Many Valuable MSS, Out of which, Three Tales Are Added which Were Never before Printed (London: Lintot, 1721), STC T106027.


11. Ibid., pp. xii–xiii.


16. Ibid., p. 110.


29. Ibid., p. 521.

30. Ibid., p. 524.

31. Ibid., pp. 64–65.


33. Ibid., p. xii.


Appendices

I. ‘Publications of’ The Book of the Duchess

_The Book of the Duchess_ appears in the following publications up until the end of the nineteenth century:


2. John Stow (ed.), *The Woorkes of Geffrey Chaucer Newlie Printed, with Diuers Addicions, which Were Never in Printed Before* (London: Kyngston, 1561) [STC 5075, 5076, 5076.3].

3. Thomas Speght (ed.), *The Works of Our Ancient, Learned, Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer: As They Have Lately Been Compar’d with the Beś Manuscripts, and Several Things Added, Never Before in Print* (London: Bishop, 1598), rptd 1602 and 1687 [STC 5077, 5078, 5079, 5080, 5081, Wing C3736].

4. John Urry (ed.), *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Compared with the Former Editions, and Many Valuable MSS, out of which, Three Tales Are Added which Were Never before Printed* (London: Lintot, 1721) [STC T106027].


II. Contributing ‘Booksellers to’ The Poets of Great Britain

The full list of booksellers is as follows:

- Cadell & Davies
- Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme
- Nichols & Son
- J. Walker
- Wilkie & Robinson
- W. J. & J. Richardson
- F. C. & J. Rivington
- Lackington, Allen & Co.
- R. H. Evans
- Cuthell & Martin
Scatterd & Letterman  Black and Parry
Otridge & Son  J. Harding
Vernor, Hood & Sharpe  E. Jeffrey
R. Faulder  J. Carpenter
T. Payne  W. Miller
J. Nunn  Leigh & Sotheby
R. Lea  Payne & Mackinlay
J. Deighton  Mathews & Leigh
J. Johnson  P. Wynne
W. Clarke & Sons  J. Booker
W. Lowndes  Samuel Bagster
J. Hatchard

III. A Complete List of Poets in The Poets of Great Britain

Geoffrey Chaucer  Richard Savage
Edmund Spenser  Jonathan Swift
Abraham Cowley  William Broome
Sir John Denham  Alexander Pope
John Milton  Christopher Pitt
Edmund Waller  James Thomson
Samuel Butler  Isaac Watts
John Wilmot,  Ambrose Philips
2nd Earl of Rochester  Gilbert West
Wentworth Dillon,  Williams Collins
4th Earl of Roscommon  John Dyer
John Pomfret  William Shenstone
John Philips  Edward Young
John Dryden  David Mallet
Edmund Smith  Mark Akenside
William King  Thomas Gray
Thomas Parnell  George Lyttelton,
Sir Samuel Garth  1st Baron Lyttelton
Nicholas Rowe  Edward Moore
Joseph Addison  Charles Churchill
Matthew Prior  William Falconer
William Congreve  John Cunningham
Elijah Fenton  Matthew Green
John Gay  Oliver Goldsmith
George Granville,  John Armstrong
Baron Lansdowne  Samuel Johnson
Thomas Tickell  Soame Jenyns
James Hammond  Sir Williams Jones
William Somerville  Richard West
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Date of acceptance: 18 September 2019.
Political Animals
Dogs and the Discourse of Rights in Late Eighteenth-Century Print Culture

Amy Milka

In the spring of 1796, at the height of the war with revolutionary France, when England experienced severe food shortages and political unrest, MP John Dent proposed a tax on dogs. After several weeks of heated parliamentary debates, the bill was drawn up on 28 April and became law on 19 May. Many of the social and economic discussions surrounding the tax had been heard before when the issue of regulation was debated in Parliament. But the new bill, which earned its champion the nickname ‘Dog Dent’ and prompted an outpouring of responses in print culture, brought different anxieties to the fore. In parliamentary debates, newspaper reports, letters to the editor, poems and pamphlet responses, the proposed tax played on new uncertainties about the relative status of humans and animals in eighteenth-century society. The burgeoning debate about animal welfare rubbed shoulders with relatively new ideas about the privilege of pet ownership, and issues of public safety came up against the lower classes’ right to privacy and property.

This article addresses the vexed issue of animal rights at the end of the eighteenth century, when the discussion of human rights and citizenship was often thought to be synonymous with radical politics. In the 1790s, the discourse of rights was mobilised to discuss the social, legal and political status of an ever-increasing number of ‘citizens of the world’. Thomas Paine’s Rights of Man (1791–92) provided a new programme of social and political thought, and a new vocabulary and vernacular style in which ordinary people could understand and articulate their rights. This paved the way for discussions of the rights of working-class men, women, servants, slaves and even animals. Christine Kenyon-Jones explains changing eighteenth-century attitudes to animals as part of ‘the continuum of better rights and treatment’, where the extension of liberty to subordinated people led to a consideration of other creatures. The assumption that rights filtered down a hierarchical chain of being underpins much scholarship on historical attitudes to animals. In contrast, this article argues that arguments for animal rights were instrumentalised to highlight inequalities among humans.

In literature and print culture, the language of the rights-bearing subject was strategically and directly applied to the issue of animal welfare. Using the 1796 dog tax as a case study, I show how satirists, newspaper commentators and poets harnessed the language of the Rights of Man to discuss animal rights. But while these arguments made clear recent advancements in thinking about animals as
sentient creatures who felt pleasure and pain, to whom humans had a duty of care, they also highlighted inequalities in the recognition of rights in other areas of society. Although Hilda Kean has characterised animal welfare as a ‘safe’ cause in a period when philanthropy and radical politics often went hand in hand, the debate over animal rights was heavily influenced by—and influential in—radical discourse. As David Perkins asserts, ‘you could not grant a right to animals that you denied to subordinate classes of humans’. This essay takes up Perkins’s claim, demonstrating the political consequences of deploying the language of rights in relation to animals.

The relationship between humans and animals in the eighteenth century has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years. This work has shown the extent to which animals were integral to constructions of selfhood and identity, and how advances in social and political thought relied on understandings of the distinction between humans and animals. Studies of the rise of pet-keeping reveal the increasing importance of the sympathetic connection between humans and animals, starkly contrasted with the upper classes’ indifference to social inequalities and the suffering of others. Advancements in scientific and philosophical knowledge regarding animal consciousness, passions and rationality have received attention as the building blocks of animal welfare efforts in the nineteenth century. The representation of animals in literature and culture is the focus of a significant body of work, including new scholarly editions of important texts such as Francis Coventry’s novel The History of Pompey the Little (1751).

The dog tax has also been addressed, most thoroughly in an article by Lynn Fešta. Providing extensive commentary on parliamentary discussions of the tax, Fešta interrogates the categories of ‘person, animal, thing’, emphasising the discordance between the increasingly sympathetic relationship between humans and animals, and the treatment of dogs as luxury goods to be taxed. The relationship between dogs and their owners was such that a dog could be seen as ‘property expressive of or essential to the embodiment or self-constitution of human personality’, and therefore deserving of special legal protection. Fešta exposes the double standards in eighteenth-century attitudes to animals, complicating their status as objects, but refusing to accord them legal protection. These limitations, she claims, ‘remind us that humanitarian concern for animals does not necessarily dislodge the human from center stage’.

In print culture, techniques of personification conferred a type of personhood upon animals, transforming them from objects or ‘things’ into subjects with rights to defend. Prosopopoeia empowered animals to speak, employing human language or their own distinctive gestures to make their thoughts and feelings heard. The newspapers of 1796 were populated by talking dogs, bemoaning the tax and addressing their human aggressors. Opponents of the dog tax depicted the canine species speaking for themselves, forming associations, petitioning Parliament and advocating reform. They capitalised upon contemporary arguments
about the similarities between humans and animals to suggest the basis for shared social and political recognition and a shared voice. But while these arguments contributed to the nascent movement for ‘animal rights’ in the modern sense of the term, they were also concerned with illustrating the power and utility of universal rights discourse in the hands and mouths of the lower and middling classes. As Paine asserted, ‘once any object has been seen, it is impossible to put the mind back to the same condition it was in before’. Giving voice to animals was a rhetorical strategy designed to highlight injustices and empower readers to discuss and express their own political opinions. Man’s best friend provided a model to the disenfranchised, and a reminder of the avenues for resistance which were open to them.

As I argue, the competing elements of the dog tax debate were harnessed for a radical political agenda. Part I offers an overview of the arguments for a tax, and connects the tax and its effects to eighteenth-century concerns about animal welfare and public morals. Part II demonstrates the intervention of visual satire in the dog tax debate, arguing that satirists collapsed the human/animal divide by transforming politicians into dogs experiencing the pain of capital punishment. Finally, Part III suggests the ways in which speaking dogs in print satire, poems and songs, employed the language of rights to defend themselves and their interests. The disturbing depiction of politically informed and active animals acted as a challenge to readers, defying them to assert their own interests against their oppressors in the government.

I. The Dog Tax and Eighteenth-Century Attitudes to Animals
Throughout the eighteenth century there had been repeated calls in Parliament and elsewhere for a tax to help regulate the numbers of dogs on the loose. Arguments used in favour of the tax fluctuated during this time, and the bill passed in 1796 reflected developing ideas about animal and human relationships. In Parliament, John Dent, the MP for Lancaster, made a threefold argument for a tax, which he proposed to supplement the Poor Rates. First, he cited the number of stray dogs, pets, working animals and packs of hounds that ran wild, worrying and killing livestock and causing hundreds of pounds’ worth of damage. Second, he emphasised the threat of disease posed by dogs of all types: newspapers frequently reported alarming cases of hydrophobia, the aversion to water caused by the bite of a rabid dog. Third, he referenced the food shortages caused by the failed harvests of 1795, arguing that pampered dogs consumed valuable provisions, and that the poor were excessively burdened by having an extra, canine mouth to feed. Despite these arguments, however, the basis of the tax and how it should be collected was the subject of significant parliamentary debate. While some politicians voiced condescending opinions about whether those claiming the Poor Rate had the right to keep pets, others expressed more sympathetic identification with the hardships and consolations of the poor. Even Prime Minister William Pitt, while tirelessly working to appropriate revenue from the tax for the war effort, proposed not to tax the poor because dogs afforded their poor owners some
‘rational amusement’. The discussions in Parliament and elsewhere reflected changing understandings of the relationship between humans and animals, and challenged deep-seated assumptions about the rights of dogs and their owners. These debates were taken up in print culture, where the discussion of animal rights also served to highlight social and political injustices.

Innumerable dogs would be destroyed by owners who could not (or would not) pay the tax, and there would be no penalty for ‘converting’ an untaxed dog to one’s own use, upending notions of property. Many were concerned about the effect that killing dogs *en masse* might have on the public. As Fešta has shown, the potential for the public massacre of dogs to degenerate into French Revolutionary violence was painfully clear to politicians and commentators alike. Concerns over the effects of the tax fed into broader discussions about animal welfare and animal cruelty. Animal cruelty (in the form of cruel sports or general mistreatment) has been traditionally accepted as a characteristic of early modern life. Descartes’ theory that animals were like machines, with ‘no mental powers whatsoever’ and an inability to feel pain, was routinely used to legitimate violence towards animals. However, Erica Fudge has persuasively argued that animal cruelty was not ‘outside the terms of moral reference’. Fudge describes the early modern ethic of ‘self-serving kindness’, based on the ‘ego-centric’ notion that the ‘government of the self’ and ‘of the passions’ was the foundation of virtue. Cruelty towards animals was reprehensible not because of the creature’s suffering, but because of the individual’s failure of self-control. This attitude was evident in literature for children, where among other things, ‘animals [were] an object lesson in the dynamics of class relations’, teaching kindness to inferiors. Time and again, the failure to control one’s baser impulses was represented as a stepping-stone to greater offences, for example, the trajectory depicted in William Hogarth’s engravings of *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751) and referenced in John Oswald’s vegetarian manifesto *The Cry of Nature* (1791).

Although cruelty to animals was a common problem, the rise in pet-keeping made it difficult to sustain the argument that animals could not feel. Dog owners saw daily examples of their canine companions reacting to pleasure or pain, and demonstrating signs of emotion. Descartes’ suggestion that these behaviours were learned reactions was increasingly questioned by philosophers and scientists who all claimed that, in one way or another, animals could feel. Practices such as vivisection made this inescapably clear. Hume expressed the popular understanding propagated by anatomy that

where the structure of parts in brutes is the same as in men, and the operation of these parts also the same, the causes of that operation cannot be different, and that whatever we discover to be true of the one species, may be concluded without hesitation to be certain of the other,

an observation repeated by Erasmus Darwin in *Zoonomia* (1794–96). Moreover, Hume, David Hartley and others recognised that animals also appeared to feel many of the same emotions as humans.
While observations about animal rationality, feeling and similarity to humans made cruelty to animals even more unconscionable, and perhaps helped to alter individual behaviour and motivate an interest in animal welfare, they did not immediately lead to legislation to protect animals, or ‘animal rights’ in any modern sense of the term. Rob Boddice argues that despite the historical importance placed upon Jeremy Bentham’s statement that ‘the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?’, for Bentham and his contemporaries, the treatment of animals was contingent upon their usefulness to humans. The refusal to fully recognise animals and their suffering was based upon not only economic but also political considerations. Capitalising on the debate sparked by Paine’s Rights of Man, John Lawrence argued for ‘The Rights of Beasts’, complaining:

It has ever been, and still is, the invariable custom of the bulk of mankind, not even excepting legislators, both religious and civil, to look upon brutes as mere machines; animated yet without souls; endowed with feelings, but utterly devoid of rights; and placed without the pale of justice. [...] Brute creatures are not yet in the contemplation of any people, reckoned within the scheme of general justice; [...] they reap only the benefit of a partial, and inefficacious kind of compassion.

In addition to ambivalence about animal pain, this ‘inefficacious compassion’ was perhaps the result of tensions over the discourse of rights. While most open-minded individuals could concede that limiting animal cruelty benefitted the spiritual and moral wellbeing of humans as well as the physical safety of animals, animal rights evoked the ‘levelling’ principles of English and French radicals. As David Perkins explains, ‘one obtained animal rights by extending rights from human beings downward’. Between the privileged classes and their pets existed a social gulf filled with groups who were disenfranchised in one way or another: the working-classes, women, servants, the enslaved. These people had been marginalised in part because of claims about their physical inferiority, ignorance and brute-like nature. If animals were proven to be sentient, feeling, rational creatures, more like humans than previously thought, the justification for social and political exclusion must also be brought into question. And if animals were to be accorded rights, it would become impossible to ignore the claims of these other groups to representation, freedom of person and adequate legal protection. As the following sections demonstrate, the treatment of animals in visual satire and print culture exploited this dilemma, and, while ostensibly arguing for the rights of animals, threw the focus back onto the inalienable rights of man.

II. Pain, Punishment and Personhood: The Dog as Moral Agent
Several visual satires addressed the dog tax directly, depicting the appeals of owners and the vengeance of dogs, or caricaturing politicians as untaxed curs to be rounded up and hanged. These images combined debates about dog ownership with a discussion of French Revolutionary principles, party politics and the evils of taxation. Ruthless and shocking, they make a pointed political argument by
depicting suffering and pain. In an unfinished sketch by James Gillray (Figure 1, below), the patriotic figure John Bull undergoes the excruciating operation of having the ‘worm’ (the frenulum) beneath his tongue cut out, a practice which was commonly thought to prevent rabies in dogs. Depicting humans undergoing the same treatment as animals lent a new perspective to traditional beliefs that animals could not feel pain.

FIG. 1. JAMES GILLRAY, CURING JOHN BULL OF HIS CANINE APPETITE (1796?). © PUBLIC DOMAIN. THE MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH DIVISION OF ART, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEW YORK.
FIG. 2. JAMES GILLRAY, TO BE PAID FOR—THE DOG TAX (1796).
© PUBLIC DOMAIN. PAUL MELLON COLLECTION, YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART, NEW HAVEN.
Fig. 3. Isaac Cruikshank, *Give a Dog an Ill Name, They'll Hang Him*, 1796.
© Public Domain. Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.
In other images (see Figures 2 and 3, above), politicians are metamorphosed into dogs ‘not worth the tax’ and experience first-hand the cruelty their policies inflict. Grotesque images of hanging dogs with half-human, half-canine faces, wearing the eponymous ‘hang-dog look’ or disfigured by pain, collapse the distinction between human and animal. The malicious destruction of dogs depicted in caricatures relied on the notion that animals (like politicians) felt pain. As Fudge has suggested, when the destruction and torture of animals were staged as a punishment for wrongdoing (in this case for destroying livestock, spreading hydrophobia or any number of hypothetical crimes), animals were being judged by human standards and held accountable to human laws. Fudge’s analysis of retributive action against ‘animals who kill’ exposes the dichotomy between early modern beliefs that animals are irrational objects, and cannot feel pain, and the desire to punish crimes against society. Rather than framing animal violence as spontaneous and irrational, the staging of punishment implied that animals were capable of reasoning and distinguishing between right and wrong. In the caricatures surrounding the dog tax, early modern animal cruelty as entertainment came head-to-head with a depiction of punishment for crime. By confounding these attitudes and collapsing distinctions between human morals and animal behaviour, the dog tax satires troubled the status of animals in eighteenth-century law and society. If animals, like humans, were held accountable to moral codes and laws, then like humans, they should also benefit from certain rights and legal protection: they should be considered ‘persons’.

The conditions of personhood, in the moral, legal and metaphysical senses, were by no means settled in the eighteenth century. The fashion for ‘It’-narratives throughout the period suggests the slipperiness of the categories of subject and object, animal and thing. According to Locke, a person was ‘a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery’. It is not difficult to imagine that, according to emerging eighteenth-century understandings of animal bodies, animal reason and animal feelings, certain species of animals might be perceived as members of this category. During the dog tax debate, for example, one MP described the dog as ‘a sagacious animal’ that ‘associated ideas’, and could form a syllogism better than his peers in the House of Commons. Animal rationality alone might provide the grounds for personhood, but the argument did not stop here. In 1750, a ‘freethinker’ in Coventry’s Pompey the Little was prepared to go further and argue that animals were ‘moral agents’. For other commentators, sentience was grounds enough to connect animals with vulnerable ‘persons’ who had a right to protection and care. Frances Hutcheson asserted that ‘Brutes may very justly be said to have a right that no useless pain or misery should be inflicted on them [...] ‘Tis true brutes have no notion of rights [...] but infants are in the same case, and yet have rights, which the adults are obliged to maintain’. The erosion of the human/animal divide strengthened the argument that animals should be treated as ‘persons’.
In the next section, I demonstrate how this notion of animals as ‘persons’ was employed in print culture surrounding the dog tax. Numerous publications gave animals a voice, which allowed them to complain about human cruelty and to deliver moral messages more directly. This also enabled more pointed social and political criticism. By personifying their canine subjects, many of the texts produced as part of the dog tax debate expressed concerns about the emotional capacities of animals, their physical welfare and human morality. The act of personification created personhood, and conferred agency. As we shall see, dogs were presented as legal subjects with the ability to reason and moralise, and the right to make their complaints heard.

III. Rover’s Remonstrance: Politics, Personification and the Rights of Dogs

Animals featured prominently in political pamphlets and satires during the 1790s, often with reference to Edmund Burke’s description of the common people as a ‘swinish multitude’. Burke’s attempt to bestialise the lower classes famously backfired, as responses to his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) appropriated his epithet as a way of unifying hardworking and disempowered Englishmen against supporters of an archaic and hierarchical version of English ‘rights’. Farmyard metaphors were common, from the representation of the king as the simplistic ‘Farmer George’, to the patriotic character John Bull, who was frequently transformed into a stubborn and thick-headed bovine by caricaturists. He was present again in the dog tax debate, this time as a bulldog. Traditional associations between the animal ‘kingdom’ and social hierarchy lent themselves to political critique. In 1793, the writer and intellectual John Thelwall was tried for seditious libel for a regicidal fable in which he decapitated a rooster who tyrannized over his farmyard. The use of allegories involving animals was an obvious tool for entertainment and political instruction.

While animals have always featured prominently in allegories and fables (where they ‘stand for something else’), Jane Spencer argues that increasingly in eighteenth-century literature, ‘animals stand for—and speak for—themselves’. Similarly, Laura Brown discusses eighteenth-century ‘dog narratives’ which question ‘species boundaries and the definition of the human’ by switching the narrative perspective to the canine protagonist. The social and geographic mobility or ‘itinerancy’ of canine narrators facilitated satire and presented readers with a cross-section of human behaviours, concerns and language. Progressively empathetic portrayals of animals drew on contemporary debates about animal rationality, animal language and the human/animal divide. Jason Hribal argues that the representation of labouring animals’ voices and experiences in print culture promoted ‘identification and solidarity’ between the beleaguered working classes and the animals that worked with them. Many of these narrative techniques were present in discussions of the dog tax in newspapers, poems and pamphlets, where animal voices routinely addressed human readers. Dogs were frequently represented as speaking for themselves, in what we might describe as prosopopoeia.
In the debate over the tax, canine characters spoke the moral and political language of the day, employing the discourse of rights to argue their position.

Writers on the dog tax were not the first to use the new ‘discourse on rights’ to discuss the status of animals. The arguments of Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and other radicals cut both ways and were often used by satirists to ridicule advocates of the rights of man. For example, Thomas Taylor’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792) satirised Wollstonecraft’s advocacy of women’s rights by applying her rationale to animals. Speaking about animal rights could either remind readers of the justness and universality of Paine’s arguments or satirically associate them with the ignorance of the brute creation. *The Rights of Asses* (1792), a satire on the Society of the Friends of the People, mocked the democratisation of political ideas by suggesting that even animals thought they had rights, a strain taken up by many conservative satirists. In another pamphlet, Paine’s argument for natural rights was applied to the brute creation, with problematic consequences:

> For as far as the right is *natural*, beasts must have it as well as man; and what will it prove? It will prove in the *rat*, a right to gnaw our victuals, and undermine our habitations; in the *fox*, a right to take the *poultry*; in the *wolf* a right to eat the *sheep*; for all creatures have the right to live, and it is the *nature* of these creatures to live in this manner.  

Invariably, in conservative responses to Paine, the connection between common people and animals was revivified, if not by the epithet ‘swinish multitude’, then by the continued implication that the poor, like beasts of burden or wild animals, lacked the mental capacity to be trusted with political power.

While Paine’s *Rights of Man* did not explicitly comment on the political status of animals, it provided both a theoretical framework and a vocabulary for others to do so. In May 1791, following rumours of a tax, the *London Chronicle* ran a petition of dogs to the king:

> That at the present liberal and enlightened era, when even Lords themselves are considered as no better than your petitioners, they humble conceive that they are entitled to equal privileges and equal rights [...] the maxim that *all men are equal*, is perfectly applicable to your Majesty’s petitioners, who humble think, that by the same rule, ‘all dogs are equal,’ and that the ‘rights of dogs,’ are founded not upon *compact*, but are *natural* and *imprescriptible*.

Quoting the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), the petition implied that animals were also covered by Paine’s explanation of natural rights. Likewise, in 1796, the *London Packet* reported a ‘General Meeting of Dogs’ who resolved to petition Parliament against the tax. The depiction of dogs organising meetings, debating and drafting petitions, was meant as a model for their human counterparts to follow. At least four separate petitions by dogs were described in newspapers and magazines, in addition to letters to the editor by dogs proposing alternative taxes on the ‘asses’ or ‘sad dogs, lazy dogs, and puppies’ in Parliament.
The insinuations that animals were more politically informed and active than their human owners were intended to shame as much as to incite indignation.

While radical texts inspired most responses to the tax, dogs also phrased their resistance in the language of conservative loyalism. The notion that Englishmen were tenacious defenders of their rights and liberties was ingrained in loyalist rhetoric and upheld by repeated references to the Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Bill of Rights. Edmund Burke described English liberties as an ‘entailed inheritance’ derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity. Writers on the dog tax co-opted this position to claim the continuation of their traditional rights. Canine petitioners begged: ‘That your Majesty will be pleased to continue and ensure to them the privilege of the bones, the liberty of the scraps, and other rights and immunities, which time immemorial has conferred upon them.’ A correspondent to the *Western County Magazine* likewise claimed that he could not ‘bring my reason, my understanding, and humanity to think that the dogs should suffer the infraction of their ancient charter.’ Enumerating the many virtues of dogs and their service to humans over the centuries, such accounts mixed natural rights theory with appeals to hereditary right, casting dogs as loyal subjects deserving of protection.

Many newspaper responses to the tax commented on the nobility, loyalty and honour of dogs, who faithfully served kind masters, but were also symbols of English courage. Even the bite of a rabid dog became a form of honourable resistance to taxation. The *Morning Post* suggested that

*Dogs feel & resent their injuries with more spirit than Englishmen. The Dogs wish to be revenged on the people for taxing them through their Representatives in Parliament. They are determined to shew the Minister the danger of burthening them, while Tax upon Tax is heaped on JOHN BULL, and he bears them with the dullness and indifference of an Ass.*

Likewise, Edward Nairne transformed hydrophobia into ‘cordophobia’ and ‘taxation fear’, suggesting that dogs were driven mad by the many ‘wrongs’ they suffered (a subtle reference to Wollstonecraft). Nairne’s disenfranchised dogs chose to form an association and applied to ‘dogs of wisdom’ to guide them in their resistance. Instrumental in organising their petition was Hareskin, based of course on the lawyer Thomas Erskine, who had famously defended Thomas Paine in 1792, and Thomas Hardy and other radicals accused of treason in 1794. The poem emphasised Hareskin’s radical credentials as a ‘Hardy dog’, who showed his compatriots how to ‘legally resist’ the tax. These political and politicised animals were a challenge to human readers, who were characterised as dull, spiritless and passive creatures. They lacked the courage, or maybe even the inclination, to stand up for themselves and assert their rights. If dogs could take legal advice, form rational arguments and even draft petitions, they offered a model of resistance for disenfranchised humans.

The argument for better rights and treatment was evoked by writers on the dog tax by connecting the dogs’ plight with the plights of other victims of oppression.
A proposed ‘Inscription for the Collars of Taxed Dogs’ deployed the satirical representation of middle-class sensibility as a study in the abuse of power and privilege. The collar represents oppression but also the affective connection between the dog and its owner, by whose bounty the dog can ‘breathe another year’:

‘Die puppy!’ Was a brother’s harsh command,
A friend repriev’d me with a pitying hand;
Dropp’d at my rigid fate a manly tear,
And told me I should breathe another year.\(^{65}\)

The collar highlights the subordinate position of the creature who cannot protect its own life, and who is reprieved at the whim of a capricious sensibility. The reference to condemnation by a ‘brother’ and redemption by a ‘friend’ made a pointed critique of the notion of dogs as ‘man’s best friend’, but also harnessed a motto which would be very familiar to newspaper readers. Josiah Wedgwood’s image of a kneeling slave, asking ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’ became the ubiquitous and fashionable symbol of abolitionism in the late 1780s. By creating a connection with this famous slogan, the verse attempted to engage the sensibility of philanthropic readers in the cause of animal welfare, while also taking a subtle jab at the commodification of suffering practised by the middle classes. Other dog tax satires harnessed the image of the suffering slave to parody the fickle sensibilities of politicians. ‘The Remonstrance and Petition of Rover, a Poor Dog’ (1796) addressed ‘unpitying Dent’, accusing: ‘tir’d, for a while, with Negro banging, | Thoud’st take a turn at spaniel hanging’. Dent was presented as unmoved by the suffering slave, but grown ‘tender’ over the death of an old weather sheep killed by a stray dog.\(^{66}\) The implication was that Dent chose his sensibilities to suit his political agenda. Conversely, the canine characters represented in the debate surrounding the dog tax refused to be sacrificed to an economic or political agenda, asserting their rights and demanding equitable treatment.

As we have seen, the debate over animal feeling had extended from a discussion of physical sensibility to moral and emotional capacity. Laura Brown points to several dog narratives published in the 1790s and early 1800s which extol the morality and virtue of dogs and the ‘Christian lessons’ their behaviour represents.\(^{67}\) In a poem entitled *The Lamentation of a Dog, on the Tax, and its Consequences* (1796), the canine narrator celebrates the many virtues of his species:

They, teiz’d and dragg’d by restless Children round,
Graz’d not their tender skin with slightest wound.
And still, when Friends forgot, Relations fled,
The World oppress’d, rever’d the once lov’d head:
Not e’en by Famine driven to retreat;
Dear his affection still, without the Meat:
Dear e’en his Prison:—and when Life  is gone,
Dear, to watch nightly by the nameless stone.\(^{68}\)

The dog exercises rational and moral restraint: he does not lash out when teased by children, and he does not forsake his master in hunger, poverty or even in death, belying his status as a brute. This recalls the early modern virtue of self-governance:
the dog is presented as capable of reason and empathy, and acts as a moral agent, fulfilling the requirements for personhood. From this moral high ground, the canine narrator offers social and political criticism. Borrowing from Paine’s critique of the tax burden on the lower classes, the poem attacks the government for re-appropriating funds: ‘yet these our Wrongs we better could endure, | Were it, as first propos’d to feed the Poor’. This argument foregrounds the responsibility of all masters not to abuse their position of power and privilege. The dog is willing to be taxed, and perhaps even to die for his master or for the benefit of other humans, emphasising the virtuous qualities of obedience and loyalty. However, the implicit suggestion is that no compassionate master would ever require such a sacrifice. A position of superiority confers a duty of care over others, and masters of all stripes should be encouraged to protect the rights of their inferiors.

While arguments about human superiority often cited the sophistication of human language, early modern philosophers accepted that animal language (including sounds and physical gestures) facilitated communication and expressed passions. Tobias Menely argues that this ‘impassioned voice’ formed the basis of a sympathetic communication which was seen to diminish the gap between humans and animals. By representing actions, gestures and sounds from a third-person narrative perspective, literary productions attempted to construct a sense of an animal’s interiority. Nairne’s poem, for example, depicted canine behaviour as a persuasive technique in the manner of oratory: ‘with our tail, address this mighty lord, | And beat a parley on the sounding board’. Similarly, in mid-April ‘Mrs Eyre’, a frequent contributor to the Oracle & Public Advertiser, addressed a letter to Parliament opposing the dog tax. Eyre’s observations of animal behaviour allow her to recount the emotional state of the dog:

> Who can describe the vast pleasure of the dog when he hears the footstep of his master—he humbles himself at his feet—he licks his hand—he caresses him—and by his pleasure welcomes him home by a thousand ways of truth and sincerity, far beyond the most studied speech!

Dogs are not defenceless or inferior because they cannot speak. Here, the dog’s body ‘speaks’ the feelings of pleasure he experiences. Eyre claims that these physical demonstrations of devotion are more powerful expressions than language itself: they have a kind of emotional honesty. This type of sympathetic prosopopoeia would be familiar to polite readers as a regular figure in sentimental literature. In Henry Mackenzie’s Man of Feeling (1771), for example, dogs are repeatedly described in ways which suggest their emotional integrity, and are used to provoke sentimental reactions in the reader. Perhaps the most well-known example is old Edwards’ dog Trusty, who shares his master’s grief at being forced off their land. The tear-jerking story of the old dog’s visible heartbreak, as he staggers out into the yard for the last time, ‘gave a short howl, and died’, demonstrates his physical and emotional exhaustion. Indeed, the emotional affinity between man and beast is emphasised by Edwards’ admission that ‘I could have laid down and died, too’. The protagonist Harley’s ‘face is bathed in tears’ as he listens to this sad tale,
modelling an appropriate reaction for the reader. In these accounts, sensibility is its own language, which emphasises the connection between man and beast.

But affection has its limits, and Eyre’s dog provides a cautionary tale for all masters. While extolling its many virtues, such as fidelity and courage, Eyre painted a picture of domestic felicity maintained by the emotional labour of a subordinate member of the family hierarchy: dogs ‘shall not open their mouth against an inhuman master, but lick the hand lifted up to shed their blood’. By reminding her readers that the persecuted dog always has the potential to bite, Eyre cautions tyrannical masters to beware of their subordinates. As Hribal suggests in his discussion of animal agency, animal behaviour could often be read as a deliberate and practiced resistance. If animals were capable of feeling pain, reasoning and feeling emotions, then those who stole food, escaped captivity, refused to work or who turned upon their masters were exercising intentional defiance. Indeed, some canine commentators on the dog tax modelled this resistance by suggesting rapacious politicians should be ‘scented out and run down’. One Towser claimed that ‘there is not a dog in the nation that will fight more desperately, or bark louder, in a good cause’, demonstrating his willingness to stand up for himself and his kind. The lesson for readers was twofold. While social inferiors, like domestic animals, might learn enough self-governance to submit to ill-treatment for a time, they were not necessarily passive or unthinking creatures. But more importantly, by associating together, defending their rights, and articulating their demands, the canine characters of 1796 taught their owners a valuable lesson in political engagement.

**Conclusion**

The dog tax was repealed in April 1798, just two years after its inception, and was reincarnated in 1812 when the stray dog population once again became a national issue. The 1796 tax was just one piece of legislation in a long line of attempts regulate dog ownership, but nonetheless it demonstrated an unprecedented concern with the question of rights. While some of the responses to the dog tax advocated for animal rights, the dog was primarily a cipher for his human owner. Festa concludes that ‘humanitarian claims on behalf of dogs in the debate over the dog tax are not designed to enlarge the class of those entitled to rights’. It was too soon, she suggests, to speak of animal rights: indeed, bills to protect animals were laughed out of Parliament well into the nineteenth century. But as this essay has shown, the diverse discussions of the rights of dogs challenged readers to reconcile their compassion for animals with the social, legal and political inequalities they witnessed daily amongst humans. Rather than viewing better animal welfare as a trickle-down effect of the rights of man, these texts circumnavigated the chain of being, bridging the gulf between the privileged classes and their social inferiors from the bottom up. In newspapers, poems and pamphlets, dogs modelled behaviour and resistance. If animals were capable not only of feeling pain, or thinking, but of moral and emotional refinement, then surely the same had to be said of their owners, no matter how indigent they might be. And if animals could petition Parliament, albeit by proxy, then surely their owners shared that right.
Notes
I am grateful to a long list of readers over the several incarnations of this piece, including Ruth Mather, Kristin Bourassa, Sarah Goldsmith, Merridee Bailey and the anonymous reviewer for Romantic Textualities.


2. The nickname appears to have been coined by the Morning Post (see e.g. 8 Apr 1797 and 22 Feb 1798).


6. Hilda Kean suggests that ‘those supporting humane treatment for animals adhered to no one political or ideological set of beliefs’, and that in the 1790s, attitudes to animals could allow politically disparate individuals to ‘make common cause’—see Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800 (London: Reaktion, 1998), pp. 24–25.


15. Ibid., p. 28.

16. ‘A rhetorical device by which an imaginary, absent, or dead person is represented as speaking or acting’, see *Oxford English Dictionary*.


18. Unsuccessful dog tax bills were introduced to the House of Commons in 1755, 1761 and 1776 (see Tague, ‘Debates on a Dog Tax’, p. 902). Newspapers frequently discussed the problem of rabies, and this was increasingly associated with the idea of a tax on dogs. See e.g. a letter to the *General Advertiser*, 26 Feb 1749; *North Briton*, 5 Mar 1763; *The Times*, 9 June 1785; a letter to the *London Chronicle*, 25–27 Jan 1791.

19. As many of these arguments are explained in detail in Fešta’s article, I cover them only briefly here.

20. The Poor Rate was a property tax levied in each parish, which was used for the relief of the poor. Throughout the century, the assessment, administration and efficacy of the Rate was widely criticised, and many reforms proposed. See Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700–1930*, Social History in Perspective (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002).


23. *Parliamentary Register*, 5 Apr 1796, p. 511; from 1794–97, the government passed new taxes and increased existing duties on ‘luxuries’ such as hair powder, servants, windows, rum and brandy. See John Jeffrey-Cook, ‘William Pitt and his Taxes’, *British Tax Review*, 4 (2010), 376–91.


25. During debates on the tax in parliament, Richard Brinsley Sheridan warned that hanging untaxed dogs would harden the minds of the lower classes and ‘stimulate them to acts of inhumanity’ against ‘animals of a superior nature’ (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 21 Apr 1796). See also the Member of Parliament John Courtenay’s remarks during the same debate on 25 Apr 1796—see William Woodfall, et al., *The Parliamentary Register*, 4 vols (London: Chapman, 1795–96), IV, 203.


30. For an overview of attitudes to Descartes, see Anita Guerrini, Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 34–45.


33. The first piece of legislation relating to animal welfare was the bill to Prevent the Cruel Treatment of Cattle (1822).


37. See Thomas, Man and the Natural World, pp. 42–44.

38. The printed caricatures mentioned here (Figures 2 and 3) are held in the British Museum Satires collection, and their political symbolism is explained in detail by M. Dorothy George’s Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, Volume VII (London: British Museum, 1942).

39. John Bull was a symbol of the no-nonsense English yeomanry who was alternately a patriotic symbol and a national laughing-stock.


44. Parliamentary Register, 25 Apr, p. 516.

45. Francis Coventry, The History of Pompey the Little; or, the Life and Adventures of a Lap-Dog, 2nd edn (London: Cooper, 1751), p. 248.

46. Francis Hutcheson, System of Moral Philosophy (1755); quoted in Perkins, Romanticism and Animal Rights, p. 42.

47. On the social and political uses of personification in the eighteenth century, see Heather Keenleyside, ‘Personification for the People: On James Thomson’s The Seasons’,
Political Animals


49. One of the ‘Swinish Multitude’, A Rod for Burkites (1790); James Parkinson, An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke from the Swinish Multitude (1793); and the periodicals Hog’s Wash (1794–95) and Pig’s Meat (1793–96).


51. On the pre-eminence of animal ‘meanings’ over animals themselves, see Fudge, ‘Two Ethics’, p. 106.


56. London Chronicle, 7–10 May 1791.

57. London Packet, 18 Apr 1796.


59. Burke, Reflections, p. 47.

60. London Chronicle, 7–10 May 1791.

61. Western County Magazine, 5 (1791), 156.

62. In the eighteenth century, the bulldog was a stalwart of English liberty and strength. In the example from the London Packet, an ‘English Patriotic Bull-Dog’ chairs the meeting.


64. Edward Nairne, The Dog Tax, a Poem (Canterbury: For the Author, 1797), pp. 1–6.


67. Among these are The Biography of a Spaniel (1796); Edward Augustus Kendall, Keeper’s Travel in Search of his Master (1798); and The Dog of Knowledge (1801): see Brown, pp. 131–33.

69. Lamentation of a Dog, pp. 9–10; Paine criticised taxes on ‘articles of consumption’, rather than upon land, arguing that the consequence was ‘a constant encrease [sic] in the number and wretchedness of the poor, and in the amount of the poor rates’: see Rights of Man, Part the Second (London: Jordan, 1792), p. 101.


72. Nairne, Dog Tax, p. 22.

73. Oracle & Public Advertiser, 15 Apr 1796.


75. Oracle & Public Advertiser, 15 Apr 1796.


78. ‘Substitute for the Dog Tax’, Comick Magazine, 1 (1797), 133. ‘Towser’ was a name frequently given to the large dogs used for bull and bear-baiting.


80. Kenyon-Jones, Kindred Brutes, p. 79.

Referring to this Article

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Date of acceptance: 18 September 2019.
The English Novel, 1800–1829 & 1830–1836
Update 7 (August 2009–July 2020)

Peter Garside, with Jacqueline Belanger, Anthony Mandal and Sharon Ragaz

This report, like its predecessors, relates primarily to the second volume of The English Novel, 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles (Oxford: OUP, 2000) [EN2], co-edited by Peter Garside and Rainer Schöwerling, with the assistance of Christopher Skelton-Foord and Karin Wünsche. It also refers to the online The English Novel, 1830–36: A Bibliographical Survey of Fiction Published in the British Isles [EN3] (http://www.romtext.org.uk/resources/english-novel-1830-36/), which effectively serves as a continuation of the printed Bibliography. The procedure followed derives generally from the activities of the research team who helped produce British Fiction 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception [DBF] (www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk), first made publicly available in 2004, though only materials found in Updates 1–4 are incorporated in that database. The present report was concluded some sixteen years after the original launch of DBF, and covers a period of over ten years since Update 6. It is hoped in the near future to provide a composite Update 8 incorporating material from all previous Updates, and marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the printed Bibliography.

The entries below are organised in a way that matches the order of material as supplied in the English Novel, 1770–1829. Although making reference to any relevant changes that may have occurred in previous Updates, the main ‘base’ it refers to is the printed Bibliography and not the preceding reports or the online database. Sections A and B concern authorship, the first of these proposing changes to the attributions as given in the printed Bibliography, and the second recording the discovery of information of interest that has nevertheless not led to substantively new attributions. Section C includes four additional novels, which appear to match the criteria for inclusion and should ideally have been entered into the main listings in the printed Bibliography. Section D lists three titles already in the Bibliography for which a surviving copy could not previously be located, while section E provides additional information about existing entries such as is usually found in the Notes field of entries. The final section (F) notes the discovery of two hitherto unrecorded subsequent issues. As previously, those owning copies of the printed Bibliography might wish to amend entries accordingly. An element of colour coding has been used to facilitate recognition.
of the nature of changes, with red denoting revisions and additions to existing entries in the Bibliography and additional titles discovered being picked out in blue. Reference numbers (e.g. 1801: 60) are the same as those in the English Novel, 1770–1829 and its 1830–36 online continuation; those given in bold refer to entries provided in the present Update. Abbreviations generally match those listed at the beginning of volume 2 of the English Novel.

This report was prepared by Peter Garside, with inputs from Anthony Mandal and Sharon Ragaz, as well as help from a number of outside informants, including Robert Betteridge, James Burmester, Laura K. O’Keefe, Edward Pope, James Raven, John Robertshaw, Yael Shapira and Susan Valladares. Further information is always welcome, and the main reporter can be contacted by email at peterside1@virginmedia.com.

A: Changed Author/Translator Attribution

1800: 41
[KELLY, Isabella].
EDWARDINA, A NOVEL. IN TWO VOLUMES. DEDICATED TO MRS. SOUTER JOHNSTON. BY CATHERINE HARRIS.
London: Printed for the Author, at the Minerva-Press, by William Lane, Leadenhall-Street, 1800.
I iv, 229p; II 263p. 12mo. 7s (Bent03); 6s 6d boards (CR).
Corvey; CME 3-628-47629-1; EM 1005: 14; ESTC n003448 (NA CtY-BR, MH-H, PU &c.).
Notes: ‘List of Subscribers’ (4 pp. unn.) at beginning of vol. 1, including 60 names. The Orlando database attributes this title to Isabella Kelly, on the basis that she told the Royal Literary Fund that she was the author. Kelly herself appears under the name Hedgeland in the RLF archives, Case 632, and ‘2 Vol: Edwardina 1810’ features in a list of her works appended to an appeal to the RLF in August 1832 (item 10). Alongside this entry is also added in the same hand ‘Written in the name of Miss Harris to benefit her in dis[tress]’. Notwithstanding the apparent misdating of 1810, the number of volumes matches, and mention of the work having been written in the name of Harris unmistakeably connects it with the present novel. The presence of a ‘Mrs. Kelly’ in the subscription list is also intriguing, and comparison with the similarly sized list in Kelly’s acknowledged Ruthingleenne (1801: 37) indicates support from similar social circles. Yael Shapira’s article, ‘Isabella Kelly and the Minerva Gothic Challenge’, in this same issue of Romantic Textualities (see pp. 168–184), points to the similarity between the engagement with the Gothic in this title and a number of other novels by Kelly written for the Minerva Press.
1800: 55
[MEEKE, Elizabeth].
ANECDOTES OF THE ALTAMONT FAMILY. A NOVEL. IN FOUR VOLUMES. BY THE AUTHOR OF THE SICILIAN, &C.
London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for William Lane, Leadenhall-Street, 1800. I 250p; II 266p; III 306p; IV 365p. 12mo. 16s (Bent03). Corvey; CME 3-628-47059-5; EM 221: 1; ESTC t089386 (BL BL; NA NjP).
Notes: Now attributed to Elizabeth Meeke, a step-sister of Frances Burney, following conclusive arguments offered by Simon Macdonald, in ‘Identifying Mrs Meeke: Another Burney Family Novelist’, Review of English Studies, n.s. 64:265 (2013), 367–85. This replaces the previous identification of Mary Meeke, the wife of a Staffordshire clergyman, whose death in 1816 preceded the conclusion of the prolific output of this novelist. [Similar alterations to Meeke’s forename are required, with a cross-reference to the updated Notes to 1800: 55, in the case of the following original novels: 1801: 50, 51; 1802: 42, 43; 1804: 46, 47, 48, 49; 1805: 53; 1806: 46; 1808: 77; 1809: 48; 1811: 53; 1812: 48; 1814: 40; 1815: 36; 1819: 48; 1823: 63. The same applies to translations by Meeke at 1803: 28; 1804: 34; 1807: 15, 22.]

1804: 18
GENLIS, [Stéphanie-Félicité, Comtesse] de; [?HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.); or ?LENNOX, Charles (trans.)].
THE DUCHESS OF LA VALLIERE. AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE. BY MADAME DE GENLIS. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH. IN TWO VOLUMES.
London: Printed for John Murray, No. 32, Fleet-Street, 1804. I xxxv, 264p; II 319p. 12mo. 8s boards (CR); 10s 6d sewed (ER); 10s 6d (ECB); 9s boards (ER). CR 3rd ser. 3: 239 (Oct 1804); ER 4: 498 (July 1804), 5: 252 (Oct 1804); WSW I: 239–40. CtY-BR Hfd29.351.V; ECB 225; xNSTC.
Notes: Trans. of La Duchesse de la Vallière (Paris, 1804). ECB and ER both state translated by Charles Lennox. Translator is also identified by Summers as Charles Lennox. This work however is listed by Agnes Crombie Hall as one of her translations in a list submitted to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46). This would seem to be supported by record of a payment to ‘Mrs Hall’ of £31.10s relating to this publication in a Divide Ledger Entry of 9 June 1804 in the Murray Archives (National Library of Scotland, MS 4272.4, p. 17). DBF 1804A018 wrongly transcribes this as Mr Hall. For fuller details on Agnes Crombie Hall, and her probable use of Rosalia St. Clair as a pseudonym for original novels, see updated Notes to 1819: 59. Preface is evidently Genlis’s own, and no indication is given there of translator.
1805: 42
LAFONTAINE, August [Heinrich Julius]; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].
DOLGORUCKI AND MENZIKOF. A RUSSIAN TALE. IN TWO VOLUMES. FROM THE GERMAN OF AUGUSTUS LA FONTAINE.
London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co. Leadenhall-Street, 1805.
I 314p; II 305p. 12mo. 8s sewed (ER); 8s (ECB).
ER 5: 501 (Jan 1805).
BL 12554.aa.38; ECB 326; NSTC L148.
Notes: Trans. of Fedor und Marie, oder Treue bis zum Tode (Berlin, 1802). ECB dates Nov 1804. Listed as one of her translations by Agnes Crombie Hall in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46). For further information on Mrs Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym for original fiction, see updated Notes to 1819: 59.

1805: 43
LAFONTAINE, August [Heinrich Julius]; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].
HERMANN AND EMILIA, A NOVEL. FROM THE GERMAN OF AUGUSTUS LA FONTAINE. IN FOUR VOLUMES.
London: Printed at the Minerva Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co. Leadenhall-Street, 1805.
I vii, 311p; II 344p; III 265p; IV 240p. 12mo.
NNS, Ham L1659 H3; xNSTC.
Notes: Trans. of Herrmann et Emilie, traduit de l’allemande (Paris, 1802), original German title Herrmann Lange (Berlin, 1799). Literary Journal, September 1805, p. 1002, gives price as 18s and comments: ‘This is said to be a translation from the German of Augustus La Fontaine, who, if everything be bis that is laid to his charge, must be allowed to be a most indefatigable novel writer.’ Listed as one of her translations by Agnes Crombie Hall in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46). For further information on Mrs Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym for original fiction, see updated Notes to 1819: 59. Copy (previously not located) from the Hammond Collection, New York Society Library.

1808: 79
[MONTOLIEU, Jeanne-Isabelle-Pauline Polier de Bottens, Baronne de; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].
CHRISTINA; OR, MEMOIRS OF A GERMAN PRINCESS. BY THE AUTHOR OF CAROLINE OF LICHTFIELD. IN TWO VOLUMES.
London: Printed for Henry Colburn, Conduit-Street, New Bond-Street, 1808.
I 208p; II 272p. 12mo. 10s (ECB); 9s (ER).
CR 3rd ser. 13: 443 (Apr 1808); ER 11: 504 (Jan 1808).
Corvey; CME 3-628-47282-2; ECB 114; NSTC M2956 (BI BL).
Notes: Trans. of *La Princesse de Wolfenbuttel* (Paris, 1807), itself based on Johann Heinrich Daniel Zschokke’s *Die Prinzessin von Wolfenbüttel* (Zurich, 1804). ECB dates Nov 1807. Included (as ‘Christina of Wolfenbutter’) in a list of her translations by Agnes Crombie Hall in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46). For further information on Mrs Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym for original fiction, see updated Notes to 1819: 59. Further edn: 2nd edn. 1809 (NSTC).

1809: 27

GENLIS, [Stéphanie-Félicité, Comtesse] de; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].


London: Printed for Henry Colburn, English and Foreign Library, Conduit-Street, Bond-Street, 1809.

I iv, 174p; II 183p; III 190p. 12mo. 13s 6d (ECB, ER, QR).

ER 15: 242 (Oct 1809); QR 3: 267 (Feb 1810).

BL 12511.c.20; ECB 225; NSTC B4973.

Notes: Trans. of *Alphonse, ou le fils naturel* (Paris, 1809). In a letter of 22 May 1810 to the Royal Literary Fund (Case 223, item 7) Agnes Crombie Hall refers to ‘the Alphonso of M. Genlis’ as one of two novels translated by her for Mr Colburn, and for which she receives ‘about 10/6 the English sheet’. The other translation mentioned is ‘the Convent [sic] of St Ursula’ (see 1810: 39 below). Also listed as one of her translations by Hall in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46). For further information on Mrs Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym for original fiction, see updated Notes to 1819: 59.

1810: 39

[DUCRAY-DUMINIL, François-Guillaume]; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].

THE NOVICE OF SAINT URSULA. BY THE AUTHOR OF “A TALE OF MYSTERY,” “JEANNETTE,” &C. IN FOUR VOLUMES.

London: Printed for Henry Colburn, English and Foreign Public Library, Conduit-Street, New Bond-Street, 1810.

I 224p; II 232p; III 264p; IV 205p. 12mo. 21s (ECB, ER, QR).


IU 845.D856.OnE; ECB 173; xNSTC.

Notes: French original not discovered. Drop-head title reads: ‘Elvina, or the Novice of Saint Ursula’ [misspelt Ursulu in vol. 1]. QR lists as ‘The Novice of St. Ursula, or Elvina’. In a letter of 22 May 1810 to the Royal Literary Fund (Case 223, item 7) Agnes Crombie Hall refers to ‘the Convent [sic] of St Ursula’ as one of two novels translated by her for Mr Colburn, and for which she receives ‘about 10/6 the English sheet’. The other translation mentioned is ‘the Alphonso of M. Genlis’
(see 1809: 27 above). For further information on Mrs Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym for original fiction, see updated Notes to 1819: 59.

1817: 11

[JERDAN, William and NUGENT, Michael].

SIX WEEKS AT LONG'S. BY A LATE RESIDENT. IN THREE VOLUMES. London: Printed for the Author; and sold by all Booksellers, 1817.

I xii, 235p; II 230p; III 226p. 12mo. 21s (ECB, QR).

ER 28: 268 (Mar 1817); QR 16: 557 (Jan 1817); WSW I: 143.

O 12.Ö.1841-1843; ECB 540; NSTC 2B9426.

Notes: Previously attributed to Eaton Stannard Barrett, but acknowledged otherwise in The Autobiography of William Jerdan, vol. 2 (London, 1852): ‘At this period the satirical novel called “Six Weeks at Long’s”, in the doing of which ... I had a hand with Michael Nugent ... was published’ (pp. 176–77). This new attribution is referred to by Gary Dyer in his British Satire and the Politics of Style (Cambridge, 1997), p. 189, n. 23, and mentioned by him again in ‘Parody and Satire in the Novel, 1770–1832’ in The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. J. A. Downie (Oxford, 2016), p. 577. Contains portraits of contemporary literary figures: Lord Leander (Byron) is first encountered reading Scott. ECB lists as ‘Six weeks at Long’s Hotel’, and gives Colburn as publisher; but not discovered in either form. Further edns: 2nd edn. 1817 (Corvey), CME 3-628-48750-1; 3rd edn. 1817 (NSTC).

1817: 23

DUCRAY-DUMENIL, [François-Guillaume]; [HALL, Agnes Crombie (trans.)].


I 263p; II 240p; III 291p; IV 280p. 12mo. 22s (ECB).

Corvey; CME 3-628-47492-2; ECB 61; NSTC 2D21007 (BI BL, C).

Notes: Trans. of La Fontaine Sainte-Catherine (Paris, 1813). Previously entered as a translation by Rosalia St. Clair [pseud.], on the grounds of an attribution in the title of The Son of O’Donnel (1819: 59). Identification of Mrs Hall as the probable user of the St. Clair pseudonym (see updated Notes to 1819: 59 below) makes it possible to disclose the real name of the translator. The omission of this title among a list of her translations in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46) is probably the result of an oversight. This is the last of seven translations of fiction now directly attributable to Hall.
1819: 47

[GILLIES, Robert Pierce],

OLD TAMPERY; A TALE OF REAL LIFE. IN TWO VOLUMES.  
I xiii, 325p; II 319p. 12mo. 12s (ECB, ER, QR).  
ER 31: 556 (Mar 1819); QR 21: 268 (Jan 1819).  
Corvey; CME 3-628-48253-4; ECB 422; NSTC 2M18581 (BI BL, C, E, O).

Notes: Dedication ‘to Flint Popham, Esq.’, signed ‘M. W. M. Brazen-Nose College’, Oxford, Mar 1819. Normally attributed to M. W. Maskell, matching the initials of the Dedication. This title, however, was claimed as Gillies’s at least twice during appeals to the Royal Literary Fund. ‘Old Tapestry. A Novel. 2 vols. 1816 [sic]’ features in a ‘List of Works’ sent as part of an appeal in April 1838 (Case 708, item 5); and again as part of a completed list of ‘Titles of Published Works’ on a form dated 2 January 1850, this time as ‘Old Tapestry a Novel—12mo. Edinb. 1819’ (Case 708, item 19). The Edinburgh manufacture and management of the work also accords with Gillies’s career. Further to the above sentences, which led to a qualified attribution to Gillies in Update 5, further information has come to light making his authorship more certain. A primary factor here is the presence of a copy in the Abbotsford Library inscribed in Gillies’s hand on the front endpaper of vol. 1: ‘Walter Scott Esqr. From the Author’. Following on from the adulation exhibited in Gillies’s preceding novel, The Confessions of Sir Henry Longueville (1814: 23), Scott is picked out in one conversation as the sole true genius living in Edinburgh (1.98–99). Elsewhere reference is made to the German writer Wieland (1.125), reflecting Gillies’s own interests; Blackwood Magazine (1.160), for which he was a major contributor; and the poetry writing of a would-be lawyer character living (like Scott) in Castle Street (2.259, 278). With this new evidence, it seems appropriate to remove the question mark from the author line as it appeared in Update 5. [A fuller account of Gillies’s literary career and publications, ‘Shadow and Substance: Restoring the Literary Output of Robert Pearse Gillies (1789–1858)’, by the present reporter, will be appearing in Romantic Textualities, 24 (Summer 2020).]

1819: 59

[HALL, Agnes Crombie],

THE SON OF O’DONNELL. A NOVEL. IN THREE VOLUMES. BY ROSALIA ST. CLAIR, AUTHOR OF THE BLIND BEGGAR, &C. &C.  
I 220p; II 215p; III 244p. 12mo. 16s 6d (ECB).  
Corvey; CME 3-628-48501-0; ECB 511; NSTC 2S2000 (BI BL).

Notes: The first of 12 original novels listed by Agnes Crombie Hall (d. 1846) in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund in 1843 (Case 555, item 46), all but the last of which appeared under the pseudonym of Rosalia St. Clair and all of which were
published by A. K. Newman. Agnes Hall was a native of Roxburghshire and wife (then widow) to the surgeon and medical writer Robert Hall (1763–1824), who likewise made a sequence of appeals to the Fund from 1808 up to his death. Some leeway perhaps ought to be allowed to the possibility that in making her appeal Hall had falsely appropriated the output of another author, but this would seem out of keeping with the general accuracy of her other claims. Mrs A. C. Hall is specifically associated with two novels written as by St. Clair in an obituary published in the Gentleman’s Magazine for January 1847: ‘Among many original novels and romances, all inculcating the purest morals, and the most patriotic and virtuous principles, we may mention one founded on the Massacre of Glencoe [see The Doomed One (1832: 72)]; and First and Last Years of Wedded Life [see 1827: 59], which exhibits an intimate acquaintance with political economy,—the state of Ireland—her evils, and their safest remedies. The scene was laid during George IV’s visit to Ireland’ (vol. 27, p. 98). The use of Rosalia St. Clair as a pseudonym is also noted in M. Clare Loughlin-Chow’s entry on Agnes C. Hall in ODNB, first published in 2004; and she is acknowledged as the underlying author in Anne Frey’s ‘The National Tale and the Pseudonymous Author: Mobile Identity in the “Rosalia St. Clair” Novels’, European Romantic Review, 25:2 (2014), 181–99. In addition to the above it is perhaps worth noting that an appeal after her death made to RLF on behalf of her daughter makes the claim that an element of co-authorship existed between the two: ‘For the last twenty years of her mother’s life Miss Hall aided her literary labours, and was joint authoress with her mother of several of the novels which appeared with her mother’s name, or rather as her mother’s work, for they were published under fictitious names’ (Tom Taylor to Octavian Blewitt, 1 June 1855: Case 223, item 25). [Similar alterations to the author attribution are required in the case of the following original novels: 1820: 61; 1822: 65; 1824: 81; 1827: 58, 59; 1828, 69; 1829: 69; 1830: 94; 1831: 61; 1832: 72. In each case, the following should be added at the start of the Notes field: ‘Listed by Agnes Crombie Hall as an original novel by her in an appeal to the Royal Literary Fund of 1843 (Case 555, item 46). For further details of Hall, and her probable use of the Rosalia St. Clair pseudonym, see updated Notes to 1819: 59.’]

1821: 25

[HALL, Agnes (Miss)].

THE MIDNIGHT WANDERER; OR A LEGEND OF THE HOUSES OF ALTENBERG AND LINDENDORF. A ROMANCE. IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY MARGARET CAMPBELL.


I 227p; II 224p; III 222p; IV 257p. 12mo. 22s (ECB, ER, QR).

ER 35: 266 (Mar 1821), 36: 280 (Oct 1821); QR 24: 571 (Jan 1821).

Corvey; CME 3-628-47209-1; ECB 95; NSTC 2C4895 (BL BL, C).

Notes: A free trans. of Alexina, ou la vieille tour du château de Holdheim (Paris 1813), by Mme. Louise Marguerite Brayer de Saint-Léon (Summers). NUC (but
not NSTC) catalogues *The Midnight Wanderer* under Brayer de Saint-Léon’s authorship. According to a letter to appeal to the Royal Literary Fund, work on this title derived singly from Agnes Hall, daughter of Agnes Crombie Hall: ‘Miss Hall herself is the authoress of a novel in 3 vols. called “the Midnight Wanderer”, published under the name of Margaret Campbell, by Newman’ (Tom Taylor to Octavian Blewitt, 1 June 1855: Case 223, item 25). For fuller details on Agnes Crombie Hall, and her probable use of Rosalia St. Clair as a pseudonym for original novels, see updated Notes to 1819: 59 above.

Further edn: According to a note in BN, this work was re-translated into French as a work by Ann Radcliffe under the title of *Rose d’Alternberg, ou le spectre dans les ruines* (Paris, 1830).

1834: 66
[HALL, Agnes Crombie].
THE PAUPER BOY; OR, THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE. A NOVEL. BY ROSALIA ST. CLAIR, AUTHOR OF BANKER’S DAUGHTERS OF BRISTOL; FIRST AND LAST YEARS OF WEDDED LIFE; ELEANOR OGILVIE; ULRICA OF SAXONY; SON OF O’DONNEL; SOLDIER BOY; SAILOR BOY; FASHIONABLES AND UNFASHIONABLES; CLAVERING TOWER; DOOMED ONE; &C. IN THREE VOLUMES.
I 287p; II 296p; III 314p. 12mo. 18s (ECB).
ECB 511 (June 1834).
Corvey; CME 3-628-48498-7; NSTC 2S1998 (BI BL, O); xOCLC.

Notes. Previously listed under ‘ST. CLAIR, Rosalia [pseud.]’. For identification of Agnes Crombie Hall as the author underlying this pseudonym, see updated Notes to 1819: 59 above. Unlike all the preceding novels using the pseudonym, this title is not listed by Hall in her appeal to the Royal Literary Fund of 1843 (Case 555, item 46). However the novels given in the present title as works by the same author, as well as the publisher, make its provenance clear. List of ‘New Publications’ (1 p. unn.) at end of vol. 1. Printer’s marks and colophons of J. Darling, Leadenhall Street.

B: New Information Relating to Authorship, but not Presently Leading to Substantive Attribution Changes

1808: 33 BYRON, [‘Medora Gordon’], THE ENGLISH-WOMAN. A NOVEL. The Orlando database tentatively lists Julia Maria Byron (1782–1858) as the possible author of the chain of novels by ‘Miss Byron’, noting also the apparent link of those published as by ‘A Modern Antique’. This claim is repeated in Quaritch Catalogue, 1442 (2020), itemizing a copy of the 3rd edn. of *Celia in Search of a Husband* (1809: 15 below). According to the commentary there, it ‘seems unlikely’ that a person named Medora Gordon Byron existed, but that Miss Byron may however be ‘Julia Maria Byron (later Heath) cousin of the poet and niece
of Robert Charles Dallas’. The NYPL Archives & Manuscripts website lists two autograph letters of Julia Maria Byron in the Pforzheimer Collection, the second to R. C. Dallas, signed 9 April 1812, discussing Cantos I–II of *Childe Harold*. In its entry it also describes her as first cousin to Lord Byron, and states that in May 1816 she married Revd Robert Heath, Fellow in St. John’s College, Oxford University. Further information about Julia Maria Byron, and more particularly evidence of any literary output, are however needed before making a positive attribution. With this secured, authorship adjustments would also be required for items 1809: 15; 1809: 16; 1810: 30; 1812: 26; 1814: 15; 1815: 18; and 1816: 21.

1808: 41 DOHERTY, [Ann], RONALDSHA; A ROMANCE. Further information on the author can be found in a note on her from the Romantic Circles edition of Southey’s letters, in relation to the following letter: https://romantic-circles.org/editions/southey_letters/Part_Six/HTML/letterEEd.26.3616.html. Under the heading of ‘Attersoll, Ann [also known as Ann Holmes, Ann Hunter, Ann Doherty, Ann de la Piguliere] (c. 1786–1831/1832)’ it reads: ‘Daughter of Thomas Holmes (1751–1827), a wealthy East India merchant, who changed his name to Hunter on inheriting the Gobions estate in Hertfordshire in 1802 from his wife’s grandfather. The same year, Ann Holmes eloped, aged sixteen, with Hugh Doherty, an impecunious thirty-year-old Irishman and officer in the Light Dragoons. Their marriage soon broke down, and Doherty published his account of events in *The Discovery* (1807). This revealed how, in an attempt to prevent the elopement, Ann had been confined by her parents in a ‘mad-house’, from which he had helped her escape. After her separation from her husband, Ann Doherty (as she was then known) published a number of novels, including *Ronaldsha* (1808), *The Castles of Wolfnorth and Mont Eagle* (1812) and *The Knight of the Glen* (1815). Her personal life remained complex. In 1811 Hugh Doherty successfully sued the architect Philip William Wyatt (d. 1835) for ‘criminal conversation’ with his wife. Her relationship with Wyatt did not last and by 1818 she was referring to herself as Ann Attersoll, probably because she was living with John Attersoll (c. 1784–1822), a wealthy merchant, banker and MP for Wootton Bassett 1812–1813. At this time she corresponded with Southey, sending him a copy of her *Peter the Cruel King of Castile and Leon: An Historical Play in Five Acts* (1818). By 1820 (possibly earlier) she was living in France and had dropped the name of Attersoll and adopted that of Madame St. Anne Holmes (much to Southey’s confusion). A French translation of *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, published in 1821 by Pierre Hippolyte Amillet de Sagrie (1785–1830), was dedicated to her. She remained in France and was later known by the surname de la Pigueliere.’ Authorship of *Peter the Cruel King of Castile and Leon, an Historical Play in Five Acts* [1818] is accordingly attributed to Mrs Attersoll in the University of Toronto Libraries’ online ‘Jackson Bibliography of Romantic Poetry’ (in progress): https://jacksonbibliography.library.utoronto.ca/search/details/4119. While this new information does not disqualify the use of the name Ann Doherty for the authorship of this item as well as that of *The
Castles of Wolfnorth and Mont Eagle (1812: 31), ‘by St. Ann’, and The Knights of the Glen (1815: 22), it does indicate that the latter two titles were written at a time when that name was probably not in use, as well as providing a link to at least one other work by the same author in a different genre.

1809: 15 [BYRON, ‘Medora Gordon’], CELIA IN SEARCH OF A HUSBAND. BY A MODERN ANTIQUE. Item 18 in Quaritch Catalogue, 1442 (2020), describing a same-year third edition of this work, tentatively proposes the true author as Julia Maria Byron. For further details, see entry for 1808: 33 above.

1810: 74 SCOTT, Honoria [pseud.?], A WINTER IN EDINBURGH; OR, THE RUSSIAN BROTHERS; A NOVEL. Further support for identification of the author as Susan Fraser can be found in a contemporary review of her Camilla de Florian, and Other Poems (1809), ‘By an Officer’s Wife’, in the Satirist, or, Monthly Meteor, 5 (Sept 1809), 300–3: ‘Mrs. Fraser, the author of the little volume now under our consideration … it appears is the lady of an officer in the 42d regiment; that gallant body of hardy Highlanders, who, wherever the British standard has been unfurled have covered themselves with glory. From an address to the reviewers, prefixed to the work, we learn that Capt. Fraser is now in an ill state of health, produced by wounds received in the service of his country’ (p. 301). Camilla de Florian itself contains a dedication to the Duchess of York signed Susan Fraser, as well as a list ‘Subscribers’ Names’. Its publisher, J. Dick of Chiswell Street, London, also features in the imprint of the present title as well those of 1810: 72, 1810: 73, and 1813: 54, the other three novels supposedly written by Honoria Scott. In Update 4 reference is made to ‘Honoria Scott (which may or may not be a pseudonym for Susan Fraser)’. In light of the above evidence, and the interest shown in both the Spanish Peninsular War and Scottish themes across both genres, it seem reasonable now to replace the author line of the four novels involved with ‘[?FRASER, Susan]’.

1823: 86 [WILSON, James], THE FIRE-EATER. There appear to be two possible candidates for the authorship as generally attributed to James Wilson. 1) James Wilson (1795–1856), the zoologist and younger brother of John Wilson (the ‘Christopher North’ of Blackwood’s Magazine). In Peter’s Letters to His Kinsfolk (1819), J. G. Lockhart describes the young Wilson ‘as no less a poet than a naturalist’, adding that ‘he has already published several little pieces of exquisite beauty, although he has not ventured to give his name along with them’ (1.262). However, the list of his publications that concludes James Hamilton’s Memoirs of the Life of James Wilson, Esq. of Woodville (London, 1859) lists only his scientific publications. Some encouragement might possibly be found in the dedication of this novel to John Wilson, though signalising one’s brother in this way could have risked looking odd by the standards of the day. 2) James Wilson (d. 1858), son of Major Wilson, Royal Artillery. This Wilson is on record as having been admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh in 1807, then qualify-
ing as an English Barrister, after which he served as Chief Justice of Mauritius 1835–57. The record in Stephen and Elizabeth Walker’s The Faculty of Advocates, 1800–1986 (Edinburgh, 1987) also adds that he was an ‘Author’ (p. 194). In this light it is interesting to note the NLS Catalogue’s description of the author of The Fire-Eater as ‘Wilson, James (Advocate)’. There is a letter presumably from the same Wilson to Lockhart of 16 October 1824, from Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Here Wilson repeats his willingness, already expressed to Lockhart before leaving Edinburgh, to fill up his vacation with literary work: ‘In this matter you could serve me much, by letter of introduction to the quarters which you think most likely to serve my views.—Since I have the misfortune to enjoy so little, if any, of the acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott, it would perhaps be idle in me to hope that he would interest himself in my favour’ (NLS, MS 935, f. 272). The second (and last) novel attributed to James Wilson is dedicated to Sir Walter Scott, 18 May 1824 (see also next entry). Both these Wilson novels have French settings, and involve military situations, the first concerning a plot against the Bourbons in the wake of Waterloo, the second being set at the time of Marlborough’s campaigns. This second James Wilson’s father being a Major in the Royal Artillery might best explain such choices of subject, and in view of all the evidence he seems the more likely candidate for the authorship.

1824: 98 [WILSON, James], TOURNAY; OR ALASTER OF KEMPENCAIRN. For discussion as to the identity of James Wilson as author see preceding entry. Interestingly this novel is attributed to R. P. Gillies in Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford (Edinburgh, 1838), along with Old Tapestry (see 1819: 47 above). Examination of the Abbotsford copy, however, reveals no handwritten inscription of the kind that might indicate Gillies, the dedication there to Scott being part of the printed text.

1826: 42 HALL, Mrs A. C., OBSTINACY. The author initials can now be confidently expanded to Agnes Crombie (for whom see updated Notes to 1819: 59, above). This work is listed separately from the original novels associated with the pseudonym Rosalia St. Clair. Clair in Hall’s 1843 appeal to the Royal Literary Fund (Case 555, no. 46), as ‘a tale for Youth’ published by Longmans. In a letter of 1828 to the Fund, Hall claimed that she had received no profit from the work: ‘Calling a short time ago at Messrs Longman & co. to obtain a settlement for a small work published nearly two years ago I had the mortification to hear from Mr. Orme … that no emolument whatever was likely to be derived from it’ (item 2). Previously the terms undertaken with Longmans had been described in a letter of 6 January 1826 written on her behalf by George Dyer: ‘I have also lying before me an agreement between Messrs Longman and Co Booksellers, and Mrs Hall dated 19 Sept 1825, and signed by both parties, relating to a Tale to be called Obstintacy, which waits (?) to be published by Longman and Co and the profits shared between them … Mrs Hall has also translated a good deal
from the French’ (Case 223, item 20). This is evidently the only standard work of fiction to have been published under Hall’s true name.

1826: 58 THE STANLEY TALES, ORIGINAL AND SELECT. CHIEFLY COLLECTED BY THE LATE AMBROSE MARTEN, OF STANLEY PRIORY, TEESDALE. Previously attributed to Ambrose Martin, though the name is more evidently part of the fiction. Such is noted in a contemporary review in the Literary Chronicle, which observes how the framework is ‘concocted in humble imitation of the Waverley fashion of ushering in a novel or a story’. The same review also notes that the ‘collection of tales is published in monthly parts’, each being ‘ornamented with a respectable engraving’ (21 October 1826, p. 661). One possible clue towards the true authorship is found in an obituary of Charles Robert Forrester in the Gentleman’s Magazine for May 1850, which in listing his earlier publications notes that ‘He also wrote for the “Stanley Tales”’ (vol. 187, p. 545). This presumably underlies the statement in the present ODNB entry for Forrester that ‘In 1826–7 he contributed to the Stanley Tales’. Forrester is the recognised author of the nearby novels Castle Baynard; or, the Days of John (1824: 35) and Sir Roland. A Romance of the Twelfth Century (1827: 30), both written under the pseudonym of Hal Willis. In view of the above information, and the possibility that multiple authorship was involved, it would seem safest for the moment to revise the author line to ‘MARTIN, Ambrose [pseud.]’, with additions to the Notes pointing to Forrester’s likely involvement. The Notes field should also now observe publication in monthly parts.

Appendix F: 1 [?ISDELL, Sarah or ?PILKINGTON, Mary], *FITZHERBERT. A NOVEL. Reference to this novel is possibly made, though under a slightly different name, in an appeal by the Irish author Sarah Isdell to the Royal Literary Fund in a letter of 20 February 1810, Case 246, item 1. In this she describes how having come to London, with two novels already to her name, she had unsuccessfully offered her ‘Novel of Faulkner’ to a number of publishers, ending with ‘Mr Crosby’ who had offered to publish it only if it could be deferred to the following year. It is it not improbable then that the novel might have subsequently passed further down chain of respectability to J. F. Hughes (an ex-associate of Crosby), with whom the publication of *Fitzherbert in 1810 is associated, nor that in such hands the original eponymous title might have been altered to one scandalously matching that of a rumoured secret wife of the Prince of Wales.

C: New Titles for Potential Inclusion

1803
HUNTER, [Rachel]. LETTERS OF MRS. PALMERSTONE TO HER DAUGHTER; INCULCATING MORALITY BY ENTERTAINING NARRATIVES. BY MRS. HUNTER OF NORWICH. IN THREE VOLUMES.
London: Printed by W. Robberds, Norwich; and sold by Longman and Rees, Paternoster-Row, 1803.
I, xiii, 232p; II, 222p; 256p. 8vo. 15s boards (CR).
CR 3rd ser. 3: 118 (Jan 1804); ER 3: 258 (Oct 1803).
p.c. [NSTC, ECB, CME pending].

Notes. Dedication signed Rachel Hunter, Norwich, June 1, 1803. ‘Advertisement’, similarly signed, refers to her preceding novels, *Letitia; or, the Castle without a Spectre* (1801: 35) and *The History of the Grubthorpe Family* (1802: 32), stating that her intention had been to reserve ‘the introduction of her own name’ to the present work. ‘A Dialogue Between the Author and Her Reader, Mr. Not-At-All’ (pp. [vii]–xiii). Fourteen tales in all, some of which such as ‘Hamet, An Allegorical Tale’ (vol. 3, pp. 42–110) are of a considerable length. Ostensibly offering moral instruction from a mother to her daughter, these ‘letters’ display a range of modes with a fairly complicated layering of narrative voices, placing the work at a level of ‘juvenile’ literature comparable to Mara Edgeworth’s *Moral Tales* (1801: 25) and Jane Taylor’s *Display* (1815: 50), both of which did gain inclusion to the printed Bibliography. This title also features as one of the works ‘by the author’ on the title-pages of all of her four remaining works of fiction (1804: 26, 1806: 36, 1807: 30, 1811: 46), so inclusion now might be said to complete her oeuvre as a novelist.

Further edn: 1810.

1811
[QUILLINAN, Edward].
NEW CANTERBURY TALES; OR THE GLORIES OF THE GARRISON.
BY OLIVER OUTLINE, MAJOR-GENERAL, &C &C.
London: Printed for Henry Colburn, English and Foreign Public Library, Conduit Street, Hanover Square, 1811.
185p. 12mo. 5s (ER, QR).
ER 19: 252 (Nov 1811); QR 6: 563 (Dec 1811).
p.c.; 3 copies in UK; 7 in US. [NSTC, ECB pending].

Notes. Dedication ‘to Job Makepeace, Esq.’. In form of comic dialogues sketching scenes of military life, with brief narrative links, reminiscent in some respects of Peacock’s comic satires. Author identification from Quaritch Catalogue, 1442 (2020), item 89, which points out that chapter 7 (‘The Ball Room Votaries’) is a prose version of Quillinan’s first book of verse *Ball Room Votaries; or Canterbury and its Vicinity* (1810). OCLC and COPAC both fail to go beyond the pseudonym. Quillinan’s first wife was a daughter of Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, after whose decease, much later in 1841, he became Wordsworth’s son-in-law by marrying Dora. ER and QR both list under ‘Novels’.

1819
[JOHNSON, Thomas Burgeland.]
*THE MYSTERY OF THE ABBEY; OR, THE WIDOW’S FIRE SIDE.*
Notes. Not seen, but appeared as item 228 in Jarndyce Catalogue, cxci (Winter 2010–11). Copy described as having tipped at rear of vol. a single folded contemporary MS sheet entitled Widow’s Fire Side and with double column list of [subscribers?] names. The fuller title is listed amongst ‘Works preparing for Publication’ in Blackwood’s Magazine, 5 (May 1819). The novel is attributed to Thomas Burgeland Johnson (c. 1778–1840; ODNB), better known as a sporting journalist, in Charles Henry Timperley’s Encyclopedia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote (London, 1842), p. 5, which also notes that he had worked formerly as a printer in Liverpool. According to Edith Birkhead the abbey in the book is ‘haunted’ by the proprietors of a distillery, and its horrible spectre turns out to be a harmless idiot. ‘Apart from these gibes, there is not a hint of the supernatural in the whole book. It is a picaresque novel, written by a sportsman. The title is merely a hoax’: The Tale of Terror (London, 1921), p. 140.

1826
[DARLEY, George.]
THE LABOURS OF IDLENESS; OR, SEVEN NIGHTS’ ENTERTAINMENTS. BY GUY PENSEVAL.
330p. 8vo. 9s 6d (ECB).
O 26.238; ECB 441; NSTC 2p10662 (BI C, E, BL, O; NA DLC, MH).
Notes. ‘Epistle Dedicatory to the Reader’, [3]–15, end-signed Guy Penesval, Brooklands, January 1st, 1826. ECB dates Mar 1826. Consists of seven quite varied tales, mostly dealing with love, and interspersed with a few poems. James Burmeßter Catalogue 78, item 91, describes a hybrid copy, incorporating this work and Robert Dyer’s The Story of a Wanderer (see 1826: 33), under the mantle title of The New Sketch Book, by G. Crayon, jun. (London: Printed for the Author, 1829). The catalogue description speculative that Darley, struggling for income, reissued the work in an attempt to revive sales, but felt that it would fare better with the circulating libraries if presented in a new dress and in 2 vols. NSTC 2p10663, however, describes as ‘an unauthorised issue’.

D: Titles Previously not Located for Which Holding Libraries Have Subsequently Been Discovered

1801: 41
KING, Sophia [afterwards FORTNUM].
THE VICTIM OF FRIENDSHIP; A GERMAN ROMANCE. BY SOPHIA KING, AUTHOR OF TRIFLES FROM HELICON; WALDORF, OR THE
DANGERS OF PHILOSOPHY; AND CORDELIA, A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.
London: Printed for R. Dutton, 10, Birchin-Lane, Cornhill, 1801.
I, vi, ii, 190p; Ii 216p. 12mo. 7s boards (CR).
CR 2nd ser. 32: 232 (June 1801); WSW I: 355.
NNS [New York Society Library], Ham F7438 V 4; xNSTC.
Notes: Sophia King was a sister of Charlotte Dacre, with whom she published *Trifles of Helicon* (1798), a collection of verse (see Jackson, p. 95).

For 1805: 43, see under Section A.

Appendix F.5
MATHEWS, Eliza Kirkham.
THE PHANTOM; OR, MYSTERIES OF THE CASTLE. A TALE OF OTHER TIMES. BY THE LATE MRS. MATHEWS, OF THE THEATRES ROYAL, YORK AND HULL.
London: Printed for Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy Paternośter-Row; and I. Wilson, Hull, 1825.
iv, 248p, ill. 12mo. 4s.
BL RB23.a.20672; xNSTC.
Notes. End colophon of William Rawson, Printer, Hull (also verso of title-page). Price (as noted in Update 2) from list of 'New Publications' by A. K. Newman at end of vol. 2 of Alexander Campbell, *Perkin Warbeck; or, the Court of James the Fourth of Scotland* (EN3, 1830: 36). Another copy reported by James Burmeśter (who also supplied the BL copy in 1992). According to Burmeśter this represents a 1-vol. reissue of a gothic novel first published in 2 vols. (but continuously paginated) in Hull in about 1798, utilizing the original Hull-printed sheets, suppressing the original prelims to the new vols., and adding a new title-page and preface. Eliza Kirkham Mathews (née Strong) was the first wife of Charles Mathews the famous comedian; they married in 1797 and shortly afterwards joined Tate Wilkinson’s York circuit, which included Hull. Evidently printed while she was there, the original Hull edition is unrecorded (at least under this name), and appears not to have survived. The BL catalogue attributes the work to Mathew’s second wife Anne Jackson Mathews; another copy at the Huntington Library also contains a misleading note regarding authorship. The BL copy includes a woodcut plate, absent in both the Huntington copy and that reported by Burmeśter, and which may have been inserted from another source. Discovery of this 1825 edition introduces a number of issues about the ultimate positioning of this title, as to whether it is placed speculatively in the late 1790s or as part of the 1825 listing as a reissue with an uncertain back history.
E: New Information Relating to Existing Title Entries


1803: 67(a) and (b) STÆL-HOLSTEIN, [Anne Louise Germaine] de, DELPHINE: A NOVEL. French source text in each case given as ‘Geneva, 1802’ [as published by Paschoud]. However, as is noted in John Robertshaw, Catalogue 137, item 121, there is evidence that a Paris edition with the date of XI, 1803, was actually the first. ‘On 5th May 1802 Madame de Staël agreed a contract with Maradan to publish “Delphine”—before the appearance of the Paschoud edition. It is not known exactly when the Paschoud edition went on sale, but it is clear it was an unauthorised edition. Schazmann 30 and the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition catalogue “Madame de Staël et l’Europe” (1966) p. 55 both state that the Maradan edition is the first. Lonchamp’s bibliography (1949) pp. 30–33 gives priority to the Geneva edition—he gives various reasons one of which is the lack of an errata in the Maradan edition, but he has failed to notice that at the end of vol. 6 there is a page of errata.’ In view of the above, it might seem more reasonable to describe the title as ‘Trans. of Delphine (Paris, 1803)—though, at least until fuller investigation, there must remain a possibility either or both of these editions were involved.

1804: 27 [IRELAND, Samuel William Henry], *BRUNO; OR, THE SEPULCHRAL SUMMONS. Serious doubt is cast on the existence of this work by Jeffrey Kahan, in ‘The Search for W. H. Ireland’s Bruno’, European Romantic Review, 24:1 (2013), 3–22. Kahan notes the description of such a title as ‘a novel of terror’ in Montague Summers’s The Gothic Quest (London, [1938]), p. 346, followed by similar mentions by Maurice Lévy (1968) and Devendra Varma (1972), as well as the putative synopsis by Frank (Item 200). However no evidence has been found as to an actual copy owned by these critics, or one to which they might have had access. As Kahan also observes, Bruno is absent as a work by Ireland on title-pages prior to the 2nd edition (1834) of his The Abbess; and the work is listed as a 3-vol. work only as late as the 1839 London Catalogue of books. He also points to the existence of a short story by Ireland titled ‘Legend of Bruno’, elements of which might possibly belong the period 1799–1805. Kahan offers a number of conjectural explanations, amongst which bibliographical deception is a common thread. As a consequence it would seem safer to remove this item from the main chronological listings, possibly placing it in Appendix F instead.

1807: 15 COTTIN, [Sophie Ristaud]; MEEKE, [Elizabeth] (trans.), ELIZABETH; OR, THE EXILES OF SIBERIA. A TALE, FOUND ON FACTS. Update 5 pointed to a possibly earlier translation than this Minerva Press publication, one issued by Oddy and Co., W. Oddy, and Appleyards at the beginning of 1807. An additional translator, either for this or one of several other contemporary editions, can now be claimed in Agnes Crombie Hall (for whom, see updated Notes to 1819: 59). According to the introduction (4 pp. unn.) to an 1874 Jedburgh edn. of her short tale The Autobiography of a Scottish Borderer, published under the name of Mrs Hall: ‘She translated several works from the Continental languages, one of them being the tale, once a favourite “The Exiles of Siberia”—from the French of Madame Cotin.’ Initially published in Fraser’s Magazine, vol. 8 (Oct 1833), pp. 396–412, Hall’s own original story had been first issued as a single item as A Tale; or Autobiography of a Scottish Borderer (Jedburgh: Printed for Walter Easton, 1834). Though the small print used here makes this definable as a shorter tale, the page length (40 pp.) would have probably precluded entry as a full item in EN3. Like the possible extra translation, it nevertheless adds usefully to the now enlarged corpus of fiction relating to Agnes Crombie Hall.

1808: 39 COTTIN, [Sophie Ristaud], CLARA; A NOVEL. Described in entry as ‘Trans. of Claire d’Albe (Paris, 1799)’. Imprint of personal copy of the French original under that title reads: ‘A Paris, Chez Maradan, Libraire, rue Pavée-André-des-Arcs, no 16 An VII.’ Author accreditation there reads ‘Par La C.***.’

1810: 67 PLUNKETT, [Elizabeth] [née GUNNING], DANGERS THROUGH LIFE: OR, THE VICTIM OF SEDUCTION. A NOVEL. A footnote to the ‘Literary Retropection’ introducing Sarah Green’s Romance Readers and Romance Writers (1810: 46) reads: ‘Vide “DANGERS THROUGH LIFE,” published by Mrs. Plunkett, as original. This novel is a translation of “LES MALHEURS DE L’INCONSTANCe.”’ This refers to Claude-Joseph Dorat’s Les Malheurs de l’inconstance (Amsterdam and Paris, 1772), first translated into English by Elizabeth Griffith as The Fatal Effects of Inconstancy (see EN1, 1774: 25). Compare the suspicion of the Critical Review: ‘In looking over several of these letters, we are struck with almost a conviction that they are a translation, or at least a very strict imitation from the French’ (3rd ser. 19 (Apr 1810): 377–83 (p. 379)). Comparison between the plots of Plunkett’s work and the above French original suggest a number of parallels, though the characters’ names have become English, and there are apparently some embellishments in plotting. Had it constituted only a subsequent translation, Dangers through
Life would not have merited inclusion as an individual entry. As things stand, pending contrary information, it is perhaps more appropriately considered as a looser reworking or ‘imitation’.

1811: 47 [JOHNSTONE, Andrew Gregory], RHYDISEL. THE DEVIL IN OXFORD. Andrew here replaces the mistaken Anthony in the original entry, the corrected full name accurately reflecting that in the Bodleian Library Catalogue, which itself may result from special knowledge. Restoration of the correct name now makes it possible to move further to a possible identification of the author. Andrew Gregory Johnston[e], who died 1850 in his 65th year, is listed as the owner of a slave plantation in Anchovy Valley, Portland, Jamaica (see ‘Legacies of British Slave-ownership’: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146630665). According to this record, he was in Britain until c. 1830, and had bought Fritton Hall [in Suffolk] in 1819. He is also listed as owning slaves in Portland, Jamaica, in the 1817 Jamaica almanac; and ownership may well have come earlier in the form of an inheritance. In this light it is interesting to note two incidents in the novel touching on slavery. In the first, a Henry lord Olbion talks fulsomely about emancipating all slaves, while ‘a young gentleman just arrived from West Indies’ accepts the basic principle but argues for a more gradual approach in view of the economic ramifications: ‘I know with what ease a speculator traverses the continent of Africa in imagination, and disposes the government of his country to communicate liberty and equality to all the inhabitants; but let it be remembered that he is no loser by his philanthropy: whereas, every gentleman in the West Indies, that liberates a slave … resigns a considerable part of his estate, and also presents the enfranchised man with an annuity for life’ (1.27–28). A sense that the above represents an authorised viewpoint is reinforced when Olbion in the aftermath, on a hurry to make chapel, abuses a beggar woman and knocks out one of the eyes of her child. The subject comes into view later in the novel (and with a hint of personal knowledge) through the story of a man in the West Indies who usurps property there, depriving his nephews of their rights, and, having returned to England and married, later considers endowing a College. But only in the process to be bitten by a mad dog, leading to further reduction of his rear through surgery: ‘cutting, carving, burning, and cauterizing, till he had scarce any thing left to sit or lie on’ (2.197–98). Allowing two years in advance of the actual publication of the novel in July 1811, the ‘West Indian’ Johnstone would have been about 23 at the time of writing. This identification gains further support from the British Library copy which reportedly bears the following attribution on the verso of its title-page: This novel was written by my dear [ingenious?] friend Andrew Gregory Johnstone when a very young man. W. A. D. H.’ In view of this, it would seem reasonable now to remove the question mark before the author name.

1820: 37 HUI SH, Robert, FATHERLESS ROSA; OR, THE DANGERS OF THE FEMALE LIFE. Bernard Quaritch Catalogue, 1433 (Autumn 2018), item
29, describes copy with a note on the front pastedown recording the purchase of the 22 parts for 11s and binding 2s.

**1821:** 26 [CAREY, David], A LEGEND OF ARGYLE; OR ’TIS A HUNDRED YEARS SINCE. Add at beginning of *Notes* field: “Advertisement” (2 pp. unn.) concerning anonymity and authenticity.

**1824:** 9 [ANON], JAMES FORBES; A TALE, FOUNDED ON FACTS. Quaritch Catalogue, 1442 (2020), item 51, describes the dedicatee, ‘Mrs Mackinnon, of Portwood House, in the County of Southampton, and of Hyde Park Place, London’ as a friend of Anna-Maria and Jane Porter. (Transcription of Dedication details above from personal copy.)

**1824:** 74 [?PEERS, John], THE CONFESSIONS OF A GAMESTER. James Burmeister, Catalogue 34, item 65, describes a copy with a 2-page autograph letter signed by Peers, and so confirming the NSTC/Bodleian attribution. ‘Dated from Lambeth, 26 April, 1828, and addressed to “My dear Sir”, the letter refers to a pending decision of the Court of Aldermen on the conduct of the Chaplain of the prison in Whitecross Street, central London, and begs “acceptance of a little work which I published some time since—the subject of it died in the neighbourhood of Thorn Arch”.’ The Burmeister entry goes on to conclude, from this and its contents, that the book ‘appears to be a genuine autobiography rather than a fictional narrative’. The absence of any materials in the supplementary fields for this title in DBF also argues against its belonging to the mainstream fiction scene. As a result, there appears to be a case for removing it from the main chronological entries, in addition to removing the question mark.

**1825:** 50 [LAUDER, Sir Thomas Dick], LOCHANDHU A TALE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. John Robertshaw, Catalogue 122 (2011), item 109, describes 1828 French trans. published by Charles Gosselin, claiming in its titles to be ‘Traduction de l’anglais sur la seconde édition, par A.-J.-B. Defauconpret’. No in-period British 2nd edn. has been discovered, so this is possibly part of a ploy designed to give a sense of runaway popularity in Britain. The ascription of the work at the same time to ‘Sir Edward Maccauley’ also suggests a lack of scrupulosity, not unfitting for Gosselin, who also mass-produced translations of the Waverley novels directly under Scott’s name, accompanied by a plethora of engraved illustrations and maps.

**1825:** 87 [WESTMACOTT, Charles Molloy], FITZALLEYNE OF BERKELEY. A ROMANCE OF THE PRESENT TIMES. Jarndyce Catalogue, clxxvii (Spring 2010), item 668, describes a copy with two later newspaper cuttings and a contemporary MS note reading: ‘This relates to the family scandal of the notorious Earl Fitzhardinge, his brothers the Berkeleys, and the whole disreputable lot’.
1826: 56 [MÄMPEL, Johann C.], THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG RIFLEMAN, IN THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH ARMIES, DURING THE WAR IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, FROM 1806 TO 1816. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF. John Robertshaw, Catalogue 144 (2018), item 110, which led to purchase of this copy, states that ‘The preface is by Goethe’. On this basis the Notes field should include after ‘Trans.’ details the following sentence: ‘Preface by the Editor’ supposedly by Goethe. The title should also begin with ‘THE’, and the correct pagination for preliminaries is ‘vi’ not ‘iv’.

1827: 48 [LAUDER, Sir Thomas Dick], THE WOLFE OF BADENOCH; A HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY. John Robertshaw, Catalogue 122 (2011), item 108, describes 1828 French trans. (Le Loup de Badenoch) published by Charles Gosselin, claiming in its title to be ‘Traduit de l’anglais sur la troisième-édition, par A.-J.-B. Defauconpret’, though only a 2nd in-period British edn. has been discovered (see also 1825: 50 above). It also wrongly gives the author as ‘Sir Edward Maccauley’. In the original Bibliography entry the pagination of vol. 1 should read ‘I, vii, 299’, and it is worth adding to the Notes field: ‘Preliminary Notice’ stating that ‘The Wolfe of Badenoch was advertised in June 1825, at which time it was ready for press’ [v].

1828: 57 MANZONI, Alessandro; [SWAN, Charles (trans.)], THE BETROTHED LOVERS; A MILANESE TALE OF THE XVIIth. CENTURY. Item 65 in Quaritch Catalogue, 1442 (2020) describes copy with same Italian imprint, and adds that the translator Charles Swan had it printed in Pisa while staying there, the title being subsequently issued by Rivington in June 1828. The Quaritch copy also reportedly contains a terminal advertisement leaf in vol. 1 for works published by C. & J. Rivington. This tends to corroborate the account for this title in Update 6 regarding its having been fully distributed in Britain.

1830: 40 [COOPER, James Fenimore], THE WATER WITCH; OR, THE SKIMMER OF THE SEAS. A TALE. James Burmešter draws attention to the fact that the proper first edition of this novel, preceding both the London and Philadelphia editions, was the English-language version printed in Dresden, 1830 (published before 18 September). This however does not override the present entry, owing to the policy of prioritizing first British editions in the Bibliography. There was also a Berlin 1830 edn. (as Die Wassernixe), which accounts for the present ‘German trans., 1830’ component. The same situation apparently applied to the English edition of Cooper’s The Borderers (1829: 27), printed in Florence, likewise reflecting Cooper’s practice of having his manuscripts set by local printers while abroad. The text of the Dresden edition of the Water Witch, together with a commentary, can be viewed at http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/texts/dresden.html.
F: Further Editions not Previously Noted

1814: 59 WARD, Catherine G[eorge], THE SON AND THE NEPHEW; OR, MORE SECRETS THAN ONE. Another edn. published by T. Mason, 1817. This is evidently a reissue from old sheets of the original 3-vol. novel published by Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, with similar pagination and bearing the same colophon of ‘Molineux, 4, Bolt Court, Fleet Street’ (see https://archive.org/search.php?query=the%20son%20and%20the%20nephew). Unlike the original edn. the replacement title-page however does not refer to the Dedication to Mrs Boehme, though the Dedication itself does follow.

1827: 68 [?SURREY, Thomas Skinner], RICHMOND; OR, SCENES IN THE LIFE OF A BOW STREET OFFICER. James Burmeister Catalogue 50, item 122, records a Colburn 1834 edition, consisting of the original 1827 sheets with new title-pages. Not found in COPAC or OCLC.

Addendum to Update 4, Addendum 1, Charles Sedley

In spite of providing considerable support in Update 4 for a John Battersby Elrington being the person behind the pseudonym of Charles Sedley (see 1807: 57, etc.), Jacqueline Belanger and Peter Garside conclude: ‘This might all seem conclusive evidence, were it not for the fact that it has not so far been possible to verify the existence of a real John Battersby Elrington.’ Edward Pope however has written to say that in his archival research he has found evidence of the real existence of John Battersby Elrington. A person of that name was in debtor’s prison (Fleet and Kings Bench) from 23 January to 22 August 1811, as well as being in a list of debtors in Newgate Prison June 1813. Also there are two baptisms of children of a John Battersby Elrington in Jamaica in 1792 and 1793, mother’s name Isabella Parker. In view of this new information, the case for a qualified attribution of the Sedley titles to Elrington, along possibly with Tell-Tale Sophas (1814: 12) by ‘John Battersby’, becomes more compelling.

Referring to this Article


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Date of acceptance: 28 April 2020.

A number of profound intellectual contexts—Burkean politics, Lockean empiricism, Warthonian historicism and Hartleyan psychology, among them—have long proven indispensable to the study of Wordsworth’s poetry. Many of these contexts seem to be incompatible with the others, but each circles back to the same set of questions. As Mark J. Bruhn puts it in his new study, “[w]here do the foundations of Wordsworth’s dualism lie? Who prompted his political turns from radical republicanism and Godwinian theory? What are the sources of his “One Life” transcendentalism?” (p. 11) Such questions are crucial for understanding Wordsworth’s development, from his earliest efforts in 1785 to the ambitious philosophical poetry that he first drafted in 1794. But, as Bruhn attests, critics tend to oversimplify matters by fixating on singular influences on Wordsworth or in attempting to explain away the poet’s seemingly contradictory, or at least shifting, philosophical positions. More specifically, *Wordsworth before Coleridge* reconsiders the early history of Wordsworth’s intellectual growth by challenging the critical consensus that the poet’s most significant philosophical ideas only arose when he encountered Coleridge.

At the risk of teleology, perhaps, the book is arranged chronologically: the first and second chapters trace Wordsworth’s schooling and university education, up to 1794. Chapters 3 and 4 ostensibly focus on 1794 alone, at turns addressing the break from Godwinian theory and the prominence of Dugald Stewart’s poetics of interiority at that time. The fifth and final chapter, a short conclusion aside, extends the discussion to 1797. Really, the book is a revisionist study that is at its best when Bruhn fills in gaps, albeit speculatively, or overturns critical assumptions. He charts in unprecedented detail the process by which the aspiring writer came to appreciate the importance of passion within the mind–matter dualism that he was schooled in at Hawkshead and at Cambridge, for one thing. Wordsworth, moreover, was greatly affected by his reading of Stewart’s recently published *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792) in 1793/94. This reading helped Wordsworth to reject the blunt rationality of Godwin’s political philosophy and Pope’s philosophical poetics. Between 1795 and 1797 Wordsworth was exposed to Cambridge Platonism and English Kantianism, which mingled with his ongoing investment in Stewart’s teachings. Out of this body of work came Wordsworth’s sentimental notion of the ‘feeling intellect’, as seen most emphatically in the early drafts of *The Pedlar*
and the 1798 Prelude, to limit ourselves to his early career (that is, his pursuits between the ages of fifteen and twenty-eight).

Understood as a revisionist study, the book’s chief target is Ernest de Selincourt who, nearly a century ago, argued that a refracted, Coleridgean philosophy informed by Hartley’s empirical theory of association shaped Wordsworth’s thinking, virtually to the exclusion of other systems. Kenneth R. Johnston followed his lead in Wordsworth and The Recluse (1984): ‘Wordsworth’s imagination, more absorbent than egotistical in 1797–98, soaked up the flood of ideas, interests, projects, and speculations springing from the fountainhead of Coleridge’s active mind and voracious reading’; ‘their literary relationship in 1797–98 was a wedding of the Coleridgean ideal and the Wordsworthian real’, he adds, whereby ‘Wordsworth was to realize what Coleridge thought’ (quoted on pp. 2–3). Suffice it to say, many critics tend to latch onto Coleridge’s philosophical influence on the elder poet because in that period, 1797 to 1804 in most accounts, the documentation is fairly detailed. In truth, relatively little can be said with confidence about Wordsworth’s access to specific books or tracts. Duncan Wu, the most pertinent expert on the poet’s reading, dates Wordsworth’s first exposure to Descartes to Coleridge’s study of the philosopher in early 1801, and finds no evidence for Wordsworth’s reading of Stewart at all. Bruhn instead takes a contextual approach. The absence of indisputable evidence for direct influence notwithstanding, Wordsworth before Coleridge documents how widely the ideas of Stewart, along with those of Cudworth and Nitsch, circulated in 1790s Britain. Wordsworth, quite simply, would have been exposed to their ideas in some fora or format, however derivative.

On occasion, Bruhn downplays his good work here, not least of all when second-guessing any claims that his study is conjectural at best. He also claims the book supplements rather than supplants alternative framings of Wordsworth’s formative influences. One such study he might have in mind could be James Chandler’s Wordsworth’s Second Nature (1984), which famously made the case for the shaping role played by Burke’s political writing in such works as The Ruined Cottage and The Old Cumberland Beggar. But Bruhn quietly complicates Chandler’s claim that Wordsworth entirely fell in with Burkean conservatism in the 1790s. While Wordsworth recoiled from revolutionary violence, Bruhn avers, he clearly distanced himself from aristocratic governance.

Perhaps the most salient lesson offered in this new study is the importance of selecting the right manuscript—or, more accurately, signalling clearly to the reader what choice you have made. Otherwise, we risk affirming one iteration of Wordsworth’s proclaimed poetics over others. Within the year or so that separates two distinct manuscript versions of The Ruined Cottage, MS B (from early 1798) and MS D (1799), for example, Wordsworth had lurched closer to a representation of nature more akin to what Coleridge called ‘the numberless goings-on of life’. Reading that manuscript at the exclusion of the prior one would sidestep the non-biological sentiments glimpsed, however temporarily, in Wordsworth’s ‘one life’: ‘Most audible, then, when, the fleshly ear | Oer come
by grosser prelude of that strain | Forgot its functions, and slept undisturbed (Ruined Cottage). (Chandler favours MS B, and David Fairer more recently, in Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790–1798 [2009], MS D.) In a quiet but clear key, then, Wordsworth before Coleridge offers a sustained challenge to a number of assumptions held about Wordsworth’s intellectual history, not least of all the outsized impact of Coleridge’s philosophical thinking.

Bruhn’s study is compact and dense—but it is eminently readable throughout. (The endnotes bear much of the weight of the supporting evidence, meaning the chapters themselves can tell a tightly woven story about the poet’s development.) The narrative is as compelling as it is commonsensical: for more than a decade before meeting Coleridge, Wordsworth profited from a deep engagement with a range of distinct philosophical systems. Far from explaining away the poet’s leap from Hartley to Kant, and the like, we ought to expand the scope of Wordsworth’s philosophical poetics beyond, but without excluding, Coleridge. 

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.83>

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Date of acceptance: 3 December 2018.


It is not often that a piece of scholarship is able to achieve both delightful complexity and remarkable clarity, but Siobhan Carroll’s An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750–1850 helps set that standard.

The Introduction begins with a comparison of earlier cartographic practices to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century map-making; specifically, Carroll describes a shift from geographers loosely using rumours and assumptions to fill in uncharted areas to Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville’s cartographic approach of leaving the ‘uncharted’ areas of Africa blank (p. 1). According to Carroll, this ‘blank’ on the map not only served as an imperial elimination of the settlements and cultures of those regions, but also marked them as colonisable in their emptiness. However, in that emptiness lay another level of significance for explorers: the empty spaces were not just ‘free’ for conquest, but the blankness also signified danger of the unknown (p. 5). From this illustration, Carroll’s conception of the ‘atopia’ emerges. Carroll defines atopias as natural regions which, despite seemingly being within the reach of scientific or
colonial exploration, are intangible, inhospitable or inaccessible, and therefore reject incorporation into larger empires or settlements (p. 13). In *An Empire of Air and Water*, Carroll focuses on four atopic spaces: the poles, the ocean, the atmosphere and the subterranean. While the technologies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries opened further access into these regions, they were still primarily inhospitable, and travelling to, through and from these regions risked a high rate of mortality. Following the Introduction, *An Empire of Air and Water* is divided into four chapters, each devoted to one of Carroll’s atopias. Within each chapter, Carroll performs intensive analysis of primary texts, and while she does include some canonical works, she also includes archival artefacts and non-canonical titles to illustrate the wide application of her theory.

Carroll’s first chapter on ‘Polar Speculations’ discusses two important dimensions of polar space: first, while the poles appear ideal for imperialism (being unclaimed by any other nation), they cannot be permanently settled owing to nature’s erasure of colonial identifiers and the high mortality of explorers. Carroll illustrates the connection between explorations and literature, and how both genres informed not only each other, but also the cultural perception of the poles. Literature written before major polar explorations reinforced fantasies about the poles being gateways into other worlds or monstrous planes. At the same time, literature written during or after exploratory reports used descriptions of the icy other world to either push forward imperial claims or create boundaries and warnings against bringing the poles into the fold. Some of the major works addressed include Paltock’s *Peter Wilkins*, Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Dickens’s *The Frozen Deep*.

Early in ‘Polar Speculations’, Carroll connects to her second chapter, ‘A Share of the Sea’. While the poles rest amid the ocean, neither atopia encourages settlement, and both seem in opposition to land which is both ‘claimable’ and physically bound (p. 20). Carroll describes the sea as a space of immense importance to the expansion of the British Empire. While the sea itself remained ‘unclaimable’, the ships on its waters were inexplicably connected to sovereignty (p. 78). Additionally, Carroll charts the language separation between maritime labourers and land-bound consumers. In this chapter, Carroll addresses a number of primary sources, including Falconer’s *The Shipwreck*, a children’s board game named *The Bulwark of Britannia*, Marryat’s *The Naval Officer* and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

In Chapter 3, ‘The Regions of the Air’, Carroll illustrates the stark difference in the path of conquest over the atmosphere compared with the oceanic and subterranean atopias. While the atmosphere held promises of imperial navigation without geographic boundaries and increased trade, the English were hesitant to invest in air travel—a space of mobility already claimed by French balloons. Therefore, literature from the time period presented the atmosphere as a space of vulnerability in the British Empire. Unlike the poles, ocean or subterranean regions, the air embodied ‘blankness’, and rejected most efforts at navigation and all efforts at permanent settlement (p. 120). The atmospheric atopia, then,
predominantly developed in the imaginations of literature, including Inchbald’s *The Mogul Tale*, Chorley’s *The Ballad of the Aeronaut*, Shelley’s *The Last Man* and Wells’s *War of the Worlds*.

The subterranean undergrounds in Chapter 4 are described as man-made ruins, wherein secret histories are uncovered, where Celtic faeries reside, where pockets of resistance disappear, or where cities of the undead lay fallen. Carroll, working from the etymology of ‘grotesque’ draws connections to the gothic and otherness, and shows how the subterranean also served as sanctuary outside the sovereign gaze (p. 149). Through her analysis of such texts as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Sargent’s *The Mine*, Beckford’s *Vathek*, Lee’s *The Recess*, Byron’s *The Island* and Wells’s *The Time Machine*, Carroll addresses other topics including the erasure of labour, women explorers and the subterranean as an attribute of urban spaces.

*An Empire of Air and Water*’s conclusion, ‘“Dislocated Progress”: Atopias in Urban Space’, draws all four atopic spaces into London’s industrialised labyrinth. While the Romantics are characterised by a movement away from the urban and towards ‘the local’ (pp. 13 and 186), Carroll argues that Romantic literature also illustrates a similar move towards these half-imagined spaces, which remain untainted by colonial expansion. In Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, DeQuincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and Reynolds’s *Mysteries*, London adopts elements of polar, oceanic, atmospheric and subterranean atopias. In these texts, Romantic authors create imagined maps of London, but these cartographic attempts only result in descriptions of London as an unmappable atopia, with London residents stranded as isolated, atopic explorers.

One can find little fault in this ambitious, interdisciplinary work, and Carroll’s approach to an accessible, well-organised Introduction followed by chapters of in-depth primary research and analysis should be a model for academic writing. Easily, *An Empire of Air and Water* is a text for scholars of Romantic and Victorian literature, environmental humanities, theorists of space and place (pp. 10 and 208), British colonialism, othering and travel writing, along with possible expansions into utopian studies, anthropology, urban and rural studies, gender studies and interests in material culture.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.84>

In the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth emphatically addresses Samuel Taylor Coleridge as ‘Friend!’ several times (Carlson, p. 226). As Julia S. Carlson notes in *Romantic Marks and Measures: Wordsworth’s Poetry in Fields of Print*, many contemporary readers of the poem do not encounter the exclamation marks in the 1805 version because the Norton Critical Edition, which remains one of the standard editions of the poem, silently removes them from the text. The Norton thus presents a more equanimous Wordsworth, one offering a mature and measured depiction of the growth of his philosophic mind. Yet, erasing the exclamation mark elides the extent to which Wordsworth’s literary endeavour was bound up in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates concerning the presentation and purpose of poetry. In her compelling revisionist analysis of Wordsworth work, Carlson elucidates the ways in which the exclamation marks enable Wordsworth to collapse the physical space between himself and Coleridge, illustrate Wordsworth’s evolving attitudes concerning punctuation and elocution, and explain how Wordsworth’s invocation was part of a larger project of constructing British identity using blank verse—a form of poetry once mocked by Wordsworth’s contemporaries as unpoetic. Carlson’s careful readings of *The Prelude* and many of Wordsworth’s other poems properly situate—in some instances, for the first time—Wordsworth as a poet shaped by, and shaping, a field witnessing radical aesthetic and paradigm shifts.

The virtue of Carlson’s book lies primarily in its New Historicist recovery of fields of print that informed—and were informed by—Wordsworth’s poetic endeavours. As Carlson contends, ‘Wordsworth’s poems were written and read amidst new practices of measuring and marking, and of rendering measures and marks in print, that reconfigured topographic and typographic fields and brought verse into heightened visibility and meter into national importance’ (pp. 8–9). Tracking these shifts reveals a host of un(der)studied figures whose work helped shape the poet Wordsworth, including travel guidebook innovator Peter Crosthwaite, Ordnance Surveyor Colonel William Mudge and elocutionists Thomas Sheridan and John Walker—to name a few. These figures reveal how ideological revolutions in seemingly disparate fields such as travel guides, cartography and elocution found their way into Wordsworth’s work. Many of Wordsworth’s seemingly radical claims about the ‘real language of men’ in his famous ‘Preface’, for example, were products of his careful reading of debates concerning elocution and its connection to British identity (p. 182). The picture of Wordsworth that emerges from Carlson’s work is one of a poet deeply concerned with—even profoundly anxious about—the efficacy of language and its ability to convey space, place and (national) identity.

*Romantic Marks and Measures* accentuates its expansive New Historicist analyses of the period with brilliant close readings of Wordsworth’s poetry.
that rival those of the redoubtable Christopher Ricks and Susan Wolfson. Carlson’s discussion of Wordsworth’s ‘Friend!’ is one example of her ability to tease out the historical forces informing Wordsworth’s poetry. Her reading of the Simplon Pass episode is another. Carlson contends that Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones lost their way in Simplon in part because cartographers had yet to establish a unified theory for rendering three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional spaces. The maps of Simplon Pass ‘reveal the lack, when Wordsworth was traveling and writing, of any one agreed code for the cartographic representation of space’ (p. 66). The failure at Simplon Pass caused Wordsworth to shift the language he used to describe his poetic development, turning ‘away from the kind of self that can be readily imaged on a map toward the kind of self of which geometry, with its claim to represent the infinite, is a better emblem’ (p. 70). In other words, Wordsworth’s problematic encounter with a real map caused him to rethink how he mapped himself and his growth in The Prelude and elsewhere. The book offers similarly impressive close readings of ‘The Brothers’, ‘Michael. A Pastoral Poem’ and The Excursion. Carlson enriches our understanding of fields of print that influenced Wordsworth without losing sight of the poet’s individual artistic achievements.

Romantic Marks and Measures is a well-written book—but it is also quite diffuse. The book itself feels like two distinct books (Chapters 1–3 and 4–7) forcibly bound together by an awkward ‘Interchapter’ that does little to meaningfully unite the two sections. At times, the book also delves more deeply than necessary into the fields of print it sees informing Wordsworth’s work: Carlson’s seeming obsession with the finer points on hachures, for instance, would have benefitted from editing for clarity. The book is likely too dense and convoluted for many undergraduate students and non-academics interested in Wordsworth’s work or Romanticism more generally. Most surprising, however, is the final chapter, which relegates Wordsworth to the margins in favour of John Thelwall, whom the book lauds for democratising the language of blank verse in a way that the more ‘conservative’ Wordsworth never did (p. 261). The book, premised on the power of Wordsworth’s poetry to help shape national identity, thus ends with a whimper as Thelwall’s ‘therapoetics’ strangely correct Wordsworth’s aristocratic blindness (p. 279). Wordsworth’s lasting influence on Matthew Arnold and on notions of British nationalism would have made for a more appropriate and cohesive end. Perhaps in challenging Wordsworth’s understanding of space, the book also expects us to challenge our own. Carlson’s sweeping focus and varied interests might be as much a challenge to how we perform and present scholarship as it is our understanding of Wordsworth’s art and its impact.

New and seasoned readers of Wordsworth’s work will find a great deal to enjoy and appreciate here. Carlson’s unconventional and daring book deserves and rewards careful reading and is sure to inspire new studies of how several fields of print influenced other Romantic authors. Perhaps it will also inspire new readings of Wordsworth’s lesser-known poetry, such as Ecclesiastical Sketches—a collection of poems Wordsworth purportedly conceived while surveying land.
In either case, Romantic Marks and Measures has put Carlson and her fresh approach to reading Wordsworth on the map for years to come.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.85>


Treading new paths over familiar ground, Talissa J. Ford’s Radical Romantics: Prophets, Pirates and the Space Beyond Nation explores the notion of nation through those who bend and break its ‘literal or figurative boundaries’ (p. 2). Though its title may sound ambitious, Ford traces a clear and concise line between the real pirate of the early eighteenth century, the imagined pirates of Byron’s works and the religious ‘prophets’ of the early nineteenth century (p. 67). Through this lens, the text presents an original and intriguing argument about the concepts of nationality, identity and gender in the Romantic period. Whilst, as Ford identifies in her introduction, there have been a number of critical studies (such as Linda Colley’s 1992 work Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837), Radical Romantics is ‘a book about what is beyond the map’, which aims to set its self apart by ‘rethinking the British Romantic period through such non-national concepts: beyond territory, beyond borders, beyond maps’. Ford states that titular pirates and prophets ‘revel the fragility of national identity and irrevocably complicate attempts to territorialise the state’ (p. 8). Able to exist and function outside of, or indeed often in opposition to, Ford argues that these figures presented both a physical and ideological threat to the stability of the nation.

Radical Romantics: Prophets, Pirates and the Space Beyond Nation is certainly an eye-catching title; as its contents suggest, both the pirate and the prophet have a long history of capturing the imagination of British society. The first chapter ‘It is Not Amiss to Speak of his Beard’ (referencing a description of the infamous pirate captain known as Blackbeard in Captain Charles Johnson’s 1724 A General History of Pyrates) explores the way in which real piracy, and those who committed it, were thought of and written about in the first decades of the eighteenth century. During the so-called ‘Golden Age of Piracy’, the chapter argues, the pirate ship—‘not only multinational but multi-ethnical’—was
often by nature and necessity a radical and subversive space (p. 20). The second chapter, ‘A Pirate or Anything’, moves away from the Golden Age of Piracy to the fictionalised pirates of Lord Byron’s work—in particular, *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair*, which Ford states ‘are haunted by the phantom of the Ottoman Empire’ (p. 42). The chapter analyses Byron’s use of the pirate figure in these poems through the context of their post-Napoleonic, imperial Britain. In these narratives, set long after piracy ‘had been ended by Britain’s targeted military campaigns’, Ford argues that ‘the pirate heroes of these poems, in stark contrast to historical pirates, are implicated in the imperial power structures that piracy naturally opposes’.

Chapter 3, ‘Coming Up from the Midst of the Sea’, neatly ties together pirates and prophets: ‘like the space of the sea’, Ford suggests, ‘the space of God defies borders’ (p. 67). This chapter examines the way in which the preachings of ‘prophets’ such as Joanna Southcott and Richard Brothers could be read as radical and threatened the ideological space of nation through their imaginings of Jerusalem. As part of the Ottoman Empire, Ford notes, Jerusalem was ‘therefore complicated by the imperial struggles’, discussed in the previous chapters. The fourth chapter, ‘Jerusalem Is Scattered Abroad’, continues this line of enquiry into a reading of William Blake’s *Jerusalem*. Ford argues that Blake can be considered as a prophet in the vein of Southcott and Brothers: ‘He lived in a prophetically saturated world: a world in which seventeenth-century antinomian tracts were back in circulation, and a world in which Richard Brothers was making plans in earnest for Jerusalem to be rebuilt’ (p. 92). The next chapter meanwhile moves away from Jerusalem, and Jerusalem imagined within Britain, to Africa and Timbuktu. ‘In the late eighteenth century, Timbuktu was a destination still tantalisingly out of reach; maps of the region were a mixture of errors and empty space’ (p. 123). Though more tangentially related than the previous four chapters, Ford’s reading of Timbuktu as a wondrous space at once beyond and warped by imperial desires is an interesting and unique one.

Whilst at times it feels like *Radical Romantics* could be a series of three texts rather than a singular work, Ford’s constructs a coherent and engaging argument that offers a new insight into an area that has been much discussed in recent years. The author’s critical approach to the ideas of piracy and prophecy highlights an important, perhaps over looked, factor in conversations about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts of nation and national identity.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.86>

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Date of acceptance: 21 June 2019.

Those seeking some light reading on one of the early nineteenth-century’s foremost commentators on British literature and culture, or a gentle introduction to Hazlitt’s radical political writing, will not be reaching for this book. Gilmartin’s study requires full commitment to reap rewards, and hardcore Hazlitt scholars and enthusiasts will doubtless regard this publication, replete with comprehensive notes, as an indispensable one-stop guide to the political dimension of Hazlitt’s work.

Interesting aspects of Hazlitt’s seeming contradictions emerge. Knowing of his noted ability, as a seasoned essayist and journalist, to merge into different social milieus, it is fascinating to see this quality extended in the image of a political chameleon, yet Gilmartin effectively conveys Hazlitt’s consistency in ideology—‘an inflexible commitment to political liberty and radical reform’ (p. 33). It is argued that ‘their rhetorical complexity and rich emotional range’ elevates the writer’s political outpourings far beyond ‘mere journalism’ (p. 21); these are not the scribblings of a prejudiced hack. Hazlitt’s *The Spirit of the Age* comes to the fore early, together with his ‘relentless campaign against Lake School ‘apostasy’ as a cynical desertion of the cause of liberty’ (p. 2). Hazlitt’s scepticism, or amusement, at the thought that ‘English cultural renovation’ could be founded on the same principles as ‘French revolutionizing’ is emphasised, as well as his discomfort at Byron’s ‘preposterous liberalism’ (p. 7).

Similarly, Hazlitt wrestles with, or perhaps that should be skilfully juggles, opinions on the liberal politics but frustrating ‘endless disputation’ of Francis Jeffrey’s *Edinburgh Review* alongside William Gifford’s conservative *Quarterly Review* (p. 5), while the ultra-Toryism of Blackwood’s with its barbed ‘nick-names and anonymous criticism’ is contemptuously dismissed in his ‘On Public Opinion’ essay (p. 213). Hazlitt is seen to be equally comfortable flipping between defending the Quakers from William Cobbett’s ‘wholesale attacks’ (p. 9) or mitigating Cobbett’s ‘egotism’ as having no vanity about it (p. 109). Although Gilmartin observes that Hazlitt, perhaps, only managed to avoid Cobbett’s brand of ‘outsized self promotion’ because he ‘projected political genius onto the figure of Napoleon’ (p. 109).

Hazlitt’s ‘critical disinterestedness’ and ‘ability to explore competing ideas and inhabit multiple perspectives’ is a salient feature throughout (pp. 159–60). Gilmartin probes Hazlitt the radical essayist, looking at form and style, before offering the 1817 essay ‘What Is the People?’ as a prime instance of the writer’s ‘most compelling versions of a radical insistence on limited economic resources as a way of distinguishing the interests of the people from the voracious appetite of state corruption’ (p. 70). The notion that, although government and people should share and pursue common goals, ‘political corruption institutionalizes the divergence of these interests’, is a persuasive one. Legitimised corruption rears its head again in the chapter on ‘Radical Argument’. Hazlitt’s attacks on
‘radical speculation’ alternate with a ‘dismissal of Whig opposition’, before castigating ‘Tory hypocrisy and personal venality’ (p. 107). Gilmartin later posits that Hazlitt ‘had recourse to Napoleon as an enabling double’ in an effort to ‘find a way out of the nightmare of legitimacy’ by ‘proposing the emperor of France as a figure of political redemption’ (p. 113).

Contradiction is again present in the succeeding chapter ‘Being Critical’ and Hazlitt’s use of ‘a dialectic of political expectation’ present in the period’s reform movement: ‘dividing radical apocalypse between nightmares of the catastrophic fulfilment of a grotesque system of corruption and exploitation, and more ecstatic visions of a sudden popular release from tyranny and dispossession’ (p. 136). Later, Hazlitt’s depiction of George Canning as ‘the embodiment of paradoxical Tory commonplace’ is itself flagged as a paradox as Canning is used as ‘a tool or instrument for systematic purposes’ (p. 155). In the ‘Dissenting Memory’ chapter, Hazlitt’s declaration (when pressed about his political ‘faith’) of himself as a ‘Revolutionist’ is discussed as well as his heritage and relationship with father (pp. 186–87).

The final chapter intriguingly examines ‘Representing Metropolitan Liberty’, and there is Hazlitt’s droll refutation of Blackwood’s definition of ‘Cockney’ in their magazine series ‘On the Cockney School of Poetry’ and his playing with the concept of being ‘not a Tory’ (p. 238). Critically, ‘democratic possibility is systematically diminished’ by Hazlitt’s portrayal of each Cockney faculty being ‘reduced to a trivial response to urban spectacle’ where, returning to a social theme, Hazlitt mockingly states that the true Cockney is ‘a great man by proxy’ (p. 276), for example: ‘He is a politician; for he has seen the Parliament House’ (p. 238). Hazlitt’s engagement with the politics of the sublime is considered as Rousseau replaces Napoleon ‘as the embodiment of revolutionary genius’, before a section ‘The King and the People’ revolves around the 1821 coronation of George IV (p. 255). We see Hazlitt deploying a powerful rhetorical method in the essay ‘On the Spirit of Monarchy’ as several ‘conventional figures’ are employed to ‘portray an impaired human intellect that cannot help but admire Royal power—the madman, the child, the savage, the infatuated lover’ (p. 285). Yet, a distinctive point is rendered about Hazlitt’s ‘reluctance to treat the coronation as evidence of the weakness of corrupt government’ and how this could be ‘consistent with popular radical discourse’, splitting the perception of the urban spectators—at once enfranchised and servile, exalted and vulgar’ (p. 286).

Concluding thoughts underscore the perceived omnipresent ambiguities and contradictions; the sense that Hazlitt’s work ‘betrays a tension between democratic politics and elite principles of artistic production and appreciation’ (p. 315). Conversely, it is argued (convincingly) that ‘in wrestling with those tensions, and expressing his own pride […] Hazlitt worked with as well as against the terms of the contemporary radical press’. Overall, the comprehensiveness of the discussion, the writing style and convoluted nature of the material can be overwhelming and, in patches, opaque (in short, not readily lucid or accessible). However, the book represents a heavyweight entry into the field of Hazlitt

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, with the first line of the 'Introduction' to Devin Griffiths’s *The Age of Analogy: Literature between the Darwins*: ‘In the summer of 1857, Charles Darwin unlocked the clasp of a new brown-backed journal, the first of a series of notebooks in which he scratched away at a radical new approach to the mutability of species’ (p. 1). A season and year, a person, a medium, an act of writing and a novel theory of life all rendered imaginatively; not only are these concerns present in the opening sentence, but they animate every page as Griffiths highlights how writing about theories of life, that is writing about change over time, changed over time by shining light on the powers of analogy. In Griffiths’s hands, analogy comes alive for its ability to underline similarities. What’s more, Griffiths brings his own experiences as an evolutionary biologist and writer about writing to a book that is itself an extended analogy. A book about how new knowledge is produced itself produces a lot of new knowledge that enlivens our understanding of the role imaginative literature plays in that making.

To say that Griffiths begins with Erasmus Darwin is not quite right. But it’s also not wrong. He begins with the grandson, Charles, but the end of the paragraph turns to Erasmus. Foregrounding and receding, the elder Darwin is a crucial feature of the argument and the way it’s carried. The first chapter, after an intro and after a prelude, is Erasmus’s. The ‘Introduction’ limns the contours and stakes of the book—‘I understand comparative historicism as the exploration of how different literary modes and social sensibilities intersect in time, its defining feature being the rapprochement of historical accounts through explicit instances of analogy and comparison’ (p. 14)—while the ‘Prelude’ zeroes in on analogy itself, in particular, ‘why the so-called literary features of analogy are precisely what afford its ability to capture natural patterns’ (pp. 29–30). The grandfather, in Griffiths’ treatment, is a writer and thinker who uses analogy in a full and complex way in his own moment, but in a restricted way by later lights.
Of Darwin’s achievements Griffiths states, ‘Darwin’s *The Temple of Nature*, a mature epic that continued to emphasize universal progress, could not resolve a more basic tension between the diversity of natural forms, the complexity of human history, and the thesis of consistent development’ (p. 55). His writings on life, defined as they are by a universalist Enlightenment understanding of human progress, are reanimated by his grandson, a man aided by developments and refinements in using analogy by writers of historical fiction, poetry and realist novels.

Beginning at the beginning doesn’t merely mean looking forward to what comes next, but holding on to what came before. The elder Darwin remains a touchstone for later writers who work with, through and beyond him: ‘Darwin’s works are important waypoints for strategies of analogical analysis that would later underwrite the comparative method’ (p. 57). Sir Walter Scott succeeds Darwin as Griffiths illuminates how comparativism works in Scott’s historical fiction. Scott is supple and flexible, not merely in his own right, but also relative to Erasmus Darwin: ‘Scott shaped the historical imagination of the nineteenth century, exchanging Enlightenment models of history for complexly graduated relations within and over time’ (p. 84). Alfred, Lord Tennyson is in the middle. In writing of poetic form and analogy Griffiths contrasts the bands around Darwin with the grace of Tennyson: ‘For these reasons, *In Memoriam* belongs at the center of this study, as it focuses our attention on analogy as a strategy of historical interpretation important to both the sciences and the humanities’ (p. 130). Tennyson makes full use of analogy: how writing about life is lifelike, how writing about the past is like writing about today, about how writing about today is like writing about the past. George Eliot succeeds Tennyson—‘it is in Eliot’s novels, particularly *Middlemarch*, where we find the most powerful statement of her belief that such comparisons, particularly in their ability to diagnose previous errors, produce new knowledge’ (p. 167). Working with and through analogy does not merely use writing to reveal natural patterns, but produces new ways of writing, new understandings of natural patterns.

Capping it off is Charles Darwin. Griffiths writes, ‘[w]hereas the *Origin* provided a series of imaginative sketches that suggested how natural selection might have operated, while parrying central objections to that theory, the *Orchids* showed how to organize a research program around the hypothesis that natural selection was real’ (p. 217). That realness is made real for a reader, Griffiths shows us, through the vivid depiction of ‘particular stories’. The power of imagination, always on display in the book, is fully engaged here. As Griffiths himself says, ‘I have emphasized the importance of imaginative projection for comparative historicism’ (p. 215). Charles gets the first word, and the last chapter, but not the final word. Griffiths’s ‘Coda’ makes ‘no-analog future’ his own as he looks to the past to meditate on his own labour of writing, his own novel theory about the powers of writing to think about change over time in the face of a future that presents no precise analogy, but will force us to think
about analogy in new ways if we are to produce the new knowledge necessary to live into that future (p. 259).

Bookending his book with chapters about men who constructed and recorded theories of life that were shaped and reshaped by the imaginative literature, and that shaped and reshaped imaginative literature makes Griffiths’s book itself a work of analogy. Analogy shows us how things are like one another, and in doing so doesn’t only show the nature of the thing or the relations between them, but produces insights that wouldn’t otherwise be available. New insights are produced over time, which recasts how we understand previous insights, as yesterday shapes tomorrow and tomorrow is shaped by how we see yesterday. Our future may be ‘no-analog’ but we are also still between.

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Date of acceptance: 21 June 2019.


Beginning in Germany in the 1770s with the *Sturm und Drang* movement, by the 1820s Romanticism had swept through Europe conquering the French, Italian and Spanish literary worlds, and then from the West to Eastern Europe. The development of a new Romantic European culture highlighted some profound links and affinities between various nation states: in particular, a shared concern with the modern concept of nationhood; debates about rights, liberty and freedom; and a human longing for infinitude. This illustrates to the reader social worlds that are deeply interconnected through the shared experience of the revolutionary context and the political culture of the eighteenth century.

Paul Hamilton’s well-thought-through and well-planned collection of essays in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* surveys the work of key Romantic authors from across Europe thus enabling comparisons between different languages and cultures. Although the volume vindicates both Arthur O. Lovejoy’s claim that diversity is a distinctive feature of Romanticism and René Wellek’s argument for the essential unity of European Romanticism (p. 1), through a variety of subjects and chapters it also aims to address what Hamilton calls the ‘transferable skill or formative impulse in response to historical circumstance’ (p. 2). In other words, Hamilton is very clear in his intent: the *Handbook* was produced in response to key historical and political developments
such as the failure of the French Revolution, the Peninsular and Napoleonic wars, Napoleon’s fall from power and the 1815 Congress of Vienna. The editor points out that even though Lovejoy and Wellek in the 1940s wrote about Europe, New Historicism has tended thus far to write almost exclusively about British Romanticism. Interdisciplinarity and comparativism contribute to the book’s distinctive flavour and the collaboration between scholars from across Europe enables comparisons between varieties of Romanticisms.

There is no explicit reference through the pages of the book of revisionist approaches to debates about European Romanticism that have replaced a focus on national contexts with a new interest in trans-European phenomena, such as studies by Remak (1961), Furst (1969), Bone (1995), Breckman (2015) and others. Nonetheless, the book implicitly challenges Lilian R. Furst’s claim in the second edition of Romanticism in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Aspects of Romantic Movements in England, France, and Germany that ‘it is evidently erroneous to compare these Romanticisms as if they were based on an agreed definition, as if they meant the same thing’. Rather, this volume demonstrates that Romantic authors of Europe are inextricably connected and in relation to not only ideas about nature, the self, the function of art and the artist, and the role of imagination, but especially in their commitment to political, historical and national causes.

In his general Introduction to the book, Hamilton discusses the main editorial decisions he had to face in preparation for this Herculean task, which are around geography and discipline, but with the particular intent of wanting ‘to observe divisions with relation to languages rather than places’ (p. 4). For this purpose, the Handbook is thus organised under the two headings of ‘Languages’ (Part i)—whose intent is to extract and develop interactions especially between French, German and Italian Romanticism (though Hamilton is sharp in suggesting that ‘writing which is interdisciplinary and comparative does not necessarily create cosy agreements about synergies’ [p. 6])—and ‘Discourses’ (Part II). This rich collection of essays brings the echo of Romanticism’s voice closer to the present with resonant clarity and Hamilton is explicit in suggesting that this volume opens up new questions around ‘what are borders for? What is a nation? What do we still have in common despite political difference? What is Europe’s “other”? ’ (p. 8). This link between Romantic identities and the contemporary ideas of what it means to be European, particularly in terms of how present-day societal dynamics are challenging Romantic concepts of Europeanness, is even more significant if we think that references to British Romanticism feature only in small part in the volume.

An important feature of the Handbook is its structure. Preceded by an erudite Introduction, the two main parts comprise forty-one chapters in total. The thirty-one essays of Part I (Languages) are organised in nine slightly uneven subsections. While the first subchapter on French Romanticism includes eight essays, the one on German ten and the one on Italian five, the sections on Hungarian, Spanish, Polish, Scandinavian and Greek Romanticism only feature
one essay each. Although this might be a necessary choice dictated by scarce and outdated critical and theoretical research conducted in the field, and the virtual absence of English-language translations of the actual texts, it nonetheless leaves the organisation of the book a little unbalanced. Furthermore, although this editorial choice might be necessary for most of the languages mentioned here above, it seems quite unusual that the section on Spanish also includes one essay only. Indeed, scholarly work on Spanish Romanticism has now for long been heavily influenced by the views propounded by the British Hispanist Edgar Allison Peers in his monumental *History of the Romantic Movement in Spain* (1940), through the more fresh research work produced and published in recent years by scholars such as Diego Saglia, Susan Valladares and Ian Haywood.

In order to rectify this imbalance in the organisation of the book, I wonder whether the essay on Balzac and Alexander Dumas by Bradley Stephens (Chapter 5) should appear perhaps in an Afterword, as both Balzac and Dumas belong, strictly speaking, to French Realism. Furthermore, it would have been more useful, I think, to avoid repetition of material as in the two chapters on Goethe (Chapters 16 and 17) and Leopardi (Chapters 21 and 22) to allow for more variety in terms of authors and themes discussed. On a more positive note, with such wide-ranging views to present, the inclusion of the sections on Eastern Europe establishes a coherent framework for the interconnectedness of European Romanticisms. This interconnected structure is central to Hamilton’s goal: to trace new lines of scholarly work in understanding the ideas and legacy of Romanticism. The essays of Part II (Discourses), ten in total, explore themes such as political thinking, science, religion, the theatre, celebrity culture and theories of languages, to then conclude with an essay on Europe’s discussions of Britain. Although Hamilton suggests that Part II ‘fills out and develops the comparative logic’ of ‘the largely author-based language studies’ (p. 4) in Part I, I wonder whether it would have been perhaps more beneficial to open the book’s organisation with ‘Discourses’ as Part I? This option would have helped readers to engage in European Romanticism’s general thematic preoccupations before moving to a discussion of more specific studies on languages.

Ordinarily, a review of an essay collection highlights the general features of the book rather than a detailed analysis of all chapters. Yet some of the essays in this collection deserve special mention, not least because of their impact—for instance, on the contemporaneity of Romanticism. To start with, Biancamaria Fontana’s chapter on Germaine de Staël’s notion of Europe (Chapter 2) reconnects discourses on the emergence of Europeanhood then and now. In particular, Fontana perceptively argues for Germaine de Staël’s ‘novel intuitions about modern society, about the politics, morals, and aesthetics of a new age’ (p. 33); many of these values are also pertinent to European society today. On a similar note, the essay by Jean-Marie Roulin (Chapter 3) explores the modernity of Chateaubriand’s work by focusing on discourses of migrations, revolutions and exile, and opens up new avenues of investigation around the legacy of French Romanticism for our own time. As Roulin makes clear, characters such as René
and Atala are migrants who ‘in the back and forth between exile and return, abandonment and reintegration’ (p. 54) yearn for a new beginning—though often the return is of an impossible nature. Like Chateaubriand, who ‘often felt himself to be on the margins’ (p. 53), his characters move from native France to England, Italy, America and the Orient. As real ‘citizens of the world’, they hope for a world that values multiple perspectives; yet their sense of a more global knowledge improves the development of their own national identity and social individuality. Finally, Patrick Vincent begins the concluding essay (Chapter 41) by suggesting that ‘long before the creation of the EU, Europeans were strongly divided regarding British exceptionalism and the place of Britain within European civilisation’ (p. 807), to then appropriately and sharply review images of Britain in European discourses and their productive relation to Romanticism between 1750 and 1850.

With its many voices and many views, The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism is a much-needed volume, which presents an extensive range of interpretations and implications on the interplay between current social, political, economic and linguistic issues all arising from the work of European Romantics. European Romanticism’s questions are still relevant yet possibly unanswerable. This remarkable collection of essays, each tracking distinct yet related lines of inquiry from two hundred years ago to the present, serves as a reminder that the past is never past, that Romanticism is still contemporary and that ‘Languages’ and ‘Discourses’ seldom have boundaries. This volume shows how Romanticism can still teach us to read and see. It breathes enthusiasm and scholarly care in a way that appeals to a wide range of readers. The choice of contributors is harmonious and refreshing. Containing useful, reader-friendly features such as suggestions for further reading, this clear and engaging Handbook is an invaluable resource for anyone who intends to study and research the complexity and diversity of the Romantic period, as well as the historical conditions that produced it—thereby appealing to a genuinely interdisciplinary audience.

Notes

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.89>

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Date of acceptance: 7 January 2020.

Perhaps the first question many students, and indeed scholars, of long nineteenth-century Britain will ask upon reading the title of *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths and the Welsh Hymn* is: just how are we to understand not only the two named figures but also Welsh hymnody in the traditional contexts of British Romanticism? The materials that E. Wyn James has collected serve not only to answer this question but also to reveal that, indeed, many answers already exist (and have for no short period of time). We learn early in James’s introduction that William Williams, Pantycelyn (1717–91) and Ann Griffiths (1776–1805) are ‘not only in a class of their own as the two most outstanding of all Welsh hymn writers, but both also rank among the most prominent figures in the whole of Welsh literature’ (p. 11). The edition’s contents provide the historical, literary and scholarly frames for this vaunted status: James brings together scholarly essays on Williams’s and Griffiths’s lives and work, Griffiths’s thirty surviving hymns in the original Welsh, her hymns in prose and metrical English translation (one might wonder why Williams’s are not included until discovering that he composed somewhere between 850 and 1000 of his own), scholarly notes on her hymns and letters, and his own list of her work’s biblical allusions. All of the English translations and virtually all of the collected essays are by H. A. Hodges (1905–76), with his essays and their notes revealing to readers the expansiveness of information available—in English and Welsh—beyond this edition. Together, these materials serve as a formidable introduction to these hymnists, to the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist movement of which they were part and to an already thriving scholarly discourse surrounding these topics, providing scholars and seekers of knowledge an ongoing conversation to join.

Thus, *Flame in the Mountains* is not a ‘recovery project’ as the phrase is generally understood. Its structure reinforces this, and guides readers who are for the first time coming into contact with these topics, while acting as an invaluable resource for those already acquainted. It is divided into two large sections (Williams being the focus of the first and Griffiths the second), each containing essays Hodges wrote over the course of his career (as well as his own translation of an address delivered by Saunders Lewis). Preceding these are a general introduction by James and a short biography of Hodges, and following them are the copies of Griffiths’s hymns (in Welsh–English facing translation), letters and scriptural allusions. James’s introduction illuminates the hymn’s central role in contemporary Wales. As Wales experienced no fewer than fifteen religious revivals between 1762 and 1859, and in this span produced over 3000 Welsh-language hymns (p. 9), Williams and Griffiths were not pre-eminent members of passing literary fashions, but leading figures of a movement whose influence reached across the whole of Welsh culture throughout the long nine-
teenth century. Here we also learn some of Williams’s and Griffiths’s shared traits and how these reflected the movement of which they were part, such as an intimate familiarity with the Bible (being first translated into Welsh in 1588, predating the *KJV* by over two decades).

Hodges’s essays illuminate how and where we can consider Welsh hymnody’s interactions with cornerstones of what we understand as ‘British Romanticism’. He does not use this phrase, and emphasises his assertion that ‘Wales is a nation with its own life and culture’ frequently (p. 47). Yet, while Hodges elevates the uniquely Welsh elements of this period, his analyses do not depict a world ‘cut off’ from the outside. Rather, his engagement is such that attentive readers can discern correlations with Romantic-era concerns, but cannot mistakenly conclude that Welsh hymnists were peripheral contributors to a larger, transnational literary and cultural movement. We see this, for instance, in literary terms, such as where he devotes attention to the interaction of Welsh and English forms of ‘metre’, ‘style’ and ‘imagery’ (pp. 49–50); to the stanza forms and metres Williams deploys (and invents) (p. 69); and to Griffiths’s likely familiarity with the traditional Welsh poetic forms (p. 121)—further, his and his collaborator A. M. Allchin’s scholarly notes on each of Griffiths’s hymns and letters mirror, in form, scholarly editions of canonical British literary figures of this period. These reflections are situated within panoramic surveys of contemporary Wales, which include overviews of Welsh Calvinistic Methodist doctrine (and what separated it from Wesleyan Methodism, which was a discrete movement), as well as the rural Welsh world that nurtured it. Williams’s and Griffiths’s individual literary histories likewise reflect Romantic themes ‘from afar’. Williams’s prolific output partook in generic practices of the time, and included two epic poems, numerous extended prose works and over thirty elegies, in addition to his countless hymns (pp. 10–11). Griffiths, who never published or even widely shared her hymns, exemplifies the oral tradition: her hymns were remembered by a close acquaintance (who could not write), recorded by that friend’s husband (who could write), published after her death and subjected to revisions and corruptions in subsequent reprintings for decades to come (pp. 123–24).

The hymns themselves lead to a topic that pervades the collection (and indeed all studies of Welsh literature), which is language. Hodges and Allchin themselves were Englishmen who learned Welsh as adults in order to explicate and share the Welsh archive. As James explains, such efforts benefit all, since such learners ‘can bring different insights and perspectives precisely because they are approaching a culture from the outside, which in turn can enrich the understanding of the indigenous members of that culture’ (pp. 16–17). This encouragement of non-Welsh readers reflects other scholarly efforts to make contemporary Welsh materials available in their original and in translation for English-reading audiences, with the University of Wales Press’ ‘Wales and the French Revolution’ series having published editions of Welsh ballads, pamphlets, sermons and poetry in recent years. Remembering their status in the Welsh canon, Williams and Griffiths did not need to be ‘uncovered’ in the same way.
as more ephemeral historical matter. By providing its readers a compendium of not only primary materials but also much research they have already inspired, this edition resonates with recent recovery efforts while adding yet another dynamic to them. As such, it will be necessary reading for all who desire a more comprehensive knowledge of the social, religious and literary cultures of Romantic Britain.

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*Travels into Print,* co-written by three researchers interested in travel books yet specialising in different disciplines, promises to be, to say the least, impressively broad in its scope. Indeed, as the authors themselves point out in the preface, their study is concerned with geographical exploration, travel writing and book history. It concentrates on non-European narratives of travel and exploration which were all published by the London-based company of John Murray between the late eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. Throughout the book the authors’ primary goal is to lay out all ‘the stages of books’ travel into print’ (p. 32).

The opening chapter gives us a foretaste of what is to come in further parts. We are informed how narratives of travel and exploration were undertaken in the field (written and rewritten); how explorers endeavored to gain credibility as truthful and authoritative writers; how the publisher shaped the raw material and influenced the process of book production, at times adjusting the narratives to satisfy the implied readers’ expectations; and finally, how the already printed travel books inspired other explorers to undertake and recount their own travels.

The second chapter goes into the practicalities of travel and in-the-field writing. Here, we read about Murray’s authors travelling for personal reasons, out of curiosity or to test others’ texts. More interesting, however, are the insights into the cases of explorers who were formally instructed (for example, by the government) to record their doings for scientific or diplomatic reasons. Whatever the motive, writing in the field was hindered by the constraints encountered in a given location (which is aptly illustrated with the narratives from the Arctic,
Central Asia and Africa). Over time, as we learn, this experience was facilitated by instructive manuals published by the house of Murray, which regulated travel and provided methodological tools for geographical knowledge.

The following chapter discusses explorers’ attempts at establishing and securing their credibility as authors while still on their way. Whether one was considered a true traveller or a ‘travel liar’ depended on, among other issues, methodological and rhetorical strategies used while writing. Readers were thus informed about all measures applied by the authors, such as their sources of scholarly citation, details of scientific instrumentation and means of achieving authenticity among the locals or assuming appropriate self-presentation, thus proving their resourcefulness and correct scientific investigation. At this stage, the house of Murray expected its explorer–authors ‘to act as arbiters of knowledge and testimony’ (p. 99); as we learn further on, the role of the publisher as to the authors’ credibility became more dominant in the process of publication.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the notion of authorship—that is, on how a traveller/explorer turned into or was made an author. It is claimed that the concept of the ‘modest author’ was not merely a popular literary convention at the time but rather a critical condition for the establishment of an author’s authority. We are provided with details of the behind-the-scenes process of book production, which was controlled by John Murray by means of censorship, editing but also textual interference or manipulation, particularly in the case of texts of exploratory and scientific character. The following chapter zooms in on the details of the process of book production in the house of Murray. It provides a thorough analysis of paratextual elements (title pages, frontispieces, dedications, epigraphs) as well as visual aspects (particularly, illustrations, maps and graphs)—aspects that are not always present in the studies of travel literature. The chapter convincingly demonstrates how these framing materials served as mediators between the book and its target consumers (p. 174). Murray’s paratextual and visual strategies enhanced (or created) the authoritative, legitimate and scholarly character of the initially raw travel narratives in order to guarantee their sales potential.

The book closes with a discussion of the changing policy of the house of Murray towards their travel series and its readership at a time of great advances in printing technology. We learn from the inside how Murray’s literary advisors employed numerous editing, publishing and marketing strategies to mould authors’ works so that they would appeal to the interests of specific audiences. The chapter makes a persuasive claim that the final printed work was always the product of contradictory forces—that is, of authorial independence, in-house intervention and industrialised production. An extensive conclusion to the study makes up the final chapter, and is followed by an Appendix—a great asset to the book, providing a thorough and detailed (almost sixty pages long) bibliography of the 239 books of non-European travel and exploration published by Murray in the period in question. This will serve as a valuable point of reference to all researching the period, be they book historians, literary scholars or geographers.
The rapid development of publishing industry in Britain as well as Britain’s unbounded imperial ambitions between the late eighteenth- and the mid-nineteenth centuries constituted ideal conditions for travel literature to flourish. This is the fact underlined by Travels into Print, but also by many other studies in the field. Yet, the focus of this book differs considerably from the others. By means of numerous well-researched and aptly selected examples it demonstrates how ‘the world was put into words by the house of John Murray and that firm’s authors’ (p. 211) and that books of travel and exploration ‘were acts of assemblage, of craft, and of truth making’ (p. 210). Even those literary scholars who could expect more formal analyses will definitely find the book refreshing (given its numerous references to non-canonical texts) and will appreciate the metaphorical presentation of the most important journey depicted here—the one undertaken by travel texts themselves, from mere in-the-field notebooks to published and promoted works.

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Date of acceptance: 21 June 2019.


Offering a wide-ranging and highly nuanced perspective on the works of Robert Burns, Nigel Leask’s Robert Burns and Pastoral has deservedly endured as a key work within Burns Studies since its original publication in 2010. Its reissue in paperback has opened Leask’s influential re-evaluation of one of Scotland’s most prominent literary figures to a broader range of potential readers. Burns Studies has been visibly flourishing in recent years, with Glasgow University’s Editing Robert Burns for the Twenty-First Century project (2011– ) providing a nexus for the field’s increasing vitality. Burns’s somewhat stuffy early twentieth-century reputation has been well and truly banished by the waves of innovative literary criticism that have emanated from the field. Burns has also been reintegrated into narratives about the development of British and global anglophone literatures as part of an increasingly outward gaze throughout Scottish Studies. Leask’s book represents an important contribution to this process, and seeks to give Burns Studies a more prominent place within twenty-first-century literary scholarship.
Leask’s intervention situates Burns’s life and works in relation to the radical restructuring of rural life which characterised the eighteenth century in Scotland. Drawing upon recent developments in the study of Scottish history, Leask places Robert Burns—poet, tenant farmer and exciseman—within what T. M. Devine has described as a historical moment where ‘the face of the Scottish countryside was radically altered and the life of the people fundamentally changed’.1 Leask’s early comment, that ‘it is remarkable that no major study has yet addressed Burns’s occupational involvement with the discourse and practice of agricultural improvement’ (p. 16), is vindicated by the array of new perspectives which such a focus furnishes in the course of the book. In particular, this focus serves to complicate conventional approaches to concepts of ‘Enlightenment’ and the ‘Romantic’, revealing the ways in which these two discourses and influences interact within Burns’s oeuvre.

In particular, Leask’s chapter on Burns’s religious satires ‘Hellfire and Common Sense’ compellingly picks apart the ways in which contemporary debates and tensions within the Church of Scotland were reflected in Burns’s poetry. Leask fluently ties these tensions into ongoing political and ideological conflicts within Scottish and British society, giving one of the most comprehensible and suggestive accounts of the ‘auld licht, new licht’ debates of the later eighteenth century that I have encountered. Leask’s self-professed “big” book on Burns’ is indeed a big book that makes important interventions across a dizzying variety of topics, including Burns’s animal poetry, his engagement with the pastoral as literary genre, his religious satires and his Romantic legacies. However, this potentially mystifying range is skilfully unified through Leask’s focus on the concept of ‘Improvement’, which he convincingly argues is at the heart of many of the apparent contradictions within the poet’s work.

It is not an overstatement to describe Robert Burns and Pastoral as essential reading for any scholar embarking on work which covers the life, work or legacy of Burns. Leask’s critical re-evaluation of Scotland’s Bard opens up a wide range of new avenues for further scholarship. His insights into Burns’s wider historical context mean that the book is also a useful resource for scholars interested in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scottish literature and history. The book’s final chapter, ‘Across the Shadow Line: Robert Burns and British Romanticism’, gestures towards the ways in which this book can inform our approach to the period more broadly and places Leask’s Burns within the burgeoning field of Four Nations scholarship.

The book’s publication in paperback also reveals its potential as a teaching aid for senior undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Its arrangement into nine tight and thematically cohesive chapters means that any one of these could helpfully be set for discussion in a relevant seminar or tutorial. The text’s availability as an affordable paperback will hopefully empower more lecturers and tutors beyond Scottish studies to include the text in their recommended reading lists. In Robert Burns and Pastoral, Leask updates the “big” book on
Burns’ for a twenty-first-century audience, situating Burns within a complex frame of national and international historical forces and ideas.

Notes


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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.92>

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Date of acceptance: 21 June 2019.


A celebrated spiritual medium known as the ‘human telephone to the spirit world’ is not the sort of character one anticipates being discussed in a book about Jane Austen. Neither is a mid-nineteenth century anti-suffrage Welsh MP who turns out to be a poor literary critic. Nor Harpo Marx, for that matter. But they are all here, among a cast of other extraordinary characters and situations, in Devoney Looser’s equally remarkable book, *The Making of Jane Austen*.

The medium in question was Leonora Piper who was asked in 1892 to communicate with George Pellow, the author of *Jane Austen’s Novels*, the first dissertation written about the novelist, published in 1883. Pellow—who was something of a prodigy by all accounts, and died at the age of thirty-two in mysterious circumstances—had told his close friend, the parapsychologist Dr Richard Hodgson, that if he died before him, he would try to speak to him from beyond the grave. Hodgson, and eventually various other professors from Harvard, went to see Piper regularly and were convinced that through Piper’s ‘automatic writing’ Pellow had made contact with them. The evidence? Piper’s written references to Jane Austen. As Looser goes on to observe: ‘the world of academia and the world of popular culture for Jane Austen were sometimes not so very far apart in the late nineteenth century’ (p. 186).

Indeed, this tension between academia and popular culture is evident and dissected throughout Looser’s extensively researched book, which can be characterised by its exceptional clarity, humour and insight. Looser, in choosing to focus on the ‘little-known or unknown individuals’ (p. 12) and their impact on the ‘making of Jane Austen’, as opposed to the ‘elite caretakers of her image’ (what John Lennon would sardonically call the ‘experts, textperts’) and their ‘hyperfocus on words’ (p. 11), has created a fascinating epistemological intervention in Austen studies. Like Shakespeare, to whom, as Looser points out, she is
often compared, Austen generates and continues to generate meaning outside of the period in which she was writing. As each successive chapter powerfully demonstrates, these meanings, and Austen’s position in our culture today, has very little to do with academia and, instead, can be attributed to many women and men who, through their own creativity and intelligence, utilised Austen’s words for their own artistic and political purposes.

Take, for example, Rosina Filippi, Austen’s first dramatist, whose abridged duologues from Austen’s novels ‘emphasized—and celebrated—female domestic protest’ (p. 79); or Cecily Hamilton, who, along with Edith Craig, featured Austen in her hugely popular suffrage play *A Pageant of Great Women* (1909) — ‘an indoor political extravaganza’ (p. 169). Then there is the fascinating story of theatre director Eva Le Gallienne, her lover (the actress Josephine Hutchinson) and the staging of the play *Dear Jane* in the early 1930s, where Hutchinson played Jane and Gallienne her sister Cassandra. This is not, of course, to say that Austen has always been used for radical purposes—as Looser writes, ‘Jane Austen has been and remains a figure at the vanguard of reinforcing tradition and social change’ (p. 3) — but it does indicate that if we scratch beneath the surface of the familiar Austen narrative (that, for instance, Austen and pop culture only existed post-1995 with the BBC’s adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*), then we begin to reveal the cultural, political and social circumstances of how ‘Jane Austen’ was invented in all her nuance, complexity and richness.

Nowhere do these concepts intersect more rewardingly than in Looser’s chapter on Austen’s illustrators and book illustration. The chapter begins with a discussion on the first English illustrator to work on Austen’s novels, Ferdinand Pickering, who was commissioned by the publisher Richard Bentley to produce ten illustrations for Austen’s six novels in the early 1830s. Pickering is another one of those characters in the book who led an unconventional life: after his work for Bentley he won a ‘life studentship’ at the Royal Academy, where he remained for years and became a target for students’ jokes. Nevertheless, his Austen illustrations would go on to have significant impact on the way readers understood the novelist’s works until the late Victorian period, when the market became saturated with illustrated editions of Austen. By identifying illustration, which has historically always been neglected as a field of study, as an important area for the critical analysis of Austen, Looser has opened up the potential for exciting new research. As she writes in an endnote, ‘only a dozen essays—some very brief—on Austen and book illustration make up what we’ve had to go on to make sense of the subject’ (p. 239). Moreover, Looser’s own research into the subject is revelatory. First, she has correctly identified that it was Ferdinand and not George Pickering who had illustrated these novels, whereas previous scholarship had attributed them to George, a landscape painter in the period. Second, Looser’s close readings of the illustrations provide us with a deep understanding of how Austen’s mid-nineteenth-century audience may have read (or misread) the novels. By emphasising particular scenes, incidents
and characters, Austen’s illustrators necessarily neglect other ones, influencing a reader’s response in the process.

*The Making of Jane Austen* is not just a book for Janites, however; it is, and will become, a key study for anyone interested in undertaking research that explores the interplay between texts and how they generate meaning across different time periods and genres. Furthermore, by paying attention to those areas and people that have not traditionally been part of the ‘Austen narrative’, Looser shows us how to produce successfully research that is engaging, exciting and important. As she warns: ‘It’s incredibly important that we not keep intoning the limiting stories about Austen, her fiction, and her cultural legacy’ and ‘I worry about our ability to see her beyond the established critical voices and author-celebrities that we’ve so long cited and repeated’ (p. 221). These statements could apply to any author and the way we study their work, which is often, reductively, stuck in the period in which that author was writing. The Shakespeare scholar Terence Hawkes once wrote that ‘Shakespeare doesn’t mean, we mean by Shakespeare’. On the basis of Looser’s superb book, the same could be said about Jane Austen.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.93>

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**Date of acceptance:** 9 October 2019.


‘Would that the criterion of a scholar’s utility were the number and moral values of the truths, which he has been the means of throwing into the general circulation’, Samuel Taylor Coleridge exclaimed in 1817. He dreamed of an intellectual climate in which an academic’s worth was measured not by the number of words they committed to print, but rather by ‘the number and value of the minds, whom by his conversation or letters, he has excited into activity, and supplied with the germs of their after-growth!’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 279). Coleridge has had to wait a long time to be rescued from charges of indolence and unproductivity, but Maximiliaan van Woudenberg and Philip Aherne attempt to do precisely that. Both studies are intellectual histories whose starting
premise is evident enough to anyone familiar with Coleridge’s extensive canon: that, in Aherne’s words, Coleridge ‘was not exclusively a writer’ (p. 281). As such, both these authors claim that evaluations that focus solely on Coleridge’s literary reputation overlook some of his most significant, and most enduring, legacies. By turning instead to the formation of a Coleridgean methodology, which van Woudenberg traces back to Germany, and the extension of this approach to nineteenth- and twentieth-century academic, pedagogic and theological politics—as Aherne explores—these studies reassess Coleridge’s status in Western intellectual culture.

Van Woudenberg offers a re-evaluation of Coleridge’s German tour, bringing together details from biographies and critical studies with an impressive range of primary sources from Coleridge’s writing and the University of Göttingen’s records. Coleridge and Cosmopolitan Intellectualism aims to ‘provide a more collected resource for the Göttingen period than previously available’ (p. 21), and, to do so, it comprises both an evaluation of Coleridge’s work with regard to Germany between 1794 and 1804, and an extensive set of appendices that include a detailed chronology of Coleridge’s time in Germany, a list of Coleridge’s library borrowings from Göttingen and the lectures he attended whilst there. This generous approach to scholarship, which both stakes Van Woudenberg’s contribution and enables future scholars to develop new arguments from the same material, means that this book deserves to be essential reading for anyone interested in Coleridge’s time in Germany or its legacy. Van Woudenberg is, of course, not alone in recognising that the 1790s witnessed the rapid development of a ‘cross-cultural exchange’ between Britain and Germany (p. 27). His study insists that Coleridge’s research methodology—not the content of his writings—was the most influential and sustained legacy from this period. Van Woudenberg’s approach reflects something of the approach that, he argues, Coleridge developed in Germany: cosmopolitan intellectualism, here, encompasses both ‘Coleridge’s interaction with the constellation of the library collections, the scholarship of professors, and the importance of Göttingen knowledge by foreign students to their native countries’ (p. 19). By demonstrating how Coleridge’s learning in Germany went far beyond the materials he collected for his ill-fated Life of Lessing (one of the many projects Coleridge promised and never completed), van Woudenberg situates Coleridge as a key player in the development of a European academic culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Van Woudenberg thus challenges the conventional geographies of Coleridgean thought. Shifting the focus away from British locations (especially, in this context, Cambridge and London, but also Somerset and the Lakes) towards Germany centralises the intellectual and pedagogical innovations that were underway in Göttingen (p. 5), and which would not begin to be adopted by British universities until the 1820s (interestingly, just at the period when Aherne suggests Coleridge’s influence was beginning to be evident in the Senior Common Rooms at Oxford and Cambridge [p. 195]). As van Woudenberg argues,
Coleridge found that he was fundamentally unsuited to British academic life (p. 35)—or, rather, that British academic culture did not reward the kind of research that Coleridge, with his habits of a ‘library cormorant’, favoured. But for Coleridge, partaking in these innovations had unfortunate consequences for his reputation. What Coleridge needed was a system which recognised, in John Dewey’s Coleridgean summary, that education was ‘a process of living and not a preparation for future living’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 255).

Reconstructing Coleridge’s time in Göttingen via his lecture schedules and library records allows van Woudenberg to offer the *Life of Lessing* as a ‘unique case history chronicling an episode of eighteenth-century intellectual culture’ at the moment when cataloguing systems and archival methodologies that remain familiar to us today were emerging in academic institutions (p. 147). He shows that evaluating Coleridge’s claims of working hard—taken dubiously by other critics and biographers—in light of the British system is to do a disservice to the contemporary climate in which Coleridge was participating: his ‘intellectual efforts’, van Woudenberg thinks, were ‘clearly the norm for foreign students within the constellation of an *Arbeitsuniversität*’ (p. 92). A significant part of these efforts was dedicated to attending seminars, the conversational (or, at least, oneversational) nature of which anticipated the culture that Coleridge cultivated in his Highgate rooms (Aherne, p. 30). Beyond these classes, though, Coleridge also immersed himself in Göttingen library’s research opportunities, using their philosophical, theological and historical collections to develop a ‘historical—critical methodology in the selection, evaluation, and assessment of primary material, historical context, and contemporary secondary sources’ that was at the cutting edge of humanistic research in this period (van Woudenberg, p. 158). As van Woudenberg concludes, Coleridge’s major achievement in the period was the stimulation of ‘a new path of investigation through the development of new methodologies and the new combination of subjects’ (pp. 219–20). The ‘true legacy of Göttingen’, van Woudenberg finds, was Coleridge’s discovery and translation of a ‘Humboldtian model’ that would come to characterise universities in the nineteenth century (p. 220).

Like van Woudenberg, Aherne suggests that Coleridge’s greatest achievements are the—often ‘illusory’ (p. 36)—residues he deposited in Western academic culture. Aherne, though, is more interested in Coleridge’s pedagogical legacy. Both authors share, too, the sense that, as Aherne neatly puts it, ‘writing about Coleridge’s influence is like trying to navigate a collection of labyrinths that have, for some inexplicable reason, all fallen in on each other whilst simultaneously retaining their original structure’ (pp. 3–4). Aherne’s string is based on the unravelling of Coleridge’s reputation: he argues that Coleridge became ‘the cause around which his supporters and beneficiaries could rally’ (p. 56). By contrast, he dismisses Coleridge’s detractors by asserting that, in attempting to ‘discredit [Coleridge’s] intellectual abilities […] they were advertising their own intellectual deficiencies’ (p. 63).
Aherne’s is a rich and comprehensive study with an ambitious scope. He does a magnificent job of pointing towards Coleridge’s widespread, if understated, intellectual influence in the century after his death. By drawing attention to figures already familiar to Coleridgean scholarship, such as Julius Hare and Thomas Carlyle, alongside less obvious figures—notably John Dewey, Shadworth Hodgson, I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot—Aherne paints a rich portrait of the legacy of what he calls Coleridge’s ‘intellectual vocation’ (p. 256). Coleridge’s theosophical prose works—especially *Lay Sermon* (1816), *Aids to Reflection* (1825) and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829)—emerge as the key texts in Aherne’s reading. More surprising, perhaps, is the extent to which Aherne insinuates them as required reading for the intellectual attempting to navigate the twenty-first-century academic landscape. In quoting John Beer’s assessment of *Aids to Reflection*’s contemporary cultural value, Aherne also implies its significance to today’s lifestyle challenges: ‘to an age that was increasingly looking less for questioning minds than for voices to offer a note of assurance in difficult times’, Beer asserts, ‘this Coleridge, the man who appeared to have distilled a message for his times from his own restless thought and experience, had a particularly strong appeal’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 80).

Nevertheless, what Aherne outlines here is less an ‘intellectual cosmopolitanism’ than what he terms an ‘intellectual aristocracy’ (p. 242) centred on Oxbridge and London in Britain, and the East Coast Ivy League schools in America. Culture, here, equates to ‘internally supported intellectual power’ (p. 258). Aherne deftly demonstrates how Coleridgean thought penetrated these institutions and, the implication is, by extension both countries’ political structures. Further studies might develop from this one to explore Coleridge’s influence in other spheres: for instance, his effect on feminine circles—such as Charlotte Yonge’s Goslings (a society of which several of the Coleridge women were a part in the later nineteenth century)—would be fruitful ground for a rich extension of this work.

These books’ collective contribution is wider reaching than their individual parts, because both make the same fundamental case: that Coleridgean methodology underpins the tenets and politics of modern-day education. The training in ‘innovation and methods’ (van Woudenberg, p. 31) that Coleridge received in Göttingen would not become part of the British model for several more decades—not, in fact, until Coleridge’s own disciples introduced them. But, as van Woudenberg and Aherne each demonstrate, the Coleridgean methodological model goes beyond this. Underpinning it is Coleridge’s exposure to the tree-structure of the Göttingen *Realkatalog*, which, van Woudenberg posits, ‘anticipates [the structure] of modern computer filing systems’. Coleridge ‘understood the usefulness and practicality of such a catalogue in stimulating new entry points for research’ (p. 129), and this system is utilised in the notebooks’ revelation of systems of cross-referencing, cataloguing ideas according to subject (often in discrete notebooks for different purposes), and in ‘interlinking […] sources to stimulate new paths of investigation’ (p. 167).
In the decades that intercede between van Woudenberg’s and Aherne’s respective periods of focus, Coleridge’s method developed. In Aherne’s reading, by Coleridge’s ‘Sage’ years, talking had replaced note-taking as the main output of the Coleridgean methodology: ‘Coleridge’s intellectual method was embodied in his voice; it needed no revision’ (p. 136). Although Coleridge was continually perplexed by his listeners’ perceptions of ‘Obscurity’ in his conversation and prose writings—in 1830 he wrote to H. F. Cary to ask for some ‘data’ on this phenomenon (p. 39)—reading Aherne alongside van Woudenberg indicates that the monologue performed a similar cataloguing function to the notebooks in Coleridge’s earlier years: Aherne explains that talking ‘allowed [Coleridge] to make complex interactions and draw intriguing associations between what would otherwise have appeared unrelated (and unrelatable) fields of knowledge’ (p. 37). The upshot for Coleridge was that his ideas were given ‘room to breathe’; Aherne poetically writes that talking ‘promoted the diffuseness of an intellect that would otherwise collapse inwardly on itself’ (p. 39). But it also foregrounds the quest to bring together different subjects, and to promote interdisciplinary thinking just at the moment when the potential for a polymathic education was being undone.

The answer to Aherne’s central question—how does one become Coleridgean? (p. 280)—is, by these books’ approaches, straightforward enough to write: become multidisciplinary, and communicate this academic diversity to successive generations. Performing the adequate research to get to that stage, however, might take a lifetime of thought, reflection and (almost inevitably) procrastination. And that is no bad thing: as both these studies, indicate, Coleridge was nothing if not a collaborative thinker. Recognising the centrality of cooperation in Coleridgean thought helps to (re)situate Coleridge, and Coleridgean methodologies, as a locus of academic, archival and pedagogical developments in both the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.94>

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Date of acceptance: 12 September 2019.

There’s an infinitive verb that scholars have been using with increasing relish over the last decade or so: ‘to problematise’. I am a fan neither of the term nor of the practice, believing that for most readers, poetry is opaque enough as it is, the critic’s job being to offer what clarity she can. But it is something we do in any case, casting and recasting arguments from an increasing number of unique, sometimes obscure, angles, refracting the light, turning what might have been telescopes—a way of bringing something far off and lovely across the boundaries of time, place, genre or identity, into our newly resplendent ken—into kaleidoscopes: pretty, interesting but useless as navigational aids.

Percy Bysshe Shelley’s was already a problematic corpus, fraught with fragments, co-authorings, deletions, contradictory manuscript copies and titular revisions, almost to the same rank degree that his was a problematic corpse: decayed, dismembered, sainted, quarantined; all of it dubious and difficult and intensely intriguing. Surprisingly, one subject on which the poet was more or less consistent throughout his brief career, was his conception of ‘life’ as that which quenches the original fire, fades the inspirational coals and stains ‘the white radiance of eternity’. Over and again in poems, essays and letters, he tries new ways of saying the same thing about the dulling effects of the passage of time on one’s ability to perceive. For him, poetry was the one antidote, the tool capable of restoring that lost vision, that freshness and vitality. And one can see why he returned to the topic: it’s an *ars poetica*. Writing poetry, for Shelley, matters to the practical health—political, spiritual, relational—of the whole world, else why write it?

In *Shelley and Apprehension of Life*, Ross Wilson surveys this territory, asking, what is unique in Shelley’s mode of apprehension, what is consistent in it? Along the way, he problematises what had been clear for most Shelleyans. Wilson begins a paragraph in the book’s Introduction with a dropped quote—odd for a topic sentence, but a stylistic choice I suppose—from Shelley’s essay ‘On Life’. It reads: ‘We live on, and in living, we lose the apprehension of Life’ (p. 2). Wilson then offers his own *ars poetica*, giving us as near a thing to a thesis as we find here, in, ‘this book is an extended reading of this statement’. He then qualifies—in particular, I argue—that Shelley does not merely acquiesce in the obliteration of ‘the apprehension of life’ by ‘living’. On the contrary, his work is at once a profoundly informed, incisive critique of what might be called mere life and an attempt to bring the resources of poetic imagination to bear on the restoration of what he calls ‘the apprehension of life’.

To such a claim, it seems to me that the only possible response is: ‘well, yes’. It isn’t that he’s wrong: Wilson has as thorough a command not only of Shelley’s work, but of the drafts, minutiae, scholarly tradition and philosophical allusions that make it up as I’ve seen anywhere. He’s right. Such a restoration is (one of) Shelley’s intellectual projects. But isn’t the point so correct as to be obvious? Had any of us thought Shelley on the side of acquiescence? Had we imagined that
he thought poetry impotent against such forces? Shelley’s energetic optimism, despite everything, his belief in the possibility of cultural renewal is more or less the one thing people know about Shelley apart from that he was rebellious all the way down to his blackened, lofty soul.

Wilson’s prose is full of verbal tics that one is welcome to find endearing—it takes all types to make a world, does it not? Here, we’ll encounter ‘to be sure’ and ‘certainly’ as double qualifiers in the same sentence (p. 3). There (and there, and there), the term ‘however’ used, yea though the sentence contains no contrary (p. 2). Over yonder ridge, a large handful of sentences with missing articles (‘life is [...] nor [a] more broadly thematic concern’) and there some misplaced modifiers (‘Life in this book is [...] performance itself’). The book has the most fun with problematising English idioms. We find such exotica as ‘acquiesce in’ where ‘acquiesce to’ is meant, or poems that ‘tail off into infinity,’ rather than ‘trail off’ (p. 43). We are rapt in the fun redundancy of ‘also, moreover’ (p. 26), and a recurrent ‘then’ (as on p. 35) not at the conclusion of an argument, as would be expected, but at the start of a new point. So Wilson knows how to keep things lively. We’re often strained, thinking, what do you mean by ‘x’? and then, having reworked the sentence into proper syntactic form, concluding, ‘oh, that old thing? Of course’, as we piece together that the point is something we’ve assumed since our first readings of Shelley as undergraduates.

But this isn’t such a bad thing. It shows, to my mind, how thoroughly Wilson is a Shelleyan. If, as the poet has it in Defence of Poetry (1821), ‘Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world’, it also ‘makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar’. This is what Wilson’s book does so well. Who isn’t familiar with the old dictum that ‘life turns out never to confirm mere thoughts about it’ (p. 38)? Or who hasn’t in their pockets an old penny, inscribed with ‘language’s ability to articulate regret is close to being overwhelmed’ (p. 36)? Or again, who doesn’t wish they had one for every time they’d heard some version of ‘thinking happens differently in poetry and in prose’ (pp. 16–17)? And what object could be more familiar than ‘tyranny [...] is [...] exploitation’ (p. 20)? But Wilson burnishes those dull pennies, casting away the veil of familiarity—every thought herein has been thought a thousand times—and making them appear strange, even revelatory. Shelley and the Apprehension of Life is a problematic book, despite its truly wonderful-to-behold textual and philosophical work, but only because it is so dedicated to problematising the familiar, which is to say, only because it is so much like poetry.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.95>

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Date of acceptance: 3 September 2018.

*Women’s Literary Networks and Romanticism: ‘A Tribe of Authoresses’* is the first book to appear in a new series, ‘Romantic Reconfigurations: Studies in Literature and Culture 1780–1850’, edited by Tim Fulford and Alan Vardy. This collection, edited by Andrew O. Winckles and Angela Rehbein, illuminates the environments of production, circulation and consumption of women’s writing across Britain. It broadens Lindsay O’Neill’s (2014) work, which focuses on local, international, familial and professional epistolary networks by conceptualising networks in more abstract ways. As such, it joins scholarship by Clara Tuite and Jenny Russell (2002) and Ileana Baird (2014), whose works portray networks as social constructions, fostered in coffee-houses or literary salons. In their collection, Winckles and Rehbein usefully complicate and nuance the term ‘network’; their volume separates networks, and the articles, into two groups. Part One is ‘networks of association and interest’, denoting groups of actual women who corresponded or worked in a community with each other: they embody ‘physical and relational networks’ (p. 10). Within this subgroup, Chapters 2–4 adopt traditional archival and literary methods while Chapters 5 and 6 use a wider approach incorporating digital humanities. The second section focuses on ‘Networks of Meaning’, referring to authors and texts that have not commonly been seen to connect with one another, but which interacted in esoteric ways: through narrative styles or citations, for example. Chapters 7–10 trace in-text networks and references between writers, analysing evidence of influence and knowledge transfer. The latter group of chapters usefully recognises that networks extend beyond epistolary exchanges and thus the collection refines and progresses current understanding of the term ‘network’.

The collection starts with Winckles’s analysis of Sally Wesley’s religious and literary networks, before moving on to Felicity James and Rebecca Shuttleworth’s research on abolitionist women writing and operating in the Midlands. Chapter 4, by Amy Culley, argues the importance of researching Romantic writers’ lives and networks which surpassed the traditional boundaries of the Romantic era. These chapters all testify the control these women writers had over their works. In particular, Winckles, James and Shuttleworth note that Wesley, Watts and Heyrick used private means of publication and circulation, such as scribal or pamphleteering, to disseminate their writings. Winckles argues in Chapter 2 that Wesley’s method of scribal publication and manuscript circulation increased her control of the spread of her works and fostered greater communality between women. His conclusion—that Wesley demonstrates how religion can be both lived experience and social interaction—marries well with the dissident and abolitionist networks
analysed in Chapter 3. James and Shuttleworth’s ‘Collaborative Campaigning in the Midlands, 1820–34’, discusses Midlands society, religion, literature and reform, illustrating the reformative abolitionist agenda of Susanna Watts and Elizabeth Heyrick against politicians such as William Wilberforce. This chapter provides valuable new insight into how the Midlands network of dissident women contended for the immediate abolition of slavery, employing their literary skills and societal positions to incite change, without compromising their strict morality or their conventional roles as women. Chapter 4 also focuses on letters: Culley’s ‘Ageing, Authorship, and Female Networks in the Life Writing of Mary Berry (1763–1852) and Joanna Baillie (1762–1851)’ casts Berry and Baillie’s correspondence as amicable and mutually beneficial material, which nurtured each writer’s reputation and legacy. Culley’s extensive use of correspondence highlights the great value of considering a writer’s age in relation to their networks and entire career.

The fifth and sixth chapters adopt a digital humanities approach to studying networks. Michelle Levy and Reese Irwin’s ‘The Female Authors of Cadell and Davies’, analyses qualitative and quantitative data supplied by digitally processing a corpus of letters exchanged between Cadell & Davies and their female authors. Chapter 6, ‘Modelling Mary Russell Mitford’s Networks’, by Elisha Beshero-Bondar and Kellie Donovan-Condron, identifies and traces patterns in the correspondence of Mary Russell Mitford, noting the significant shift from primarily male correspondence to a much greater male–female mix, along with her developing tendency to correspond with individuals involved in writing and publishing as her career progressed. These two chapters include many tables and figures of data; regretfully, the graphics in Beshero-Bondar’s and Donovan-Condron’s chapter are hard to decipher, perhaps reflecting the complexity of Mitford’s epistolary patterns. Levy and Irwin’s tables and graphs allow the reader to track with them the most prolific communicants with Cadell & Davies, identify the popularity of different genres and reveal the number of editions female writers published with this house. The graphs in the fifth chapter add clarity to the factual interpretations and complement the close readings undertaken of the letters, allowing Levy and Irwin to theorise on the purposes and motives of pre- and post-publication correspondence between the women writers and Cadell & Davies, and in turn connect this to the power held by the publishers and writers.

Part Two commences with Harriet Kramer Linkin’s analysis of the citational network between Mary Tighe and various other female writers, before moving onto Robin Runia’s examination of Maria Edgeworth’s letters to Thomas Day and Mary Wollstonecraft, in which Runia highlights Edgeworth’s writing style as versatile. Chapter 9 summarises the problematic and male-dominated posthumous network of Sade, before identifying similarities between Mary Shelley’s Mathilda and Sade’s Eugénie and suggests Shelley was a potential reader of Sade. Chapter 10, the volume’s closing chapter by Eric Hood, could be called extraneous, as it focuses on Elizabeth Barrett Browning, typically understood as a Victorian rather than a Romantic writer. The Introduction to Women’s Literary Networks and Romanticism justifies the inclusion of this chapter in order to provoke considera-
tion of the time frame considered as Romantic. However, as this chapter takes its primary material from a text published in 1856, one could say the editors have overextended the period. Hood’s chapter focuses on the significance of invoking Charles Fourier in *Aurora Leigh*, analysing Fourier’s sexual and economic liberalism in relation to Barrett Browning.

The first three chapters of Part Two stay safely within the conventional confines of the Romantic period. Linkin’s chapter, ‘The Citational Network of Tighe, Porter, Barbauld, Lefanu, Morgan and Hemans’, analyses an impressive number of women writers who invoked Tighe by name, quotation or epigraph, arguing that these invocations and citations position Tighe as a pivotally influential on these women and their receptions. She reveals a symbiotic relationship established through citation, aggrandising Tighe’s and the other writers’ cultural capital. Linkin’s analysis is fair, as she includes more equivocal invocations of Tighe in her analyses of Lady Morgan’s and Felicia Hemans’ references to Tighe. This chapter prompts reconsideration of the great significance women found in each other’s works and starts to reconfigure definitions of the term ‘network’. Equally, Chapter 8, ‘Edgeworth’s *Letters for Literary Ladies*: Publication Peers and Analytical Antagonists’, also highlights connections between writers, as evidenced in their texts. Runia argues that Edgeworth changed her structure and register for different audiences, demonstrating this well through her quotation of Edgeworth’s different writing styles for addressing Day’s conservative and Wollstonecraft’s radical political opinions regarding marriage. Similarly, Rebecca Nesvet in Chapter 9, ‘Mary Shelley and Sade’s Global Network’, argues that Mary Shelley had significant knowledge of Sade’s short story ‘Eugénie de Franval’ and this is evident in Shelley’s *Matilda* (1819–20), which Nesvet characterises as an English adaptation of the French writer’s work. These chapters, while more hypothetical in identifying and analysing potential connections, influences and intertextualities, testify to the new approaches and understandings of how networks manifested during the Romantic period.

The topic of literary networks extends beyond this book’s remit, as Winckles and Rehbein acknowledge. Notwithstanding their refusal to make any ‘claim to comprehensiveness’ (pp. 10–11), however, their collection represents a valuable contribution to work in this field, both complicating our understanding of the different manifestations of networks and the individuals within them, and encouraging future scholars to think of networks as other than solely epistolary exchanges.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.96>

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**Date of acceptance:** 5 September 2019.

At the conclusion of his speech unveiling the Memorial Fountain at Cockermouth, H. J. Palmer declaimed ‘Poets are born, not made’, but, as Saeko Yoshikawa demonstrates throughout *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism*, national figures and places of literary pilgrimage are in fact made (p. 143). Discussing a poet so intimately related with a specific geographical space, Yoshikawa’s analysis demonstrates that this association between poet and landscape was closely curated and developed, and that it ‘had been fostered by guidebooks of various kinds as much as by more formal studies, biographies and literary criticisms’ (p. xi). As such, this book provides a clear and convincing history that is equal parts spatial analysis, reception history and cultural materialism—all surrounding the relationship between William Wordsworth and the Lake District. Yoshikawa achieves this through paying close attention to the development of specific sites in ‘a new cultural phenomenon’ of Wordsworthian tourism across the nineteenth century (p. 1), beginning with Black’s *Picturesque Guide to the English Lakes* (1841). These spaces provide the structural schema of the book, creating a clear demarcation of spaces divided by various stages of Wordsworth’s life as well as various stages of publications.

Beginning with an anonymous artist’s album of sketches of ‘key scenes of Wordsworth’s life and works’, Yoshikawa notes that this previously unpublished album not only ‘follow[s] the conventional tourist routes but mak[es] significant deviations that signalled the new direction and destinations of nineteenth-century Lake District tourism’ (p. 12). These new directions are shaped and characterised by the increasing presence of the railroad and other modes of transportation, providing one of the most surprising arguments in this insightful analysis: the role of the railroad in shaping the sociocultural phenomenon of Wordsworth’s Lake District geography as a site of literary tourism. Making these spaces much more accessible to a broader audience, the railroad enables a different kind of tourism, what the *Adams’s Pocket Guide* (1852) describes as ‘summer excursionists’, more casual tourists less interested in the eighteenth-century aesthetic of the picturesque and more interested in ‘the poet’s domestic life’ (pp. 83 and 69). As a result of these forces, several key sites of Wordsworthian tourism emerge: specifically, the poet’s grave, Dove Cottage, Rydal Mount and his childhood homes and haunts.

Surprisingly, through most of the nineteenth century, it was not Dove Cottage that received the majority of the attention; instead, it was Rydal Mount and its gardens that attracted the preponderance of visitors. In large part, this is attributable to the association of Wordsworth as landscape gardener. The gardens at Rydal Mount ‘were the space where visitors could feel closer to the gardener-poet, and after his death many of them tried to sense his spirit lingering
among the trees and flowers and rocks he had tended, and in which he, in turn, had found inspiration’ (p. 99). This oft-noted association between Wordsworth and gardens, flowers and nature provides a unique opportunity for Yoshikawa to trace reminiscences of Wordsworth from below, that is from the servants, townspople and others who would have seen the poet in his daily life. These narratives reinforce a relationship between the poet and nature, while also demonstrating his ‘taciturn and unsociable’ character: one neighbour remembers that Wordsworth ‘seemed to have loved stones and mortar more than people’ (p. 157). The association of the poet with the natural and the landscape is reaffirmed not only through the cultural material of sketchbooks and guidebooks, but also from these important anecdotes.

Yoshikawa notes that a shift occurs not simply away from the picturesque tourism that characterised early trips to the Lake District, but also a noticeable movement away from the places of the adult Wordsworth toward the spaces associated with the poet’s youth. This shift is attributable, as Yoshikawa notes, to the publication of Wordsworth’s autobiographical The Prelude (1850). Yoshikawa notes that, as The Prelude ‘became more widely known and read […] his birthplace at Cockermouth and school at Hawkshead began to be more frequently visited’ by these literary tourists (p. 13). By blending this reception history into her analysis of these spaces, Yoshikawa is able to provide a fascinating ‘spatial turn’ in this history of poetry and of cultural landscapes. Chapter 5, which focuses on both Cockermouth and Hawkshead, draws thoughtfully on Pierre Nora’s arguments regarding the need to ‘construct a “site of memory” […] as there were no “environments of memory”’ from which the tourists might draw (p. 143). Thus, this spatial analysis that draws on literary criticism, reception history and cultural materialism also draws deftly on memory studies in order to challenge and illuminate the ways in which we commemorate, celebrate and construct the towering figure of William Wordsworth. Certainly, this book will prove useful, as a result of its complex and multidisciplinary approach, to a wide range of scholars and students.

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<https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.97>

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Date of acceptance: 18 April 2018.
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