Women Writers, Authorship, and the Late-Eighteenth Century Novel: Representations of the Female Author in the Minerva Press (1785- 1800).

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore a selection of female-authored novels published by the Minerva Press between 1785 and 1800. I then turn to a selection of letters written by Minerva Press female writers and sent to the Literary Fund: a charity established to support impoverished writers. Literary society scrutinised and often belittled the female author. It was widely disparaging of the popular novel as well. The Minerva texts I investigate shed light on how these women writers, often dependent financially on their pens, strategically represented their own and their characters' literary interactions and activities during an era of transformation in the literary marketplace and social turbulence. I trace how they defined and redefined the subject position of the female author, arguing that these wide-ranging presentations provide predominantly conservative narratives about the female author and on the popular novel but that they also destabilise Romantic-period criticisms of both.

My analysis comprises five chapters, the first four focus on a specific formal element of a novel and the fifth focuses on letters. Chapter One concentrates on authorial ascriptions on title pages of Minerva Press novels, demonstrating that the Romantic-period authorial identity is protean and constructed from multiple, changeable components. Examining prefaces in Chapter Two, I focus on how these paratexts define the position of the author strategically in relation to the subject positions of other participants in literary society: reviewers, dedicatees, parents, and literary critics. In Chapter Three, I analyse women writer-characters in Minerva novels and in Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796), exploring how specific aspects of authorship are emphasised. Chapter Four turns to presentations of the reader and of the novel in a range of Minerva and non-Minerva books and in the diaries of Anna Larpent. It traces the ways in which these readers responded to novels, balancing narratives highlighting the negative influence of novels with alternate, more positive effects of reading novels. In Chapter 5, I concentrate on the letters to the Literary Fund, examining the various strategies writers use to plead for assistance.

Cumulatively, my readings trace Minerva writers' contributions to contemporary debates on authorship and the novel. The multiple narratives within Minerva texts provide less-researched,

alternate, and diverse representations of authorship. In so doing, they highlight that the Romantic-period female author and the popular novel were defined within fluid and symbiotic networks of expectation and reception. These writings reveal narratives which emphasise the flexibility of identity, the complex position of authors, and how social, reputational, literary, and financial prejudices and expectations shaped presentations of popular authorship in the late-eighteenth century.

Contents

Textual References and Abbreviations

I have provided full references in all footnotes which are the first reference to a text, and then I have followed a system of surname, condensed title, volume (if applicable), and page number for all subsequent references to the same text.

Full Minerva Press titles have not been given in the body of the thesis or in the footnotes as these are often wordy, for example *Ellen Woodley. A Novel. In Two Volumes. By Mrs. Bonhote, Author Of Parental Monitor. Olivia; Or, Deserted Bride. And Darnley Vale; Or, Emilia Fitzroy*. Rather, I have given the main core of the title, *Ellen Woodley*, and omitted the later parts of a P transcript unless these parts are specifically relevant to the point being made. I capitalised all words in a title but did not write them in uppercase, as was usually standard on title pages, for ease of reading.

In the interests of clarity, abbreviations have been kept to a minimum, with the exception of those given below:

CUP – Cambridge University Press

ECCO – Eighteenth Century Collections Online

MUP – Manchester University Press

MWCW – The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft. Volume 7: On Poetry; Contributions to the Analytical Review, 1788-1797, ed. by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (London: William Pickering, 1989)

NCCO – Nineteenth Century Collections Online

ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

OUP – Oxford University Press

RLF – Royal Literary Fund

Introduction

I well remember […] the vast amount of evil which would be done to me, in the very bloom of my life, in dragging me before the public as a writer.[1]

In 1794, when Mary Martha Sherwood (née Butt) finished writing *The Traditions*, a historical romance, she did not intend for it to be published. Her father, the Reverend George Butt, had different ideas, and sent it to William Lane. Lane was the proprietor of the Minerva Press, the largest publishing house of fiction in London in the 1790s. Reverend Butt's motivations were financial; a family friend, Mr. St. Quentin, had fallen into debt and publishing his daughter's novel by subscription could alleviate St. Quentin's penury.

Mary Sherwood's first novel was published when she was eighteen. Her memoirs – written by her daughter, Sophia Kelly, at Sherwood's behest and after Sherwood's death in 1851 – recall Sherwood's 'mortification' at imagining and enduring her 'hardly finished' novel being made public and herself 'dragged' before the world as an 'authoress'.[2] Sherwood did not attach her name to *The Traditions*; instead, it was published under the ascription, 'by a Lady'. *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood* suggests that she was afraid to be cast as a writer in public and that she did not discriminate between being an author or a novelist; she did not want to be labelled or known as either. Mary Sherwood (in concert with others, perhaps) attempted to influence her presentation as an author by withholding her name from her title page. Similarly, *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood* provides a controlled account of Sherwood's life and authorship. Kelly understood the 'high value set upon even the signature of her [mother's] name' and admits that 'much, very much, has been withheld'.[3] Kelly selected specific

[1] Sophia Kelly, *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood, Chiefly Autobiographical; with Extracts from Mr. Sherwood's Journal During His Imprisonment in France and Residence in India. Edited by Her Daughter, Sophia Kelly*. (London: Darton. and Co., 1854), p. 126. Google eBook. Mary Martha Butt married her cousin, Captain Henry Sherwood, in 1803.

[2] Ibid., p. 125; Ibid., p. 125; Ibid., p. 125; Ibid., p. 126.

[3] Ibid., p. iv; Ibid., p. v.

material to create a positive legacy of her mother and suppressed certain information for reasons of privacy and reputation.

The establishment and preservation of a female writer's positive and socially pleasing reputation was of paramount importance in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries given the widespread and pejorative scrutiny of female writers at this time. Attacks on women writers came from various angles: nature, physicality, ability, intention, and form of writing. Richard Polwhele observed that some women writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, defied and despised 'NATURE'S law', had 'crane-like neck[s]', 'borrow'd hair', and displayed 'sapient sneer[s]'.[4] Hannah More caricatured the 'ever multiplying authors' specifically as 'novel writers' who are 'raw girl[s]' who, erroneously, are 'tempted to fancy that [they] can also write'.[5] More's and Polwhele's disdain for such figures is vehement and their comments illustrate a range of injurious views on female writers. Polwhele contends that women writers are unnatural while More criticises the lack of ability in many female novelists specifically. Given society's disdain, it is no wonder that Sherwood's memoirs portrayed her to shy away from being labelled an author and everything that term connoted. The way *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood* describes Sherwood's entrance into the literary marketplace illuminates the public interest in authors and, consequently, the careful, delicate, and strategic management of the identity and reputation of an author. This identity management occurred in a range of texts: memoirs, letters, and novels. This thesis will trace how women writers at the Minerva Press portrayed the figure of the author and authorship in their novels and letters. It demonstrates how their narratives engaged with the literary prejudices, gender expectations, economic systems, and the commodification of the author and it argues that these representations do not necessarily overcome, subvert, or improve the milieu in which the female author operated in the Romantic period.

[4] Richard Polwhele, 'The Unsex'd Females; a Poem' (New York: republished by Wm. Cobbett, 1800), p. 7. *ECCO*; Ibid., p. 8; Ibid., p. 8; Ibid., p. 25.

[5] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1799), Vol. 1, p. 169. *ECCO*; Ibid. p. 169; Ibid., p. 170; Ibid., p. 170.

This interest in a female author's ability to write, her motives for writing, and her identity pervaded early Romantic literary culture. Particular and negative scrutiny was reserved for female novelists due to the era's belief that women were intellectually and physically inferior to men and because the form of the novel was largely derided by reviewers and by some writers. In James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), the male narrator uses St. Paul to declare that the ideal woman is one who displays 'modesty, meekness, prudence, piety'.[6] Fordyce then continues to use this to justify why women should be treated with 'tenderness and respect' but also with 'candid admonition' should they swerve from these qualities.[7] Female novelists were particularly worrying individuals. As Rictor Norton observes, 'the very act of *publishing* was innately immodest, thus unwomanly'.[8] From the middle of the eighteenth-century, the novel, too, was seen as dangerous. Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* 4 (1750) spoke of the 'wild strain of imagination' present in novels and trajectories such as those of Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) warned of the harmful effects of this imagination and also of quixotism on women.[9] In the 1780s and 1790s, women novelists gained public presence but were condemned for writing 'pernicious and frivolous' tales of fancy and vice.[10] Such tales were 'utterly unfit' to be consumed by female readers and to be created by female writers.[11] The female novel writer was the antithesis of the era's modest and meek ideal woman. She thus occupied a complicated and subjective subject position, where traditional expectations of literature and gender converged discordantly. The novel in the late eighteenth-century was a vehicle through which writers participated in this constant commentary about authorship. This is evident from the number of self-conscious allusions to authorship and the wide-

[6] James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell […], 1766), Vol. 1, p. 7. *ECCO.*
[7] Ibid., p. 8; Ibid., p. 8.
[8] Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London; New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 2.
[9] Samuel Johnson, '*The Rambler.* No. 4. *The modern form of romances preferable to the ancient. The necessity of characters morally good*' in *Samuel Johnson: Selected Essays from the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler*, ed. by W. J. Bate (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 9-16 (p. 10).
[10] T., 'Volume VIII. *October 1790*. Article XLIII. *Euphemia*. By Charlotte Lennox', in *MWCW*, p. 307.
[11] Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, p. 149.

ranging strategies used for presenting female authors in Minerva Press and other contemporary novels.

This thesis examines the portrayal of the female author in and through novels published by the Minerva Press between 1785 and 1800 and in letters written by Minerva female authors between 1792 and 1832. These texts demonstrate, as John Brewer writes, that 'the ways in which the arts worked in eighteenth-century England are often best understood […] through […] those we have now largely forgotten'.[12] Indeed, the Minerva texts function as exposés of largely unstudied and largely obscure narratives of authorship. While my study draws on novels and on letters, the discussions found within them are not confined to the reputation and construct of the novelist. These texts show that the status, the construct, and the reception of the female author, and of authorship more broadly, were key, enduring concerns for Minerva Press female writers. Their texts offer new and specific constructions of the female author in the Romantic period. These portraits of the author are mediated in several ways: by the formal element in which the presentation is located (title page, preface, novel); by expectations of written forms and genres; by expectations of gender; and by the commodification of the book trade. Additionally, personal experiences of being a female writer of popular fiction in the 1790s influenced the representations of authorship in letters by Minerva writers. In this thesis I am concerned with what the Minerva novels said about authorship, how their presentations of authorship interacted with sociocultural and literary expectations, and how these might inform current debates on the Romantic author.

The demographic of authorship fundamentally altered in the 1780s and 1790s due to an influx of female writers in the literary marketplace. The end of the eighteenth century was a time when 'a striking number of women authors were acknowledged' on title pages, writes James Raven.[13] In his

[12] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 1997), p. 13.

[13] James Raven, 'Historical Introduction: The Novel Comes of Age', in *The English Novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, ed. by Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwerling (Oxford: OUP, 2000), Vol. 1, pp. 15-121 (p. 48).

study, Raven distinguishes between novels attached to female names (those works claiming to be by women) and novels with identified female authors; he finds that the number of novels purported to be by female authors and the number of novels by identified women writers both increased.[14] He concludes that 'female authorship was deliberately being promoted' and 'the march of the woman novelist (and the more prolific individual woman novelist) is clearly visible'.[15]

The Minerva Press played a crucial role in changing this demographic, as Elizabeth A. Neiman demonstrates. She identifies a twofold 'Minerva effect' on the Romantic era book trade; the Press increased the number of published women writers by attracting new female writers to publish with them, signifying that the Press altered the gender balance of the literary marketplace.[16] Secondly, Neiman shows that Minerva writers were more likely to have a 'prolific' or persistent career, which she defines as publishing six or more novels.[17] The Minerva Press meant that more female writers had novels published and it meant that female and male authors were more likely to have sustained authorial careers.

My thesis aims to contribute to research on women writers and on the Minerva Press by considering how Minerva writers reflect on women authors' identities and their "marches" (for there is not a singular or homogenous "march") within their novels and letters. I focus on the Minerva Press because it is a 'critically underappreciated' participant in the Romantic literary marketplace, because a large proportion of its identified authors were female, and because it 'welcomed (and perhaps cultivated) a female signature'.[18] I use the phrase 'literary marketplace' to refer to the large network of people and actions involved in the writing and selling of a book: writers, publishers, copyeditors, reviewers, readers, bookshops, circulating libraries, patrons, and others. At a time when the literary

[14] Ibid., pp. 48-49.
[15] Ibid., p. 48; Ibid., p. 49.
[16] Elizabeth A. Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics: The Politics and Poetics of Romantic Exchange, 1780-1820* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), pp. 7-11.
[17] Ibid., p. 9.
[18] Kathleen Hudson, 'Introduction', in *Women's Authorship and the Early Gothic: Legacies and Innovations*, ed. by Kathleen Hudson (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 5; Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, p. 11.

marketplace was being transformed by the flourishing of the novel, the concept of the author was also changing and broadening. The Minerva texts present the author in the Romantic period in ways which nuance, at times, the denigratory stereotypical images of the author portrayed in review periodicals and in texts such as Polwhele's 'The Unsex'd Females'. The Minerva texts also approach and construct the author differently to discussions of authorship found in writings such as Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition in a letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (1759), where Young valued 'Genius' whereas imitators used 'materials not their own'.[19] Also, the author is often not singular, 'self-originating and original' and autonomous, despite these characteristics being commonly ascribed to the Romantic period author by 'early-nineteenth century poets and critics' as Andrew Bennett has noted.[20] Crucially for my research, authorship was a widespread concern for many participants in the literary marketplace throughout the Romantic period and there are many texts which discuss authorship both at length and in passing comments. Minerva Press novels contain self-reflexive references to authors and portrayals of authors and authorship on their title pages and in their prefaces and through the novels' writer-characters and reader-characters. Similarly, the Minerva letters to the Literary Fund reflect on and provide accounts of authorship. I compare writings on authorship found in the Minerva corpus against those found in non-Minerva texts. I trace how Minerva Press authors participated in discussions about Romantic authorship, shaping this dialogue and altering the concept of the Romantic author.

Following JoEllen DeLucia, I argue that the idea of the singular Romantic genius is no longer a tenable lens for studying the Romantic-period author.[21] In this thesis, my analysis of title pages suggests that writers had multiple authorial identities and these identities were formed from interchangeable, constituent parts. Furthermore, I propose that the presentations of authorship in

[19] Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition in a letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (London: A Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), p. 9. *ECCO*; Ibid., p. 12.
[20] Andrew Bennett, *The Author* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 71; Ibid., p. 71.
[21] JoEllen DeLucia, 'Radcliffe Incorporated: Ann Radcliffe, Mary Ann Radcliffe and the Minerva Author', *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840*, 23 (2020), 94-108 (p. 96) <http://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.74>

prefaces and in novels nuance our sense of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century concept of the author figure because they portray multiple manifestations of the female writer. These diverse constructions spotlight the versatility of the author figure. They interact with and nuance the stereotypical image given commonly in review periodicals of the young, inexperienced female writer creating imitative novels. Moreover, I suggest that the portrayal of the author is specific to the part of the text in which the discussion of the author is found. For example, a preface contains different representations of the author and of authorship to those found on a title page or in the plot of a novel. Similarly, a letter provides a different portrait of a female novelist compared to a female writer as a character in a book. The part and form of the text influences the presentation of the author provided. Consequently, these writings demonstrate that the Romantic author is a critical concept which is both flexible and expanding. They illuminate how the presentation of the Romantic author is informed by *who* wrote a discussion of authorship as well as *where* and *how* it appears. As such, these writings illuminate alternative narratives of the female author, elements of which are shared by other female authors and elements of which are portrayed to be unique. These presentations counter the Romantic period's tendency to homogenise female popular authors – even if they do not intervene wholesale in the derogatory portrayal of the female author.

This thesis uses the term writer to refer to the human creator of a text. Usually the form of the text is a novel and so sometimes this term is used interchangeably with novelist. Author and author-figure are used to refer to the identity and embodiment of the writer created by a text. Identity means a collection of characteristics which can be real, performed, and projected. Individuals can have many different identities. Professional identities can be those outside the field of writing (e.g. lawyer or Reverend) but, as Chapters One and Two expand upon, some Minerva writers emphasise that 'Author' is their professional identity. Authorial identities are where the author-figure is presented; this may or may not include professional identities outside of writing or personal elements, such as married titles. Finally, this thesis uses popular novel to refer to works written for the general reading

public's entertainment and perhaps edification, including sentimental tales, gothic novels, and historical novels.

The Expansion of the Literary Marketplace and the Minerva Press

The British literary marketplace expanded throughout the eighteenth century. Recent scholarship has identified multiple reasons: the industrial revolution, an expanded middle-class, higher rates of literacy, and the establishment of printers and libraries in more provincial areas. Concurrently, there was a surge in the number of novels written, printed, and read. In this growing marketplace, writers experimented with form and content. This experimentation, along with the practical contextual factors, are reasons for the rise and development of the novel form in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century.

Scholars have taken many approaches when studying the expansion of the literary marketplace. James Raven traces the legal history of printing while using qualitative data of print runs and book sales to show that these circumstances were germane for the establishment of new publishing and printing houses. This, Raven writes, moved 'the book from luxury to commodity'.[22] As this thesis will explore in Chapter One, the commodification of the book trade had implications on the presentation of the author. Gary Kelly focuses on the political and social culture of the late-eighteenth century. The protean nature of the novel meant it was the ideal form to reflect social realism issues. Thus, the novel 'was reformed and reformulated for the unfolding political and social conflicts of the time'.[23] Anthony Mandal, similarly, recognises that the novel appealed to both conservative and revolutionary individuals.[24] He identifies that reactions to the novel were split; it was seen both as a

[22] James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 10.
[23] Gary Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 187-208 (p. 189).
[24] Anthony Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: A Determined Author* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 38.

serious literary form and as uncontrolled and indulgent.[25] Indeed, late-eighteenth century novels range from reactionary to radical, serious to fanciful, in tone and in content. Jane West's anti-Jacobin novel *A Tale of the Times* (1799) and William Godwin's revisionist *Caleb Williams* (1794) capture the wide political spectrum of novels in the 1790s. Alongside these, Gothic novels and sentimental tales connected the form with extreme and heightened emotions, while novels such as Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) demonstrate the more equivocal stance a novel could take regarding social and political matters.

Changes in eighteenth-century reading numbers and habits may also account for the expansion of the book trade. Ian Watt's thesis in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) has its limitations (seeing Richardson, Defoe and Fielding as the writers who first wrote 'the novel', for example), but it pioneered a wider contextualised approach to the form. *The Rise of the Novel* examined the social, economic, and formal contextual changes in the eighteenth century and argued that they mutually culminated in the novel form.[26] Watt's work leaves a strong legacy. Michael F. Suarez posits that urbanization, economic development, and a severe jump in the population – from 7.2 million in 1780 to 8.6 million by the end of the century – explains the expansion of the literary marketplace and the emergence of new readerships.[27] The novel was in great demand with these new readerships. As the number of people in England increased, the proportion of those who constituted the reading public and were consumers of fiction increased correspondently. William St. Clair writes that readers read as much for pleasure as for instruction by the end of the century.[28] After Watt, criticism took a formalist approach to the study of the novel or turned increasingly to the authorial figure to determine the development of the novel. Some trace the rise of the novel through the careers of specific individuals;

[25] Ibid., p. 38.

[26] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957).

[27] Michael F. Suarez, S.J., 'Business of Fiction: Novel Publishing, 1695-1774', in J. A. Downie, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 22-38 (pp. 22-23).

[28] William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 7-18. For the view that reading was a social, often communal, habit, see Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: reading together in the eighteenth-century home* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017).

Bonnie Latimer connects the genesis and rise of the novel with Samuel Richardson, for example.[29] The increase in literacy in the population, the formation of a female, bourgeois readership, the developments in printing machines, the advancements in paper technology, and the establishments of new booksellers and libraries in provincial and rural areas were all contributory factors to the growth of the marketplace and to the development of the form of the novel.

William Lane and the Minerva Press exemplify how a company thrived and contributed to the growing book trade. Lane began selling books from his father's shop; he then moved and began operating out of 13 Aldgate Street, London. Then, in 1775, Lane moved to Leadenhall Street, bought his first printing machine and printed his first two books, *The Delicate Objection: or, Sentimental Scruple* and *The Embarrassed Lovers Or, The History Of Henry Carey, Esq. And The Hon. Miss Cecilia Neville*. He kept expanding from then on until the early nineteenth century. He was entrepreneurial: a printer, publisher, bookseller, advertiser, and circulating library supplier. Lane printed his own newspaper, *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, in which he promoted his own works. He devised promotional documents such as *A Tale addressed to novel readers of the present* (1795) which, through the form of a story, advertised 38 titles published within the last decade.[30] He included advertisements appealing to new novelists and promising fair pay within the pages of books he published; there were vignettes of his 'generous' character in *The Follies of St. James Street* (1789) and descriptions of the Minerva Press as having 'liberal' pay in *Edwardina* (1800).[31] He capitalised upon readers' attention by inserting advertisements including edited excerpts of favourable reviews of other novels in the back of books. The end of volume two of Isabella Kelly's *The Abbey of St Asaph* publicises *Edward de Courcy* and *Pauline* and their reviews.[32] Lane also expanded the geographical

[29] Bonnie Latimer, 'Popular Fiction after Richardson', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 29:2 (2016), 241-260.

[30] William Lane, 'A Tale addressed to novel readers of the present' [1795], General Reference Collection C.184.f.25(1). British Library, London.

[31] Anon., *The Follies of St. James's Street* (London: William Lane, 1789), Vol. 2, p. 18. *ECCO*; Catherine Harris [Isabella Kelly]*, Edwardina* (London: Printed for the Author at the Minerva-Press, 1800), Vol. 2, p. 51. *ECCO*.

[32] Isabella Kelly, *The Abbey of Saint Asaph* (London: William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1795), Vol. 2, L12^{v}. *ECCO.*

reach of the Press; the 1795 Catalogue of the Minerva General Library promised 'five hundred thousand volumes' of assorted forms and genre to circulating libraries and its members.[33]

Lane also curated an image of the popular author. The Minerva's 1798 Prospectus contains a list of the names and selected works of ten 'Particular and Favorite [sic]' authors: Anna Maria Bennett, Regina Maria Roche, Elizabeth Meeke, Agnes Musgrave, Anna Howell, Mary Charlton, Isabella Kelly, Elizabeth Parsons, Elizabeth Bonhote, and Anna Maria Mackenzie.[34] The Minerva author is presented as female, with a full name given, no married title provided, each with at least three works of fiction published, 'favorite' (and therefore popular with readers), and all with at least one novel published between 1796 and 1798, so therefore very contemporary. The 1798 Prospectus captures the Minerva's strong branding and also the specific activities regarding promoting and controlling authorial presentation. This thesis sees the innovation and strategy in the Press' promotional documents as endemic in the women writers' representations of authorship in their novels and in their letters to the Fund.

The Scholarly Narrative of the Novelist in the Romantic Period

The narrative of the rise of the novel in academic scholarship has focused predominantly on male authors. Scholars observe that Samuel Richardson and Daniel Defoe began and shaped the concept of the modern novel – writers like Aphra Behn notwithstanding – while Walter Scott's historical novels are perceived as important interventions which incited a revaluation of the popular novel and of the novelist in the 1810s.[35] Amongst these bracketing male figures, however, there is a discernible and large group of women writers. Feminist scholars of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Elaine Showalter,

[33] Minerva Literary Repository, Library and Printing-Office, *A catalogue of the Minerva General Library, Leadenhall-Street, London. Containing upwards of five hundred thousand volumes, in all classes of literature*. ([London]: [1795]). *ECCO*.

[34] 'General Prospectus', *Minerva Literary Repository, Library and Printing-Office* (1798). 7375 057.2 Shelf reference: T1. St Bride Foundation and Library, London.

[35] Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott and the Historical Novel', in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 2: English and British Fiction 1750-1820*. (Oxford: OUP, 2015). *Oxford Scholarship Online*, 2018. <10.1093/oso/9780199574803.003.0017>

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Toril Mori, reinstated women writers in literary history by identifying female literary traditions in the Romantic period.[36] This research enabled recovery and analytical work on individuals such as Charlotte Lennox, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Wollstonecraft: individuals whose works and lives receive regular attention in today's scholarship.

Following this reinstation, some scholars see the novel of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries as a female form of writing which women writers took to quickly and in large numbers.[37] Pat Rogers posits that 'for the first time female authors were able to infiltrate a new literary form, the novel, almost at its inception, and operate on terms of equality with men'.[38] The developing and expanding literary marketplace and the newness of the novel form provided an ideal environment for aspiring female writers to enter the book trade and for them to shape the concept of the female author and authorship.

Since the 1970s, certain female novelists have received much attention, as individuals (e.g. Jane Austen) and as groups, such as the Bluestockings. This has resulted in a scholarly narrative which states that 'women writers assumed a strong public identity' in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[39] Such groups are viewed as evidence of a literary sorority where women assisted each other, collectively forging a public presence through 'networks of patronage, correspondence and publication'.[40] Narratives of female achievement and success are frequent in scholarship on women writers. Such studies are often founded on examinations of the economic conditions of authorship

[36] See: Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (revised and expanded edn.) (London: Virago, 1999); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. (London: Yale University Press, 1980); Toril Mori, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London; New York: Methuen Press, 1985).

[37] See: Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 good women writers before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986), Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (revised and expanded edn.) (London: Virago, 1999), and Stuart Curran, 'Women readers, women writers', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 169-186.

[38] Pat Rogers, 'Social Structure, Class, and Gender, 1660-1770', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by J. A. Downie (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 39-54 (p. 50).

[39] Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 3.

[40] Ibid., p. 205.

and how women prevailed against a patriarchal society and a patriarchal literary marketplace.[41] Catherine Gallagher states there was a 'predominance of debt in the rhetoric of authorship'.[42] Equally discernible, according to Gallagher, is the notion that female authors owed their society or their readers and that writers could repay this debt through their texts.[43] Jennie Batchelor, meanwhile, concentrates on the labour inherent in being a female author and in being a woman in the Romantic period: authorship was 'experienced differently by women writers for whom the pressures exerted by literary labour were greatly intensified by their obligation to perform the cultural work of femininity'.[44] As Batchelor's monograph reveals, being a female author in the Romantic period was labour intensive and sometimes financially unrewarding. Matthew Sangster's recent work reinforces the economic precarity of authorship for male and female writers.[45] This thesis joins these debates on presentations of authorial poverty through its analyses of the letters written to the Literary Fund in Chapter Five.

By studying the Minerva Press, this thesis seeks to contribute to scholarship on the female author. I endeavour to trace the various strategized presentations of the female author on Minerva Press title pages, in the Minerva prefaces and plots, and in the Minerva writers' letters to the Literary Fund. The presentations are strategic because they connect the author-figure to other participants in the literary marketplace and in society and because they define the author in relation to these other subject positions. These comparisons provide different ways to approach the Romantic period author. It becomes clear that the Romantic-period author is a mutually defined, symbiotic, and evolving construct, whose identities and narratives are constructed from multiple components and whose presentation is dependent on external individuals and market forces.

[41] See Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[42] Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, p. xxii.
[43] Ibid., p. xxii.
[44] Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship 1750-1830* (Manchester: MUP, 2010), p. 2.
[45] Matthew Sangster, *Living as an Author in the Romantic Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Critical Approaches to the Minerva Press

Current scholarship on the Minerva Press arises out of work on the Romantic literary marketplace, on the novel, and on the women writer. Due to the vastness and variety of the Minerva corpus, the range of authors who published through the Press, and the innovative business strategies of William Lane, the Minerva Press can contribute to many fields of research: the development of the British and overseas literary marketplace, form and genre studies, author studies, and others. Consequently, research on the Press is varied in approach and multifaceted in topic. As such, and as Elizabeth A. Neiman and Christina Morin note, Minerva scholarship demonstrates 'resistance to the typecasting of Minerva authors, genres and readers'.[46] This thesis seeks to illuminate how the Minerva texts themselves interact with and at times resist the typecasting of the female author and the popular novel.

One prominent strand of very recent work approaches Minerva Press novels and writers in relation to a specific type of Romantic fiction: the Gothic novel. Minerva novels offer new perspectives on the evolution of the Gothic genre, on the relationship between gender and genre, and on the networks of influence and imitation extant between notable Gothic writers, such as Ann Radcliffe, and Minerva contemporaries.[47] Interest in the Gothic pushes scholars to the Minerva Press, and interest in the Press channels reconsideration of the Gothic. However, the Minerva Press is too multifaceted to be associated with one genre. Accessing Minerva novels predominantly through a Gothic lens risks overlooking other key concerns of these texts and the Minerva corpus. One of these key concerns is author studies.

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[46] Christina Morin and Elizabeth A. Neiman, 'Re-evaluating the Minerva Press: Introduction', *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840*, 23 (2020), 11-20 (p. 12). <https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.69>

[47] See: Yael Shapira, 'Beyond the Radcliffe Formula: Isabella Kelly and the Gothic Troubles of the Married Heroine', *Women's Writing*, 26:3 (2019), 245-263 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2015.1110289> and Kathleen Hudson, ed., *Women's Authorship and the Early Gothic: Legacies and Innovations* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020). See Anna Shajirat's article on the evolution of the gothic genre, pp. 21-42, and Hannah Doherty Hudson's article on gendered language in reviews of gothic works in Hudson's edition, pp. 43-64, in particular.

The construction and manifestation of the Minerva Press author fascinates Minerva scholars, including myself. Researchers cite instances of imitation and derivation in Minerva Press novels as evidence of networks of exchange and influence between Minerva and non-Minerva writers. Neiman argues that 'Minerva's derivative themes are an accidental inheritance that furnishes writers with the language to respond to Romantic-era debates'.[48] In her monograph, Neiman states that Minerva novels 'collectively recraf[t] derivative conventions anew' and it is through this that a collective Minerva authorial identity can be discerned.[49] Neiman draws connections between the Press and works by William Godwin, Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Wordsworth, and others to demonstrate that Minerva authors also broached debates concerning class, women's rights, poetics, and the self. This comparative focus intimates that Minerva novels merit study in their own right, as well as for these comparative connections. It aggrandises the attention bestowed on Minerva novelists because of the fresh light Minerva novels shed on the works of their better-known contemporaries.

Other scholars concerned with author studies take a different approach by focusing on individual authors. Anthony Mandal argues that Elizabeth Meeke's use of anonymity and pseudonymity reflects contemporary literary convention and illustrates 'the liminal, often shifting identities that Georgian women found themselves obliged to occupy, whether by choice, misfortune, or circumstance'.[50] According to Mandal, Meeke's name was nothing more than a 'subordinated "tag"' which gives no insight into the identity or persona of the author.[51] Studying the pseudonymous identity Rosalia St. Clair, the ascription under which Agnes C. Hall wrote, Anne Frey highlights the versatility of identity, arguing that 'a name can no longer be presumed congruent with ethnic identity'.[52] Mandal and Frey disconnect the author from the authorial ascription: an approach which

[48] Elizabeth A. Neiman, 'A New Perspective on the Minerva Press's "Derivative" Novels: Authorizing Borrowed Material', *European Romantic Review*, 26:5 (2015), 633-658 (p. 633) DOI: <10.1080/10509585.2015.1070344>
[49] Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, p. 44.
[50] Anthony Mandal, 'Mrs. Meeke and Minerva: The Mystery of the Marketplace', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 42:2 (2018), 131-151 (p. 139). <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693116> [accessed 29 January 2022]
[51] Ibid., p. 135.
[52] Anne Frey, 'The National Tale and the Pseudonymous Author: Mobile Identity in the "Rosalia St. Clair" Novels', *European Romantic Review*, 25:2 (2014), 181-199 (p. 189). DOI: <10.1080/10509585.2014.882049>

highlights the complexity and craft of an authorial ascription and warns scholars away from biographical readings.

My research follows Marion Rust's approach to Susanna Rowson's authorial identity but it looks at authorial identities throughout the Minerva Press, rather than in the case of one particular author. Rust contends that 'the competing demands of self-formation and self-regulation not only occurred on personal, social and political planes but were the very stuff of their as-yet-unspecified linkages'.[53] She identifies the synergy of public and private, personal and political aspects of identity. The complexity of identity and identity management pervades Mandal's, Frey's and Rust's scholarship and shows that the presentation of the author is influenced by numerous contexts. Taking an approach which focuses on a collection of Minerva authors enables this thesis to suggest that authorial identity in the Minerva corpus is multifaceted for individual writers and across the publishing house. The Minerva authorial identity can be defined through its lack of a collective, shared identity, notwithstanding that elements of authorial ascriptions could be used by multiple writers.

This thesis aims to show that Minerva writers carefully and strategically represented their own and their characters' literary identities, interactions and activities. I posit that title page authorial identities are collocations of individual constituent parts. Some of these elements are professional, while others are more personal, like married titles. For example, Isabella Kelly's authorial identity on the title page of *Eva* (1799) comprises her full name, 'Isabella Kelly', along with references to three of her previous works – showcasing her professional experience as an author – and a dedication to the Duchess of Gloucester, insinuating a connection to this member of the royal family. These elements combine to project a specific manifestation of Kelly as the author of *Eva*. Portraits of the author in prefaces and within the novels are nuanced differently. Anna Maria Bennett's writer-characters, for example, speak to stereotypical expectations of the gothic novelist and the female historian. I also consider how economic experiences and professional needs of Minerva Press authors influence the

[53] Marion Rust, *Prodigal Daughters: Susanna Rowson's Early American Women* (Virginia: North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 37.

authorial identities presented. This view of authorship as flexible, versatile, strategized, and hybrid is threaded throughout this thesis. Thus, this thesis' intended contribution to current knowledge is that reflections on the writer and on the novel evolved in concert with and in response to contemporary writings on the same topics and in relation to the expansion and commodification of the book trade and, by extension, the author. I argue that some Minerva texts intervene in the largely denigratory reputation and reception of the female writer and the popular novel by nuancing ways of approaching this figure and their work, while others yield to denigrating stereotypes. As such, Minerva novels highlight the conflicted, nebulous, and versatile construction and subject position of the Romantic period author which is highly influenced by a wide range of factors. The Minerva texts did not explicitly elevate the figure of the female author; rather, their compliance with social and literary expectations hampers the recognition and respect their texts, on occasion, solicit.

While Mandal's and Frey's works implicitly hold that identity is impersonal, I consider identity to be affective. Readers respond to projected identities by drawing on their personal experiences, emotions, and situations. Explaining the affectivity of literature, Linda Zunshine writes that some 'narratives seem to demand outright that we process complexly embedded intentionalities of their characters, configuring their minds as represented by other minds, whose representations we may or may not trust'.[54] Zunshine proposes that readers respond to fiction through relative and comparative frameworks. Given Marisa Bortolussi's and Peter Dixon's suggestion that humans respond to fictional characters and real peoples similarly, it follows that writers can respond to their situations and personal lived experiences through their writings.[55] The writer draws on their experience as they represent authorship and the novel, and the reader uses their experiences of these to interpret these writings. I use this approach and Eleanor Ty's suggestion that 'books could also help define an individual's subject position in society and outline the way one's subjectivity was constituted' to read

[54] Linda Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 159.

[55] Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon, *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002). See chapter 5 'Characters and Characterization', pp. 133-165, specifically.

references to authorship, to author-figures, and to novels as instances where writers compose and define their subject position in the Romantic period.[56] Authorial ascriptions, prefaces, characters such as female authors and novel readers are all meaning-making entities which respond to, shape, and reflect contemporary perspectives on the Minerva Press and on the author and authorship in the Romantic period.

The Reception of the Novelist in the Romantic Period

To situate the Minerva Press presentations of authorship within their contemporary milieu, this section provides an overview of commentary on the novelist in the Romantic period. Romantic period interest in the figure of the author is evidenced by the large number of review periodicals, prefaces, letters, and diaries which broach the subject. Late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century writings on authorship provide a counterpoint to Michel Foucault's disinterested but not indifferent question, 'what difference does it make who is speaking?'.[57] It mattered very much who was speaking and who was writing what in the eighteenth century. Duncan Wu and Alan Rawes posit that the era's growing interest in autobiography accounts in part for the growing curiosity about the author.[58] Meanwhile, Mark Rose locates the 'tendency to read authors' works in the context of their biographies […] with the rise of the novel, the literary form explicitly devoted to the display of character'.[59] Novels responded to the era's interest in the personal; prefaces contain snapshots of personal circumstances, narrators profess to be telling their own stories, and some novels such as *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792) were thinly-veiled accounts of real life scandals.

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[56] Eleanor Ty, *Empowering the Feminine: the narratives of Mary Robinson, Jane West, and Amelia Opie, 1796-1812* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. vii.

[57] Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?' [1969], in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James D. Faubion, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (New York: The New Press, 1998), Vol. 2, pp. 205-222 (p. 222).

[58] Duncan Wu, 'Romantic life-writing', in *A History of English Autobiography*, ed. by Adam Smyth (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), pp. 179-191. DOI: <10.1017/CBO9781139939799.013>; Alan Rawes, 'Autobiography', in *Byron in Context*, ed. by Clara Tuite (Cambridge: CUP, 2019), pp. 230-237. DOI: <10.1017/9781316850435.029>

[59] Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA.; London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 121.

The specific identity of a writer greatly intrigued reviewers. Romantic period reviewers speculated frequently on the identity and disposition of an author. Reviewers took especial interest in associating the quality and content of a written work with its creator, meaning that a writer's identity influenced the reception of their work. Writing anonymously themselves, reviewers often foregrounded the assumed gender of the writer: '[t]his Novel is the work of an author unhackneyed in the ways of men or of authorship. […] She, for we suspect it is the work of a female pen…'.[60] Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote that '[w]e imagine it is a female production, and taking this for granted, think…'.[61] The anonymous reviewer and Wollstonecraft structured their comments around their speculative identifications of the writers' identities and sex, revealing that a writer's gender was an important concern in reviews and that authorial anonymity shaped a reviewer's judgement of a work and, by extension, its writer.

Alongside gender, an author's other professional roles impacted upon the reception of a writer and their work. One reviewer lamented that they are 'sorry to see the name of a clergyman, and, we believe, a philologist, in the title-page of so dull a novel'.[62] The reviewer indicates their shock that a clergyman has written such a boring novel, implying that a man of his profession and learning should create a more interesting text. Walter Scott, for his part, hid his identity. Scott wrote that 'the reputation of novel-writer may be prejudicial' to an anonymous author who was 'a man of grave profession'.[63] Scott's profession as a lawyer and his position as Clerk of Sessions may have resulted in his anonymity. The reputation of being a novelist brought with it expectations of character, disposition, and behaviour which were incompatible with other more respectable and more respected

[60] '*Iphigenia, a Novel*', *The Critical review, or, Annals of literature*, 4 (1792), 114 (p. 114). *British Periodicals.*
[61] W., 'Volume II. *October 1788*. ARTICLE XXVII. *The School for Fathers; or the Victim of a Curse. A Novel*', in *MWCW*, p. 46.
[62] '*The Secluded Man; or, the History of Mr. Oliver*', *The Critical review, or, Annals of literature*, 25 (1799), 473 (p. 473). *British Periodicals.*
[63] Sir Walter Scott, 'Preface to the Third Edition [1814]', in *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, ed. by Claire Lamont with an Introduction by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: OUP, 2015), pp. 378-381 (p. 378); Ibid., p. 378.

professions, revealing in turn the relative lack of respect for the novelist, if not for the writer more broadly.

Reviewers were so caught up in authorial identity that, at times, they challenged the identity of an author, either explicitly or subtly. One reviewer contended that the work was not a debut production because 'unless we took the lady's words for it, we should rather have supposed that this was not the first time'.[64] These speculations are slightly tentative, but the reviewer implies their experience in deducing 'true' authorial identities by declaring that 'there is a great deal of deception in these matters', justifying their deduction that the author is not a neophyte.[65] Reviewers could be overconfident in their surmises about the author of a text, and misjudge the author entirely. In a review of *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786), the reviewer changed the gender of the pronouns from 'her' to 'his' to indicate artfully that they had discerned the true identity of the author: 'the lady so often indulges her fancy in describing improper scenes, that we suspect the cap is assumed to palliate other errors, and to obtain that interest which the author could not, with equal confidence, expect in his proper dress'.[66] Notably, this reviewer is wrong! Anna Maria Bennett wrote *Juvenile Indiscretions* and, while the title page declared her ascription as 'Author of Anna, or the Welch Heiress' (a novel which was published anonymously), the preface and dedication of *Juvenile Indiscretions* use female pronouns consistently. *Anna* and *Juvenile Indiscretions* were claimed as by 'Mrs. Bennett' on the title page of *The Beggar Girl* in 1797, revealing the truthful use of pronouns in *Juvenile Indiscretions*' preface.

Such reviews illustrate that reviewers read from the text to the author and that reviewers delighted in connecting a text to an author of their own imagining. These reviews also substantiate Kathleen Hudson's view that 'their [women's] motives were intensely scrutinised, and indeed their

[64] [B…K], '*The Sentimental Deceiver; or, History of Miss Hammond. By a Lady*', *Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal*, 71 (1784), 77-78 (p. 77). *British Periodicals.*
[65] Ibid., p. 77.
[66] '*Juvenile Indiscretions*. A Novel. In Five Volumes', *The Critical review, or, Annals of literature*, 62 (1786), 68-69 (p. 68). *British Periodicals.*

very right and ability to pick up a pen in the first place was both overtly and covertly questioned'.[67] While the review of *Juvenile Indiscretions* shows that female and male authors' lives and works received significant scrutiny, the same review and the review of *The Sentimental Deceiver* attests the challenges faced by female writers specifically. Reviewers imposed identities on them and rejected the identities writers promoted through their title pages and prefaces. The prevalent interest in the figure of the author appears, somewhat paradoxically, alongside a disinclination on the part of reviewers and perhaps other readers to trust the self-representations of writers.

Novels can provide another means of understanding the reception history of the novelist and authorship in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The Minerva Press novel *The Enchantress: Or, Where Shall I Find Her?* (1801) provides a fictional account of how a character, the lonely bachelor Sir Philip Desormeaux, responds to two anonymous female writers. Desormeaux advertises for a wife in a national newspaper and is intrigued by two anonymous responses. He acts to uncover the identity of each writer and the novel ends when he discovers these. *The Enchantress* reflects society's interest in authorial identity and it reveals the darker side to identity and reception by emphasising the readers' abilities to impose identities on others.

The tension between anonymity and discovering an identity drives the novel. Anonymity is attractive initially and the two female writer-characters have styles described as 'precious' and as full of 'fire and spirit' meaning they are 'worth the pursuit'.[68] However, Desormeaux becomes frustrated, oscillating between lusting after the women and being annoyed at their elusiveness; the titular enchantress is referred to as an 'incognita' and then a 'syren'.[69] 'Syren' evokes an image of the beautiful women of classical mythology whose bewitching singing is thought to lure sailors to their

[67] Hudson, 'Introduction', in *Women's Authorship and the Early Gothic*, p. 6. Hudson draws on Lauren Fitzgerald's work to identify the female Gothic: Lauren Fitzgerald, 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 13-25 (p. 15).

[68] Anon., *The Enchantress; or, Where Shall I Find Her?* (London: Minerva Press, for William Lane, 1801), p. 66. *Chawton House Novels Online*; Ibid., p. 4; Ibid., p. 4.

[69] Ibid., p. 13; Ibid., p. 93.

deaths.[70] It is not necessarily a compliment and alerts the astute reader to the negative reactions to both anonymity and female identity.

From Laura Mulvey's theoretical standpoint of the male gaze, in which women are objects upon which men gaze rather than autonomous and individual entities with their own independently-ascribed value, the anonymous 'enchantress' and 'M.M.' become figurines created in the mind's eye of the male protagonist in the novel.[71] Their lack of names and identity allows Desormeaux to create idealised characters for each anonymous writer, designing their bodies, motivations, and actions as he pleases. At one point, Desormeaux is looking through a window at a woman he believes is his incognita. The staging of this scene and the narrative style emphasise the control assumed by the male character over the woman's identity when she is anonymous:

> He ardently longed […] to make her speak, to realize the visions of his fancy, to enter into conversation with her, perhaps to find her the very woman who would captivate his heart; for already he felt inclined to think a pretty hand and arm, and a talent in drawing, indispensable requisites.[72]

Walls create divisions between internal and external spaces, between private rooms and public streets. Windows, with their transparent glass, act as a pseudo-boundary separating the interior, domestic space occupied by the woman from the outside.[73] Similarly, anonymity works as a boundary of both protection and separation between writer and reader. However, both boundaries are permeable. Desormeaux is shown to compromise the privacy and security afforded by anonymity by gazing through the window at the woman. The window becomes a liminal space and she is framed,

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[70] 'siren, n', in *OED Online* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/180372> [accessed 16 January 2022]

[71] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16:3 (1975), 6-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>

[72] Anon., *The Enchantress*, p. 42.

[73] Desiree Henderson looks at Rowson's use of windows in 'Windows on Writing: Susanna Rowson and the Scene of Female Authorship' to rebut the argument that women's writing belonged in the domestic sphere. See Desirée Henderson, 'Windows and Writing: Susanna Rowson and the Scene of Female Authorship', *Studies in the Novel*, 49:2 (2017), 149-169 DOI:10.1353/sdn.2017.0014. I interpret windows here as a narrative device conveying how anonymity enables readers to impose identities on an author.

like a portrait, for Desormeaux to gaze upon at his leisure. John Mullan and Robert Griffin each posit that anonymity is congruent with power over one's identity.[74] In contrast, in *The Enchantress* the anonymous female writers are simultaneously designed and disempowered by Desormeaux's male gaze. Entitling her a 'dulcinea', as Desormeaux does at one point, reinforces the power men presume to have and wield over women.[75] 'Dulcinea' parallels another literary figure, that of the unseen Dulcinea del Tobosa in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605-1615). Don Quixote believes Dulcinea to be a princess and he envisages her as he pleases. Both Dulcinea's letters in *Don Quixote* and the anonymous 'dulcinea' in *The Enchantress* are viewed by the male characters as blank canvases on which the men can configure their ideal woman. Anonymity allows these male characters to exert greater control over female figures.

In reading his anonymous letters, Desormeaux parallels the reader of the anonymous novel. Readers of anonymous novels and readers of novels with named authors can configure a writer as they please and they can subject anonymous writers to imposed, imagined identities. *The Enchantress* captures the enticing quality of anonymity but it also alerts readers to the darker side of authorial identity and anonymity. By assimilating anonymity and authorship with the marriage market in *The Enchantress*, anonymity is shown to have serious consequences for the female author's autonomy. Male control pervades the narrative. *The Enchantress* reveals that to write is to put oneself in the public sphere and to subject oneself to others' scrutiny. Even when withholding one's private identity, perhaps through anonymity, a writer and their identity are subject to examination and conjecture. All writers, anonymous and named, faced this when publishing their works. Indeed, the private lifestyle of Ann Radcliffe led individuals to suppose she had been detained in an asylum for madness or that she was dead during the early 1800s.[76] Thus, the projected authorial identity or persona of the writer

[74] See: John Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 51 and Robert J. Griffin, 'Introduction', in *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Robert J. Griffin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 1-18 (p. 8).

[75] Anon., *The Enchantress*, p. 67.

[76] Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, p. 203.

was subject to reinterpretation by external parties. Managing one's identity is complex and not finite; elusive and honest writers had the identities they projected rejected or manipulated by others.

A Reception History of the Minerva Press Novel

The interest in and the criticism of the writer took a particular direction when the author was a novelist, even if the novelist published anonymously, and when the text was a Minerva product. Samuel Johnson's narrow and belittling definition of the novel as a 'small tale, generally of love' in 1755 establishes the pejorative tones in which the form was largely talked about for the rest of the eighteenth century.[77] In the second half of the eighteenth century, the novel was maligned by some for being easy to write and for being formulaic and imitative. Hannah More derided novels for the 'frightful facility of this species of composition'.[78] The cryptically-named 'Grumio', writing for *The Bee; or Literary weekly intelligence* in 1792, concluded that '[s]ome [novelists] aiming at wit and humour, degenerate into pertness and foolery; and others, walking upon the crutches of imitation, retail the defects of their masters, without any beauty or ingenuity. Most of them are filled with low tea-table talk, without one spark of genius'.[79] He declares Samuel Richardson, Tobias Smollett, and Henry Fielding exempt from this criticism, but states that it is a 'grievous task to proceed with patience to the end of almost all our other modern novels'.[80] The tendency to compare 1790s novels against those produced half a century earlier results in dissatisfaction, in most instances, as novelists faced accusations of unoriginality and simplicity from reviewers.

The tension surrounding perceptions of the novel and the fact that these were broadly denigratory can explain in part why some eighteenth-century writers eschewed identifying their works

[77] Samuel Johnson, 'novel, n.s', in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/novel_ns> [accessed 5 August 2021].
[78] More, *Strictures*, p. 170.
[79] Grumio, 'Observations on Some English Novels', *The Bee: Or Literary Weekly Intelligencer*, 8 (1792), 133-129 (p. 129). *British Periodicals.* This journal has misnumbered pages, hence the idiosyncratic page span of this article.
[80] Ibid., p. 129.

as novels and took care to present their text and themselves carefully by pointing their reception in a specific direction. Regarding *Camilla* (1796), Frances Burney explained that 'I do not like calling it a Novel: it gives so simply the notion of a mere love story, that I recoil a little from it. I mean it to be sketches of Characters & morals, put in action, not a Romance'.[81] Burney's description of a novel as a 'mere love story' is reminiscent of Johnson's belittling definition of the form forty years earlier. Similarly, Maria Edgeworth admitted that she did not want to call *Belinda* (1801) a novel, framing the decision about a text's form as an authorial right:

> **Every** [sic] author has a right to give what appellation he may think proper to his works. The public have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that is presented.
>
> The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale—the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel. Were all novels like those of madame de Crousazhttps://www.proquest.com/docview/2138576855/Z000031990/545AC23B9C9447AEPQ/1?accountid=8018 - footnote1, Mrs. Inchbald, miss [sic] Burney, or Dr. Moore, she would adopt the name of novel with delight: But so much folly, errour [sic], and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious.[82]

Edgeworth highlights that there were a few select novelists whose works gave the form some éclat. Notably she forges a predominantly female canon of novelists who she admires. Due to the numerous inferior novels, Edgeworth does not want to tarnish her reputation by associating her work with that form and opts for a 'moral tale' instead.

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[81] Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay),* Vol. 3, ed. by Joyce Hemlow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 117, qtd. in Anthony Mandal, 'Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Devoney Looser (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), pp. 16-31 (p. 20).
[82] Maria Edgeworth, 'Advertisement', in *Belinda. By Maria Edgeworth, in three volumes* (London: Printed for J. Thomson, 1801) Vol. 1, p. i. *ProQuest eBook*.

Edgeworth and Burney tried to avoid labelling their works as novels, and by extension themselves as novelists. While these attempts were not wholly successful – indeed Edgeworth and many Minerva Press novelists invoked Burney's name as the superior model novelist of their era as Chapter Two will discuss – their actions emphasise the broadly tarnished reputation of a novel and novelist. Additionally, Burney's and Edgeworth's writings reveal that a writer and a text circulate within a network of expectations and reputation and that authors can attempt to direct these. Edgeworth is directing the reader to read *Belinda* away from the 'folly' and 'vice' of the general run of novels and instead in comparison to the specific framework of novels she listed.

The reception of the novel took a specific form when associated with or produced by the Minerva Press. The Minerva Press became typified specifically as a publishing house producing the worst novels. Reviewers commented that 'there is no want of that, which we have too much reason to say, is a distinguishing characteristic of the production from the '*Minerva* press,' namely, the frivolous and the improbable'.[83] The Press' name was used to indicate a dearth of literary quality: as one reviewer remarks, to call something a Minerva Press novel 'is a short way of saying that the imagination runs riot; that scenes and characters are described without the faintest references to probability: that is it steeped in sickly sentimentalism and defaced by a miserable execution'.[84] The Press was representative of the 'dreadful days' of the early Romantic period: after Samuel Richardson and Oliver Goldsmith and before Walter Scott and the early Victorian novelists.[85] Reviewers viewed this era as a time when the literary marketplace was 'an impenetrable gloom peopled only by the nightmare phantoms of the Minerva press'.[86] Additionally, references to the Minerva Press were a means of criticising usually celebrated writers. The popular yet controversial gothic novelist Matthew

[83] '*Ellen Rushford. A Novel*', *The Critical review, or Annals of literature*, 14 (1795), 225-226 (p. 226). *British Periodicals.*

[84] 'ART. VIII. Modern Novelists: Charles Dickens', *Westminster Review*, 26:2 (1864), 414-441 (p. 416). *British Periodicals.*

[85] 'The Light Literature Of Other Days.' *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art,* 14:374 (1862), 766-768 (p. 768). *British Periodicals*.

[86] Ibid., p. 766.

Lewis's *Feudal Tyrants* (1807) was 'neither larger nor finer than has issued from the pen of many a teeming maiden in the sanctuaries of the Minerva press [sic]'.[87] Similarly, Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) could not 'claim any very decided superiority over the thousand-and-one volumes with which the Minerva Press inundates the shelves of circulating libraries, and increases, instead of diverting, the ennui of loungers at watering places'.[88] To be compared to the Minerva Press in this way meant a non-Minerva writer was tainted by association; their work was met with derision and prejudice and the writer ostracised from respectable literary society into the 'gloom'.

As the reputation of the author depended in part on the reputation of the novel, authors were similarly tarnished or they had to consider the reputation of the novel in their discussions of authorship. The widely negative treatment of the Minerva Press and of the novel more broadly and some novelists' inclinations to shun the labels of 'novel' and 'novelist' reveal that each writer and reader had their own take on the novel and on the figure of the author. Each text is an act of definition performed in conjunction with definitions imposed or assumed by external parties. The Romantic novel was protean and malleable, and the various constituent parts of a novel – title page, preface, and plot – were germane spaces for exploring the concept and presentation of the author and for a writer to offer a specific and precise incarnations of the author figure. The Minerva writers' discussions of authorship reveal that the Romantic period author could take many diverse forms which are multifaceted in construct and effect in what they illuminate about Romantic-period narratives and perceptions of authorship.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. Chapters One to Four consider the presentation of the author and reader in a sequence which mirrors the structure of a novel: title page,

[87] 'ART. VI. *Feudal Tyrants*', *The Critical Review, Or, Annals of Literature,* 11:3 (1807), 273-278 (p. 274). *British Periodicals.*

[88] 'ART. IX. The Wanderer; or Female Difficulties', *The Quarterly Review,* 11:21 (1814), 123-130 (p. 124). *British Periodicals*.

preface, plot. Chapter One focuses on authorial ascriptions on title pages of Minerva Press novels between 1775 and 1809, blending bibliographical and biographical methodologies. The corpus used for this chapter spans from when William Lane published his first book in 1775 to when he retired and Anthony King Newman took over in 1809. Chapter One proposes a new taxonomy of authorial ascriptions which refines the concept of anonymity and reveals the nuances of anonymity and identity creation and management. It argues that there is not a linear or monolithic relationship between an authorial ascription and a writer, the creator of a work. A writer can use different ascriptions throughout their career and, by so doing, hybrid authorial identities are created, formed out of exchangeable units which complement other units to build a specific identity for a specific text. Yet, even a single ascription points outwards to other manifestations of a writer's identity. Underlying Chapter One is a tension about the ownership of the title page. It is very difficult to assert which participant in the writing and publishing process – author, printer, publisher, copywriter – decided on the authorial ascription used, and of course this could have been decided on a case-by-case basis specific to each author or to each novel published. This chapter concludes that any authorial identity is a composite projection forged by a collection of various ascriptions and influenced by multiple factors. The Minerva Press ascriptions attest the complex, ever-changing identity and position of the Romantic period female author of fiction.

Chapter Two focuses on prefaces and dedications in Minerva Press and contemporary novels. It views the preface as a seminal part of a novel which strategically introduced and frames the author and the novel to a reader. Minerva prefaces present the author in relation to various other subject positions. They address reviewers; address patrons; present the author within the paradigm of the parent; and craft frameworks of reception. The various means of presenting the author in prefaces sustains the versatility and complexity of an author's subject position demonstrated in Chapter One. Chapter Two shows the author to be multifaceted, a figure of strategic presentation and reinvention.

Chapter Three analyses the fictionalised female author. It looks at four female writer-characters; three in Minerva Press writer Anna Maria Bennett's fictions and one in Frances Burney's

novel, *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth* (1796). It analyses how each characterisation of the female writer responds to a stock type of the female author: Bennett caricatures a scribbling young epistler, a gothic novelist, and a female historian, and Burney portrays a female philosopher. While Bennett's writer-characters are comedic, mockable figures which amuse and entertain, they elude straightforward reading as each character is imbued with equivocation. They parody the female author, lampooning yet reinforcing specific stereotypes. This chapter posits that Bennett's writer-characters prompt incisive reflections on Romantic-era reading taste, arguing that Bennett's portrayals satisfy public expectations of the female author while the subtexts indicate the commercial and popular value of these derided figures' creations. Burney's female philosopher highlights the political potential of writing, but her writer-character is not as commercially orientated. Burney shows writing to be a means for women to address society's sexual double standards. Bennett's and Burney's writer-characters show the alternate means of constructing the female writer, but their characterisations emphasise different aspects of the female author: respectively, her popularity and commercial appeal and her political capacity.

As the novelist was defined in part by what she wrote and by her audience, Chapter Four concentrates on reader-characters within Minerva Press and contemporary novels. It traces their reasons for reading, what and how they read, and the effects of reading. These characters reinforce the Romantic-period aphorism that reading was injurious to female disposition and conduct. However, they mediate this by posing a gender egalitarian approach to reading which is not found in review periodicals. Minerva novels portray that male and female readers can be influenced by novels alike. This chapter closes with a study of the diaries of Anna Larpent, an avid novel reader, and traces how she critiques the Minerva novels she read and her reasons and the effects of reading novels. By attending to the language and marginalia of her diaries, this chapter concludes by arguing that novel reading was a means of practising and developing organisation, communication, criticality of thought, and professional habits. The Minerva Press reader-characters and Larpent's diaries attest that there was no singular, universal response to novel reading, destabilising the reviewers' generalist and

generalising approach to novels. In constructing such narratives of reading, these texts offer us alternate ways of realising the effect and value of the novel; it is a form germane for entertainment, instruction, distraction, and critical thinking.

Chapter Five draws on non-fiction sources to provide insight into the representation of the precarity of female writers' lives. It concentrates on letters written by Minerva Press writers sent to the Literary Fund between 1792 and 1832. This extended timeframe is necessary as authors reflect on their authorship in the 1790s in letters written in the 1820s and 1830s. The Minerva Press writers frame authorship and their authorial careers using the lenses of daughterhood, age, and illness, while asking for financial aid from the Literary Fund. The precarity of authorship conveyed in these letters counters the images of authors as whimsical, quixotic, and naïve conveyed in periodicals and in caricatures of authors in novels. These women lived in genteel and extreme poverty, and many spent time in debtor's prison. This aspect of authorship rarely finds expression in presentations of authorship in other written forms. This chapter closes by exploring the requests of two Minerva Press authors, Eliza Parsons and Isabella Kelly. These women tested the boundaries of the Fund by making requests which lay outside of the traditional remit of the Fund's assistance. I argue that this shows their desperation for assistance but also their determination and resourcefulness to support themselves and their families.

Thus, this thesis examines the representations of the author found within Minerva Press novels and letters by Minerva Press writers. The chapters are threaded together by their focus on authorship, identity, and the novel. I examine the portrayal of the author within the intricate networks of meaning, association, and expectations of authors in which the Minerva Press writers operated. It aims to illuminate that the Romantic-period author exists in a meaning-making nexus of perception, expectation, and reception and that these narratives are not necessarily lived experiences, but performances of authorship. By tracing writers' responses to sociocultural expectations of the author and of the novel, this thesis aims to illuminate the aesthetic and literary preconceptions, prejudices, and values of the Romantic period book trade.

Chapter One – Ascriptions, Title Pages, and Authorial Identities

Contrary to what the title page states, *The History of a Dog. Written By Himself, And Published By A Gentleman Of His Acquaintance* (1804) was not written by a dog. It was written by a human, the writer masquerading as an anthropomorphized canine as they – or someone else – decided this ascription behoved their text. This ascription is an example of the craft, creativity, complexity, and strategy which can lie behind authorial ascriptions and therefore authorial identities. This chapter focuses on these and on the construction and effects of authorial identities. By focusing on the ascriptions on Minerva Press title pages, I argue that an individual ascription does not lead to a single authorial identity. Each ascription is a composition of multiple points of reference which are personal, professional, and commercial. These direct the reader to a specific manifestation of an authorial identity apposite for that precise text. This indicates that the Romantic-period author is a multifaceted, versatile construct.

This thesis employs the word 'writer' to refer to the real human creator of a novel and the phrase 'author-figure' to refer to the identity of the writer referred to on the title page. Separate terms are needed as the two are not always one and the same, as *The History of a Dog* makes clear. The phrase 'authorial ascription' refers to any phrase which denotes the author-figure, be they real or fictitious, on a title page. While Betty Schellenberg used 'signature' to refer to the authorial ascription and Mark Rose applied the term, 'name', I prefer to use 'ascription'.[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines both 'signature' and 'name' in relation to a specific person.[2] However, a title page ascription may point to an anthropomorphized or metaphorical construction, such as a dog or 'a modern antique', for example. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'ascription' without reference to a specific person: it is '[t]he action of setting to the credit of; attribution of origin or authorship'.[3] Thus,

[1] Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Rose, *Authors and Owners*, p. 1.

[2] 'signature, n. and adj.' in *OED Online* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/179546> [accessed 6 September 2019]; 'name, n. and adj.' in *OED Online* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/124918> [accessed 6 September 2019]

[3] 'ascription, n.' in *OED Online* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/11405> [accessed 6 September 2019]

'ascription' facilitates consideration of title page authorial identities as strategic creations, projecting a specific manifestation of author-figure, without needing to associate this with a human.

This chapter examines the title page ascriptions of Minerva Press novels published between 1775 and 1809. It reveals a diverse range of authorial ascriptions present on the Press' title pages. For this thesis and for this chapter's analysis, I use a dataset I compiled from Peter Garside's, James Raven's, and Rainer Schöwerling's *The English Novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (2000), Volumes 1 and 2, and the updates to the *Survey of Prose Fiction* provided by *Romantic Textualities*. While the *Survey of Prose Fiction* concentrated on authorial identities known from title pages and elsewhere (e.g. letters, contracts), my work concentrates on the authorial ascriptions and author-figure identities projected specifically on title pages. This is to shed light on how the figure of the author was crafted on a specific title page and to illuminate what kind of author-figures were promoted by these textual spaces.

In this chapter, I uncover the existence of hitherto-unrecognised permutations of anonymity and forms of authorial identity present on title pages. Elizabeth A. Neiman notes that the Press' 'novels remain a blur, individually inconsequential'.[4] The sheer number of anonymous novels is one cause of this homogeneity. If one uses the authorial identities published in the *Survey of Prose Fiction*, then twenty-nine percent (equalling 158 novels) of the 544 Minerva Press novels published between 1775 and 1809 are anonymous. I argue that the permutations of anonymity which I identify and analyse go beyond the common taxonomy of onymous, anonymous and pseudonymous and thus merit a new nomenclature, established and analysed in section 1.2 within this chapter. This taxonomy is also glossed in Appendix A. My taxonomy and analysis aim to show that there are nuances of anonymity and therefore that authorial identity is a formation of identities: half-identities, shifting identities, obscured identities. Anonymity is not simply to be nameless. In turn, this pushes the focus towards the other elements which are part of an authorial ascription which does not feature a name. This

[4] Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, p. 1.

reveals that elements relating to professional activities or to one's gender or marital status substitute in for a name, or are even promoted in preference of a name. This gives these elements significance, revealing what attributes writers and publishers considered beneficial to promote in an authorial identity on a title page.

Furthermore, this chapter proposes an alternative way to think about the Romantic notion of the author. It moves away from the definition Andrew Bennett provides of how Romantic literary society and subsequent scholarship envisaged the Romantic author as singular, 'self-originating and original' and autonomous.[5] My argument stems from my taxonomy which highlights that authorial ascriptions are formed of exchangeable components. Thus, I argue that the author-figure is plural; *identities* are evident, even when thinking about an individual ascription on a title page. A specific identity is created from an ascription but this identity uses components which draw in other identities. For example, the title page of Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) refers to *Errors of Education* (1791) and *The History of Miss Meredith* (1790). It joins the Gothic title of *Wolfenbach* with those of an instructional tale and a sentimental novel. In turn, *Wolfenbach*'s title page creates an image of the author as one who writes across multiple genres, leaving the reader to surmise what they will about Parsons' experience and style. Some of Parsons' later title pages do not connect to as wide an array of genres, creating a different impression of Parsons' style and of Parson's professional experience as a writer. Thus, a writer and their authorial identity are not necessarily one and the same thing. A writer has multiple authorial identities. These identities can be a combination of personal and professional elements. These professional elements can refer to the profession of authorship – their previous works, for example – or to other professions they hold alongside writing, such as being a Reverend. An authorial ascription is deictic and points readers towards other author-figures, thereby illuminating the multifaceted and versatile identity of an author.

[5] Bennett, *The Author*, p. 71; Ibid., p. 71.

My theory on authorial identities derives indirectly from Michel Foucault's writings on the author-function: 'it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects-positions [sic]'.[6] Foucault extends this by considering Ann Radcliffe. She may be considered as the writer of the Gothic novels bearing her name, but she 'also made possible the appearance of the Gothic horror novel at the beginning of the nineteenth century; in that respect, her author-function exceeds her own work'.[7] Indeed, Foucault's theory that an author's name can become a signifier of a genre or form is verified by the earlier Minerva Press writer, Mary Ann Radcliffe. A Minerva Press catalogue in 1814 lists 'Mrs. Ann Radcliffe' as the author of *The Fate Of Velina De Guidova* (1790) and *Radzivil. A Romance* (1790), promoting these works by adopting the same surname.[8] This brief investigation of how names could be used and identities created exemplifies the potential significance of authorial ascriptions for understanding the author-figure in the Romantic era literary marketplace. An ascription was a commodified space for uniting an author with others and for expressing individuality.

I also wish to study the nuances of anonymity because of the challenges anonymous works present for the field of author studies. Roland Barthes theorises that anonymous books are rich sources to study when considering authorship and identity because 'to give an Author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing'.[9] The gradations of anonymity present on Minerva Press title pages furnishes the work and the authorial identity with more signification, but these remain open-ended as they only disclose partial identities. I also propose that my categorisations of authorial identities do not impose an author's identity onto a text because I am looking at types of identity rather than using an identity to shed light hermeneutically on a specific book. Foucault argued that 'the author-function, which is complex

[6] Foucault, 'What is an Author?', p. 216.
[7] Ibid., p. 217.
[8] 'Catalogue of A.K. Newman and Co.'s Library. 1814-1820.' Newman A.K. and co. 1814[-20] Don. e.217. (Weston Stack). Post-1701 Weston 604023724. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.
[9] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-148 (p. 147).

enough when one tries to situate it at the level of a book or a series of texts that carry a given signature, involves still more determining factors when one tries to analyze [sic] it in larger units'.[10] Indeed, the Minerva Press novels demonstrate this complexity because of the frequency of their absent (anonymous) authors and because of the versatility of their ascriptions when identities are present. However, the large Minerva corpus also reveals that there are groups of author-figures within the group of texts previously documented as anonymous. Paying greater attention to the individual title pages of Minerva Press novels reveals that they are not a 'homogenous mass', but rather comprise a variety of collections of authorial identities. Even within these collections, each identity is unique and therefore, to some extent, resists categorisation. These groupings suggest that a name does not need to be present for an authorial identity to manifest and, secondly, that a title page can point to multiple authorial identities through a single ascription. With regards to the Minerva Press, this study of authorial ascriptions reveals that studying the Minerva Press authors collectively as 'Minerva Press authors' is somewhat counterintuitive to the unique and individualised identities their title pages promoted. Each author had a series of individual and unique ascriptions, and yet scholars (including myself) group the authors under the collective epithet of the 'Minerva Press authors'.

1.1 Taxonomising and Analysing Authorial Ascriptions on Title Pages

'Anonymity' is used currently to encompass a wide and diverse range of authorial identities, rendering it a 'term that is under considerable strain to contain its own multitudes'.[11] Studying the Minerva Press corpus reveals that there are various permutations and gradations of anonymity on title pages. These have not been recognised previously. I have developed a taxonomy to identify, group, and illuminate the different subgroups of title page identities under new labels. This facilitates analysis of the different manifestations of named and other title page identities and aims to nuance the current study of

[10] Foucault, 'What is an Author?', p. 220.
[11] Gillian Paku, 'Anonymity in the Eighteenth Century', p. 2 in *Oxford Handbooks Online* <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-37> [accessed 5 January 2018].

anonymity. In turn, I consider the significations of these forms of identity and connect this to the construction and portrayal of the Romantic-period author-figure.

My research into the Minerva Press corpus builds on but also departs in a significant way from the work of Garside, Raven and Schöwerling. Their analysis used gender to categorise authorial identities into four groups: male-authored, female-authored, anonymous, and 'other'-authored novels.[12] Garside, Raven, and Schöwerling define 'other' as a category encompassing 'title-page pseudonyms, initials, and names where gender is unclear. [It] [a]lso includes instances where a translator is declared but the original author is not; translators are not counted as authors'.[13] Thus, for them, 'anonymous' is a broad category denoting authors whose identities are wholly unknown, those whose authorial ascriptions contain attributions to other anonymous works and those authors who expressed their identity nominally, such as the frequently-used authorial ascription, 'By a lady', but whose real identities are not known. Unsurprisingly, as the term 'anonymous' includes so many manifestations, anonymity is the dominant Minerva Press ascription.

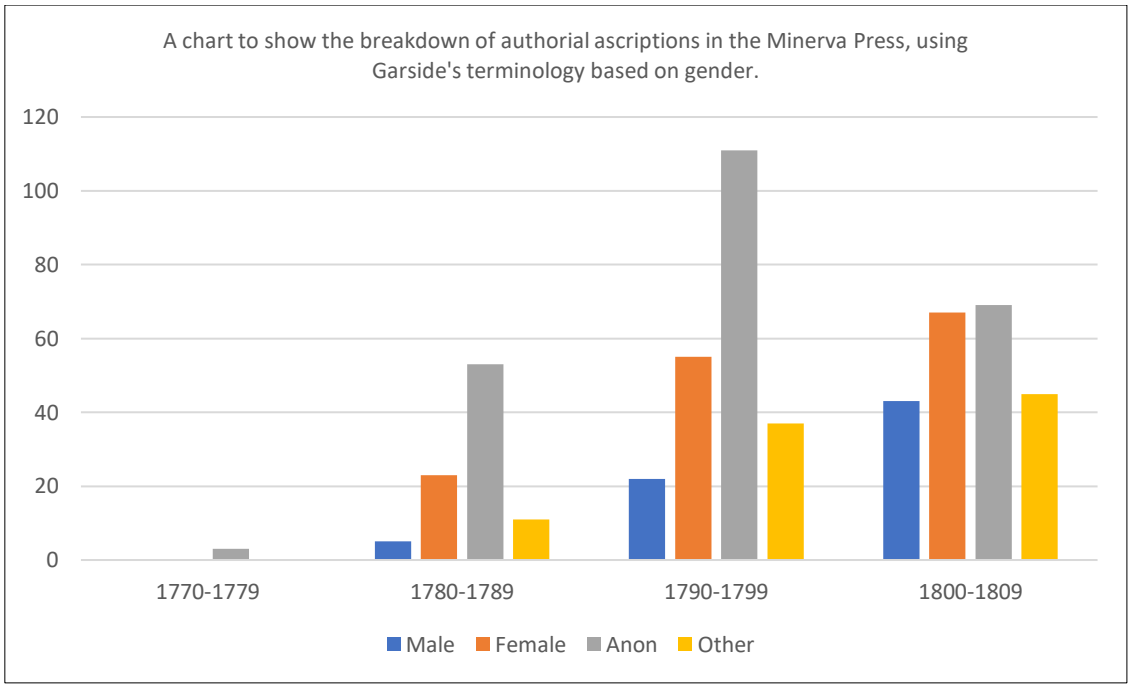


Figure 1: Breakdown of authorial ascriptions in the Minerva Press, using Garside's classification.

[12] Raven, 'Historical Introduction', p. 47.

[13] Ibid., p. 47.

Figure 1 demonstrates that these groupings provide little insight into the types of identities used, although it is evident that using gendered names became increasingly popular. It also conflates a title page author-figure's identity with that of a writer's identity known through sources outside of the novel.

To shed light on the types of authorial identity used on title pages in the late-eighteenth century, my taxonomy aims to realise two things: it supports the observation that an authorial identity is a unique construction of multiple referents. This construction, while sharing elements of the same writer's identity which are evident on other title pages, is specific and unique to that text's title page. Thus, each writer has a composite identity, and multiple composite authorial identities if they have written many works. This indicates that we should not approach an author as a single individual, because an author does not correlate solely to a singular authorial identity. Instead, the author is a figure crafted as the creator of a specific text for a specific intended audience. These ascriptions are temporally and commercially specific, created for a title page printed in a set year.

My taxonomy also demonstrates that there are gradations of anonymity. These gradations show that some types of ascription highlight certain aspects of an identity, such as a writer's previous works, while they shroud the name of the author. These provide insight on the value ascribed to each aspect of an ascription and reveal that an authorial identity can be created without naming the author. Indeed, if one turns to the Romantic novelists who have received the most attention from modern scholars – Frances Burney, Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Mary Shelley – they are known now by their full names, yet not one of them used their full names on their original title pages. These writers had shifting identities referring to their gender or to their previous works; in 1796, Frances Burney was 'the Author of Evelina and Cecilia' on the title page of *Camilla: or, a Picture of Youth*. In a way, this title page forges its own canon by listing previous works. These writers' novels sold very well too, demonstrating the correlation between consumerism and canon. When applied to the Minerva Press, this correlation is shown to be inconsistent, meaning other forces bore influence and other, less permanent legacies were created. By returning to the description of the author on Romantic-period

title pages, one can realise the multiple selves and subject positions occupied by authors and the significance ascribed to each constituent part of an ascription in that time period. I contextualise this within the Minerva Press because they are largely unstudied and because the large Minerva corpus reveals groupings within naming conventions which are impossible to see if one concentrates on a single author's ascription.

With this in mind, what follows is an introduction to each term, their uses, and analyses of their significations in the Minerva Press corpus. My taxonomy prioritises information given on the title page as this is a precise and controlled manifestation of an author's identity in a specific scenario. This method is to understand more about how an author was presented within a singular work to a reader.

1.1a Onyms

Some title pages state the full, legal name of their author. These are 'onymous' texts. My employment of the term is contingent with Gérard Genette's definition of 'onymity': 'the author "signs" […] with his legal name'.[14] Paku also borrows Genette's term for the same purposes.[15] Mandal chooses to use the term 'nominal'.[16] 'Nominal', by definition, signifies '[o]f or relating to a noun or nouns; of the nature of a noun'.[17] 'Noun' encapsulates a wide variety of terms. It includes names, proper nouns, pronouns, such as 'she' or 'he', and nouns such as 'lady' or 'daughter'. All of these noun types were used as authorial ascriptions on Romantic novels and yet not all of them are names. Thus, I propose that 'onym' is preferable to 'nominal' as it adds greater precision. Names such as 'Regina Maria Roche' and 'Mary Charlton' are onyms, as is 'Reverend William Dodd', as these are the proper, full, legal names of writers including first name, surname, and on occasion professional identities.

[14] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts*, *Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 39.
[15] Paku, 'Anonymity in the Eighteenth Century', p. 6; Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 39.
[16] Mandal, 'Mrs. Meeke and Minerva', p. 135.
[17] 'nominal, adj. and n.' in *OED Online* <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/127734?redirectedFrom=nominal> [accessed 8 January 2018]

There are 89 onymous novels in the Minerva Press corpus from 1775-1809, equalling 16 percent. There are more female onyms than male onyms; of the 29 onymous texts published between 1790 and 1799, 62% have female onyms. Of the 56 onymous texts published between 1800 and 1809, 64% have female onyms. The trend for using onyms increases throughout the period and there could be many reasons for this. Onyms are signifiers of individuals, but some individuals are associated with legacies which can be appropriated by others. Using similar names connects an author-figure to another author-figure's reputation, as the 1814 Minerva Press catalogue which identified Mary Ann Radcliffe did with Ann Radcliffe's works. Another reason for the increase in onyms could be the expanding literary marketplace. Using a specific, personal onym is one means of distinguishing a work from those by other authors, with the possible aim of attracting a reader's attention.

Relatively few ascriptions include other professional identities. 10 of the 544 novels feature other professions; 'Reverend' is used thrice, 'Officer' and 'Esquire' (or 'Esq.') are used twice, and 'Editor' is used once. One writer used the ascription of 'a Gentleman of the Temple', indicating a lawyer, and one was 'a student of Trinity College'. Only two onyms contain a profession and a full name: 'Reverend William Dodd' and 'Leslie Armstrong, Esq.'. Notwithstanding William Dodd's execution for forgery, the professions are respectable ones, requiring examinations to be passed or indicating an individual's ownership and management of land. It indicates that these writers are not solely writers, but they are skilled in other areas. These ascriptions suggest authorship was part of a professional identity for some writers, while for others their professional identity was their authorship. Other writers at the Press did hold other occupations – Mary Pilkington was a governess and Eliza Parsons was an attendant in the Royal Wardrobe – but these are absent from their authorial ascriptions. These positions would not confer as much respectability on the author-figure as that of the label of 'Reverend'. No female onym mentions another profession. These ascriptions, I argue, reflects how it was more difficult for women to hold respectable professions and, therefore, the female onymous authorial-identity was managed in a different way to that of male onymous authorial identities. Female onyms in the Press signify the definition women gained from being writers; that

they depended on this role to gain professional recognition and status. They had few other options. Section 1.1e of this chapter does, however, explore how some female ascriptions co-opt the professions of male relatives for their authorial identities.

1.1b Pseudonyms

While onyms are legal names, pseudonyms denote fictitious names devised by writers. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'pseudonym' as 'a false or fictitious name, *esp.* one assumed by an author'.[18] Robert Griffin clarifies that pseudonyms are where 'the legal name of the writer is not in evidence'.[19] Like anonymity, pseudonymity is too broad a category in current scholarship. Margaret Ezell considers the popular authorial ascription 'By a Lady' to be a pseudonym, and she provides a feminist reading of it by arguing that it indicates a subversion of cultural gender norms as well as female agency.[20] Anthony Mandal, meanwhile, identifies Elizabeth Meeke's ascription 'Gabrielli' as a pseudonym.[21] However, there are great disparities in usage, signification and implication between 'By a Lady' and 'Gabrielli'. The latter adheres more to the *Dictionary*'s understanding of the term as it resembles a fictitious name; the former prioritises promoting the gender of the author-figure. Yet, both are compounded as pseudonyms in current scholarship. I propose that further distinctions can be made between ascriptions such as 'By Gabrielli' or 'by a Lady', and this precision enables one to realise the different significations of each.

My use of 'pseudonym' is in keeping with *The Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of it. The operative word in the *Dictionary*'s definition of a pseudonym is 'name'; which is defined as a 'word or phrase constituting the individual designation by which a particular person or thing is known, referred

[18] 'pseudonym, n.' in *OED Online* <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/153775?redirectedFrom=pseudonym#eid> [accessed 29 December 2021].
[19] Griffin, 'Introduction', in *Faces of Anonymity*, pp. 1-2.
[20] Margaret J. M. Ezell, '"By a Lady": The Mask of the Feminine in Restoration, Early Eighteenth-Century Print Culture', in *Faces of Anonymity*, pp. 63-70 (p. 77).
[21] Mandal, 'Mrs. Meeke and Minerva', p. 135.

to, or addressed'.[22] Contextualising this within the Minerva Press corpus prompts the realisation that a pseudonym can take many forms even when a more specific 'name' element is involved; there are pseudonyms that are obviously fictional names, such as 'Gabrielli', and those which bear greater resemblance to legal names, such as 'Catherine Harris'. Between these, there are pseudonyms such as 'Felix Ellia' and 'Horace Vere' which blend the conventional elements of first name and surname with fictitious sounding names.

Pseudonyms, like onyms, were used more frequently in the Minerva Press corpus throughout the period investigated. Just under three percent of Minerva Press novels between 1790 and 1799 were pseudonymous, equating to six texts. These six texts featured six different pseudonyms: 'Prudentia Homespun', 'Peter Teuthold', 'Ellen of Exeter', 'Gabrielli', 'Lister', and 'Felix Ellia'. Of these, one is veridical, 'Peter Teuthold', two occupy the murkier middle ground, 'Felix Ellia' and 'Prudentia Homespun', and three are chimerical: 'Ellen of Exeter', 'Gabrielli', and 'Lister'. From 1800-1809, more novels used pseudonyms. Seven percent of the novels published were pseudonymous. Eight different pseudonyms were used on 15 occasions: 'Catherine Harris', 'Gabrielli', 'Eugenia de Acton', 'Bridget Bluemantle', 'Orlando', 'Anthony Frederick Holstein', 'a Modern Antique', and 'Horace Vere'. Pseudonymity was used more regularly and with that came a greater variety in the pseudonyms used. Additionally, the balance between using chimerical or veridical pseudonyms altered, with more veridical than chimerical pseudonyms used. Four from this period are veridical – 'Catherine Harris', 'Eugenia de Action', 'Bridget Bluemantle', and 'Anthony Frederick Holstein'. 'Horace Vere' is both chimerical and veridical. Chimerical pseudonyms are 'Orlando', 'Gabrielli', and 'a Modern Antique'. Thus, the use of pseudonyms more than doubled between 1790-1799 and 1800-1809, from six uses to 15 uses, and the use of veridical pseudonyms quadrupled, from one to four.

I propose that the growing use of pseudonyms indicates that it was important to promote an authorial identity that was individualised, that there was a growing want to align this fictitious name

[22] 'name, n. and adj.', *OED Online*.

with a conceivably real individual, and that there was a wish to separate private lives from public personas. Veridical pseudonyms reflect the era's increasing interest in life-writing as they play into the era's tastes for biography. Furthermore, an onym or a veridical pseudonym could be a way to distinguish a work from those published by others as a unique identifier or it could be a way to join a work to a specific set of expectations. Onyms and pseudonyms are commodified elements, in which wide appeal and individuality coexist in a commercial marketplace.

Certain chimerical pseudonyms illustrate the boundaries between the authorial ascription on a title page and the writer's identity. Pseudonyms such as 'Orlando' and 'a Modern Antique' reinforce the boundary between a writer's title page identity and their personal, professional life outside of the occupation of writing. This is further emphasised by ascriptions such as 'Horace Vere' and 'Felix Ellia'; these draw on the dead Latin language, frustrating attempts to read from author-figure to writer and signalling that discovering truths about a writer from their works of fiction will always be problematic. This is ironically captured in the 'Horace Vere' ascription as 'Vere' translates loosely to 'truth'. It is possible that this ascription implies its novel has some elements of truth in it, while the tale attached to the 'Felix Ellia' ascription may be expected to be happy or follow a lucky character, given that Felix roughly translates to lucky and happy. 'Prudentia Homespun', meanwhile, is not a real name but this identity illustrates how a pseudonym may operate as an extra-textual character of a novel. It has a first name and a surname, providing readers with a guise of a human writer, but the names remain fantastical enough for the reader to realise that this is not someone's real name. This ascription was adopted by Jane West for *The Advantages Of Education, Or, The History Of Maria Williams, A Tale For Misses And Their Mammas* (1793). This chimerical pseudonym complements the text's message of a text. Cheryl Turner notes that '[p]seudonyms were sometimes employed by authors solely to add an appropriate quality to their publications' and that, as such, pseudonyms 'would seem to demonstrate an understanding of market manipulation'.[23] Specifically, chimerical pseudonyms indicate that an

[23] Turner, *Living by the Pen*, p. 95.

authorial identity could be an extension of the text. Evidently fictional, such pseudonyms attach authority to the author-figure; being prudent and 'homespun' suggests this author-figure's experience in domestic matters. Pseudonymous authorial ascriptions give readers an allusion to a writer but establish a distance between the writer and the author-figure, and also between the text and the reader. Veridical pseudonyms cater to the era's interest in biography but frustrate attempts to read biographically, while chimerical pseudonyms emphasise the performativity inherent in the author-figure.

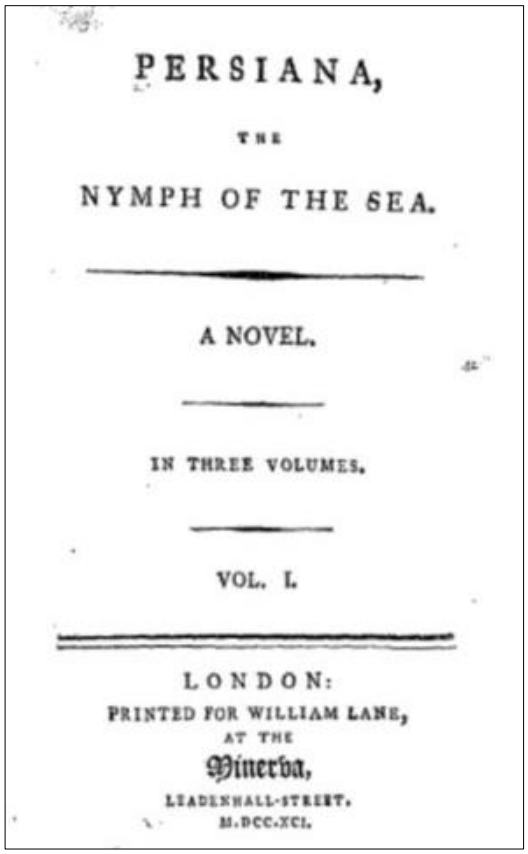
Once title pages with onyms and pseudonyms are removed, 434 texts of the Minerva corpus remain. This signifies 80 percent of the corpus. Yet, not all of these title pages are anonymous. Rather, the title pages contain indications and allusions to the author-figure. Genette states that '[a]lthough anonymity is degree zero, it, too, includes gradations. There are false anonymities, or cryptic onymities'.[24] Indeed, anonymous authorship can be further refined and distinguished into subgroups. There are permutations of anonymity which bear the same result – that a name of an author is undisclosed – but through which the author figure is not wholly anonymous. As James Raven points out, 'the absence of a name of a title page is not quite the same as saying that a reader was kept in the dark about the identity of the novel's author'.[25] The next sections seek to investigate this further within the Minerva Press corpus.

1.1c Anonymity

I define 'anonymity' in the purest sense. It refers to works which have no indication of an author, nor does the title page connect to another work. An example would be *Persiana, the Nymph of the Sea* (1791), in Figure 2 on the left below.

[24] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 42.

[25] James Raven, 'The Anonymous Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1830', in *Faces of Anonymity*, pp. 141-166 (p. 144).



PERSIANA,

THE

NYMPH OF THE SEA.

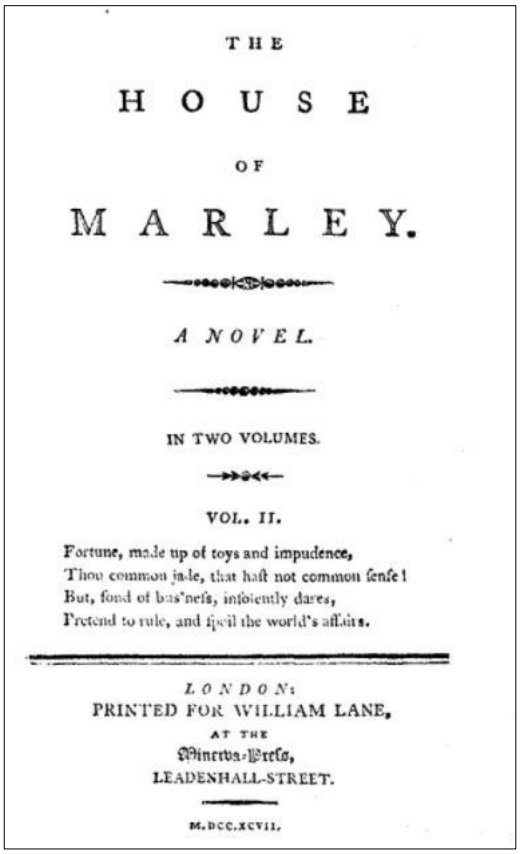
A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
AT THE
Minerva,
LEADENHALL-STREET.
M.DCC.XCI.

Figure 2: *Persiana, the Nymph of the Sea* (London: William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1791), Vol. 1, title page. *ECCO.*



THE

HOUSE

OF

MARLEY.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Fortune, made up of toys and impudence,
Thou common jade, that haft not common fenfe!
But, fond of bas'nefs, infolently dares,
Pretend to rule, and fpoil the world's affairs.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
AT THE
Minerva-Preſs,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVII.

Figure 3: *The House of Marley* (London: William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1797), Vol. 1, title page. *NCCO.*

Persiana, the Nymph of the Sea has no authorial ascription at all. There is no indication of an author-figure. *The House Of Marley. A novel, in two volumes* (1797), in Figure 3, is also anonymous in terms of its ascription but, in slight contrast, its title page contains an epigraph. One could argue that an epigraph could be its own form of authorial ascription; rather than pointing to the author of the text in question, it points to a quoted text, connecting the two texts by association. If numerous anonymous texts contained epigraphs from the same known author or the same work, these could link the anonymous texts and form an identity. This could be an avenue of future research after this thesis.

Anonymity – the lack of an ascription to the text's author-figure – could be viewed as an ascription in itself. The lack of an identity becomes a form of identity; a writer or publisher that wished to withhold the author's identity for any number of reasons. This would nuance David Brewer's assertion that authors' names act 'like counters to be pushed around' and it complicates Andrew

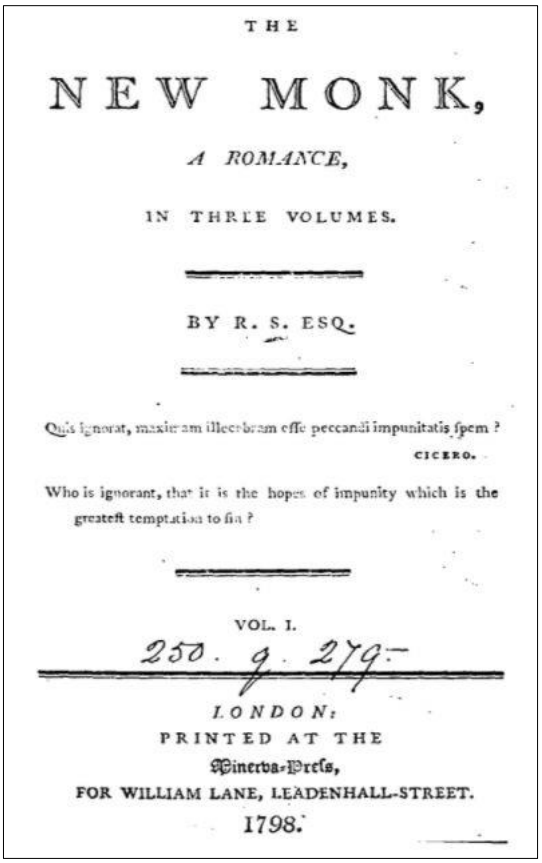
Wernick's argument that the 'authorial name is *promotional capital*'.[26] Anonymity cannot be 'pushed around' in the same way, given that there is less information to manipulate. Anonymity prevents the marketisation of an author on a biographical level, but the anonymous author can be marketised in other ways. It could be, as Catherine Boyle and Zachary Leader propose, 'a signal (like the more obvious pseudonym 'A Lady') that the novel was written by a woman for women'.[27] Therefore, anonymity still indicates an identity: that of a commodified writer who writes for a specific audience. Indeed, anonymity behoved Anthony Newman at the Press in 1814 as he issued a catalogue which attached names to 50 previously anonymous works, revising and curating the texts' authorial identities. The promotional capital of an anonymous author, therefore, is nebulous but it fundamentally exists and it is subject for reinvention. Therein may lie the appeal of an anonymous ascription for a popular publishing house or popular author.

1.1d Monogrammatic-anonymity

While anonymity is where a title page provides no authorial ascription, some title pages contain initials as their ascription. This is a new subset of anonymity which I have termed monogrammatic-anonymity. Examples from the Minerva Press corpus are 'C. R.', 'C. L.', 'F. H. P.' and 'R. S. Esq.' (with 'Esq.' standing for 'Esquire'). Figure 4 shows a title page of *The New Monk, a Romance* (1798) by 'R. S. Esq.'.

[26] David A. Brewer, 'The Tactility of Authorial Names', *The Eighteenth Century*, 54:2 (2013), 195-213 (p. 196) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24575074> [accessed 29 January 2022]; Andrew Wernick, 'Authorship and the supplement of promotion', in *What is an author?* ed. by Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 85-102 (p. 93).

[27] Catherine Boyle and Zachary Leader, 'Literary Institutions', in *Romantic Period Writings 1798-1832: An Anthology*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Ian Haywood (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 152-179 (p. 155).



THE

NEW MONK,

A ROMANCE,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY R. S. ESQ.

Quis ignorat, maximam illecebram esse peccandi impunitatis spem ?

CICERO.

Who is ignorant, that it is the hopes of impunity which is the greateft temptation to fin ?

VOL. I.

250. g. 279.

LONDON:

PRINTED AT THE

Minerva-Preſs,

FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.

1798.

Figure 4: *The New Monk, a Romance* […] By R. S. Esq (London: Minerva Press, 1798), Vol. 1 title page. *ECCO*.

It is difficult to identify an individual from one, two, or three initials. Monogrammatic-anonymity is a partial identity, a cryptic allusion to an author. 'C. R.', for example, alludes to Clara Reeve, author of *The Old English Baron* (1777). Reeve used 'C. R.' as her ascription for *Original Poems on Several Occasions. by C. R.* (1769) and for *The Progress of Romance* (1785). The 'C. R.' within the Minerva Press corpus appears on the title page of *Castle Zittaw: A German Tale. By C.R. In Three Volumes* (1794). There is only one known copy of this text. It is held at the New York Society Library and it has not been digitised, hence the lack of an image here of its title page. *Castle Zittaw*'s title and implied contents have parallels with Reeve's Gothic romance, *The Old English Baron*. The C. R. initials invite comparisons to and connect the Minerva Press work to that of a contemporary popular writer, indicating the kind of texts it might be compared to and which texts it ought to be read alongside. Additionally, it may be that the writer or publisher is attempting to use Reeve's reputation for a different work, harkening back to Foucault's theory that an author's name functions beyond their own texts. Initials, like onyms,

demonstrate that ascriptions can be applied spuriously and that networks of association and reputation are shared between texts through their ascriptions.

1.1e Substantive-anonymity

Monogrammatic-anonymity does not indicate the gender of the author. By contrast, substantive-anonymity refers to authorial ascriptions in which substantives, nouns which are gendered common nouns or pronouns, are used. It includes noun-phrases such as 'Mrs. ….', 'by a Lady', 'by a gentleman', and 'by the wife of a …'. It includes ascriptions such as 'Mrs. Kelly' and 'Mrs. Meeke' because this ascription foregrounds the married title of the author and their husband's surname. These ascriptions do not give the woman's, or man's, first name. This categorisation enables greater precision about which gendered nouns were used as it distinguishes between names which are onyms and names where the author-figure's female's identity is subsumed or becomes that of her husband's surname.

In the Minerva corpus, female substantive nouns were used more than male substantive nouns. Between 1770 and 1809, 78 title pages contain female substantive nouns compared to the 16 title pages bearing male substantives. This does not indicate that more women wrote for the Press, or that women writers chose to use substantive nouns more than men. An authorial ascription could be a fictitious projection which bore no relation to the personal identity of the writer. An ascription was most likely a mutual agreement or compromise between the writer and publisher, as indicated in Robert Bage's letters recounting that he 'sunk money', or paid, William Lane to publish *Man as he is* (1792) anonymously.[28] The predominance of female substantives can have twofold significance: that authors and publishers preferred to use a female ascription than a male ascription and, secondly, that married titles were more popular than unmarried titles for women. Figure 5 details the female and male substantives used:

[28] R[obert] B[age] to William Hutton, [non-dated, between August 1792 and 25 September 1792 from the dates of the preceding and subsequent letters]. The Wolfson Centre, Library of Birmingham. MS 3597/7/6.

Year	Substantive-Anonymity Total	Male Substantive Anonymity	Male Titles Used	Female Substantive Anonymity	Female Titles Used
1775-1779	None used				
1780	2	0	0	2	Mrs Griffith (2)
1781	0	0	0	0	0
1782	0	0	0	0	0
1783	2	0	0	2	a Lady; an Irish lady
1784	2	0	0	2	a Lady (2)
1785	6	0	0	6	a Lady (6)
1786	2	1	Late Nobleman (1)	1	a Lady
1787	4	1	a Gentleman of the Temple (1)	3	a Lady (2); first attempt of a young lady
1788	1	0	0	1	a Lady
1789	4	1	an Officer (1)	3	Mrs Johnson; Mrs Bonhote; a Lady
1790	4	0	0	4	a young lady; Mrs Bonhote; Mrs Brooke; a Lady
1791	2	0	0	2	Mrs Parsons; Mrs Rowson
1792	1	0	0	1	Mrs Gunning
1793	3	0	0	3	Mrs Parsons (3)
1794	3	0	0	3	Mrs Bennett; Mrs Parsons; Miss M. E. Robinson
1795	7	1	late Mr. Gay; Mr Robinson	5	unpatronized female; by a Woman; Mrs Meek [sic]; Mrs Parsons; by a Young Lady
1796	7	1	a young Gentleman	6	Mrs Howell (2); Mrs Parsons (2); Mrs Kelly; Mrs Meeke
1797	5	0	0	5	Mrs Bennett; Mrs Bonhote; Mrs Howell; Mrs Meeke; Mrs Parsons
1798	3	1	Rev. Mr. Holder	2	Wife of an Officer; Mrs Sleath
1799	3	0	0	3	Mrs Meeke; Mrs Rowson; an incognita
1800	1	0	0	1	Mrs Croffts
1801	2	0	0	2	Mrs Croffts; Mrs Meeke
1802	4	2	a student of Trinity College; Mr Lyttleton	2	a clergyman's daughter; Mrs Meeke
1803	4	4	Mr Lyttleton (2); Rev. J. Thomson	1	Mrs Meeke
1804	5	1	himself	4	Mrs Meeke (4)
1805	3	1	Mr Lyttleton	2	a clergyman's daughter; Mrs Burke
1806	3	0	0	3	a Lady; Mrs Bennett; a young lady
1807	3	0	0	3	Mrs Meeke (2); Mrs Thomson

1808	5	2	a Naval Officer; Northumbrian nobleman	3	Miss Byron; Mrs Meeke; an Irishwoman
1809	3	0	0	3	Miss Byron; Mrs C. Maxwell; Mrs Pilkington

Figure 5: A table listing the substantive-anonyms used between 1775 and 1809 on Minerva Press title pages.

Predominantly, female substantives indicate marital status or familial relationship to a male. There were 47 title pages with 'Mrs. …' and three with 'Miss …' on them. Of the remaining 28, one is by 'the Wife of an Officer', therefore also signalling a married status, and two are by 'a Clergyman's daughter'. The remaining 25 are various inflections of the ascription 'by a Lady': 'by a Young Lady', and 'by an Irishwoman', for example. The majority of ascriptions define the female author-figure in relation to a male and if it was not through a husband, it was through a father. This reflects a way in which women's identities were constructed in the Romantic period; they attained a form of social standing and articulated a form of identity through their male peers, rather than in their own rights. Investigating the professional identities reveals that female authorial identities were, at times, built on their male relatives' professional occupations. While this can be read as women being defined in relation to their male relatives, the female author-figure ascriptions co-opt the reputation and respectability of the occupations of Reverend and Officer by including these professions.

The large number of texts promoting an ascription containing a married title suggests that it was not a disadvantageous ascription for a female authorial identity. No Minerva authors used their married title, their first name, and their surname. For example, Elizabeth Meeke published as 'Mrs. Meeke' and Eliza Parsons published as 'Mrs. Parsons'. These women were two of the most prolific Minerva writers, yet they both published at a time when they were living independently from their husbands. Meeke separated from Samuel Meeke in 1787 and Parsons' husband died around 1789. Despite the distances between them and their husbands, both women used their married surnames when writing, suggestive of the permanency of a married surname but also indicating that to be seen as a married woman rather than a separated or a widowed one might be seen as advantageous on title pages. In contrast, the majority of the 16 male substantives indicate social status or profession,

ranging from land-owning titles to professions such as Reverends or lawyers. None define themselves as a husband, as revealed by a search of *ECCO* for novels published between 1770-1800 with an ascription including the word 'husband' which returned no results. The male authorial identity was defined independently of women in the late-eighteenth century.

From 1800 onwards substantive anonyms were used differently. They operated more like chimerical pseudonyms as synergies are apparent between the substantives used and novel's content. *Jealousy, Or The Dreadful Mistake* (1802) was by 'A Clergyman's Daughter'. The focus on one of the seven deadly sins complements the writer's father's religious occupation. *The British Admiral* (1808) was written by 'A Naval Officer', an ascription which lends authority to the writer of the novel because of their naval experience and status. Comedic ascriptions were sometimes used, such as *The History of a Dog. Written By Himself, And Published By A Gentleman Of His Acquaintance* of this chapter's title. This ascription, along with the Minerva text *Celia In Search Of A Husband. By A Modern Antique* (1809), highlights the developing, separate sub-genre of 'It' narratives. In these cases, the title page ascription is connected to, informs, and is informed by the genre of the novel. Such ascriptions signal their fictitiousness and remind readers that an authorial identity does not have to equate to a person. Importantly, they signal that an author's identity is designed for a specific text in mind.

The final groups of authorial ascriptions concern the phrase 'by the author of' where an onym, pseudonym, substantive-, or monogrammatic-anonym is not present on the title page. Previous scholarship has largely overlooked the title which is present at the end of 'by the author of'. The exception to this is Griffin's statement that 'the phrase "by the author of" […] refers us not so much to a situated person as to a previous performance and acts as a kind of advertisement'.[29] Indeed, this phrase operates as an advertisement by linking one novel to another one, two, three, or even four titles in the Minerva corpus. However, I propose that these title page chains illuminate the author-figure and their construction on that title page, as well as functioning as an advertisement.

[29] Griffin, 'Introduction', in *Faces of Anonymity*, p. 10.

1.1f Pseudo-anonymity

One use of the phrase 'by the author of X' is where 'X' is a novel with an onymous author. I term such instances 'pseudo-anonymity', using 'pseudo' to mean 'seemingly'. An example would be Susanna Rowson's novel, *The Fille De Chambre, a novel, in three volumes, by the author of The Inquisitor, &c, &c.* (1792). *The Fille De Chambre* is connected to *The Inquisitor*. The title page of *The Inquisitor* reads as 'By Mrs. Rowson, author of Victoria'. Thus, Rowson's name is discernible through tracing the title page connections. The concept of open secret anonymity has been looked at by scholars such as John Mullan and Gillian Paku; in particular, their studies were concerned with Laurence Sterne and Samuel Johnson, respectively.[30] Yet Sterne's and Johnson's identities were known through means other than title page chains, such as through letters to friends. Therefore, pseudo-anonymity is where an author's name can be discerned from a linked title page. It shows how that authorial identity is constructed through amalgamating information from multiple title pages, rather than external biographical sources. It thus requires more effort on the part of the reader to identify the writer of the pseudo-anonymous text but, as section 1.2 of this chapter will argue, pseudo-anonymity was used at specific moments to obscure a writer's name while sustaining an authorial identity which retained some links to a specific writer.

1.1g Quasi-anonymity

In contrast, 'quasi-anonymity' uses 'quasi' in the sense of 'partially'. It encompasses novels where the title page features 'by the author of Y' in which Y is a non-onymous work. The novel 'Y' does not feature a proper, legal authorial name: an onym. An example would be *Frederic and Louisa, a novel, in four volumes, by the author of Adeline* (1792). In turn, *Adeline* has a title page transcript of *Adeline; or, The orphan. A novel* (1790). *Adeline* is anonymous, meaning that no writer can be identified.

[30] See Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History* (2007) and Gillian Paku, 'The Age of Anon: Johnson Rewrites the Name of the Author', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32.2 (2008), 98–109.

'By the Author of…' features on 13 percent of novels in 1780-1789, 29 percent of novels from 1790-1799, and 51 percent of novels between 1800-1809. These figures demonstrate that works were increasingly connected to one another across this thirty-year period. This may, in part, be explained by the fact that the marketplace was expanding between 1780 and 1820 and the Minerva Press' output increased as well. Writers started careers in the 1780s and 1790s and thus had more works to connect to by the 1800s. The increased use of 'by the author of…' suggests that Minerva writers often had long and sustained authorial careers and it shows that these chains reveal marketing trends; one title page could be used to promote another. Along with putting notices and advertisements in newspapers, the books themselves functioned as promotional materials. Title page chains suggest that the whole title page functioned as promotional material for an author and for a publisher, rather than it being an author's name as Wernicke argued.

Furthermore, title page chains indicate the genre or genres a writer has written in, operating as a curriculum vitae of sorts by attesting that this writer is experienced and in what genres. Isabella Kelly's novel, *Ruthinglenne, or the Critical Moment* (1801), links to four of her previous works. The author-figure is incarnate as 'By Isabella Kelly, Author Of Madeline, Abbey Of St. Asaph, Avondale Priory, Eva, &C. &C.'. These title page chains suggest Kelly's oeuvre can fall into two groups: gothic novels, from the mentions of abbeys and priories, and sentimental tales of female heroines, from the inclusion of *Madeline* and *Eva*. Similarly, Anna Maria Bennett's *Vicissitudes Abroad; or, the Ghost of my Father* (1806) links to five previous works: *Anna* (1785), *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786), *Agnes de Courci* (1789), *Ellen* (1794), and *the Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797). Themes of changing circumstances, fortune, and coming-of-age and individual's origins are evident from the titles. The effect of these chains is that the writer's identity is forged and bolstered, their ability to cater to a wide range of popular tastes evidenced through these references to other works.

Furthermore, the fact that some Minerva Press title pages include novels published by other publishing houses suggests that projecting an image of an experienced author superseded promoting solely one publishing house. For example, Anna Maria Mackenzie's *Calista* (1789) refers to *The*

Gamesters (1786), published by Steel and Baldwin, and to *Retribution* (1788), published by Robinsons. Similarly, Bennett's *Agnes do Courci* was published by S. Hazard but it was included on the title page of the Minerva Press production, *Vicissitudes Abroad*. Therefore, while the majority of Minerva title pages promote works written by the same author for the Minerva Press, the overall onus is on the author's previous works, rather than title pages showing an allegiance to one publishing house. The decision was made – by author or publisher – to promote the wider oeuvre of that writer.

Sometimes, a title page chain linked to a text that was linked was not written by the writer. The Minerva Press novel *Laura; or, Original Letters* (1790) states it is a 'sequel to the Eloisa of J. J. Rousseau'.[31] While this is not a quasi-anonymous text, the anonymous author of *Laura* is connected to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, his status, and his bestseller novel, potentially magnifying the presence and expectations of *Laura* in the marketplace. Whether this connection was good or bad is difficult to determine; the reference to Rousseau may have attracted attention and boosted sales, but equally readers may have interpreted the reference to Rousseau as a facetious attempt to benefit financially and reputationally from Rousseau's legacy and viewed *Laura* as a pot-boiler.

The growing use of title page chains indicates that to have an identity as an author was considered important. Significantly, this identity did not necessarily need to include an actual name. These ascriptions emphasise that the authorial identity of a writer in the Romantic period can be articulated outside of the personal life of a writer and through their professional history. At times, this authorial identity can co-opt parts of another authorial identity. The Romantic-period author is therefore simultaneously autonomous and dependent, deriving its subject position and identity from multiple places and persons.

[31] Anon., *Laura; or, Original Letters. In two volumes. A sequel to the Eloisa of J.J. Rousseau* (London: W. Lane, 1790), title page transcription. Wellesley College Library <https://luna.wellesley.edu/search/?searchtype=t&SORT=D&searcharg=Laura%3B+or%2C+original+letters.+In+two+volumes.+A+sequel+to+the+Eloisa+of+J.J.&searchscope=1> [accessed 30 December 2021].

While most of these ascriptions can overlap with each other, they prompt appreciation and consideration of the permutations of authorial identity and the projected identities conveyed on title pages. They facilitate consideration of an ascription on a case-by-case basis and aid in-depth investigation of authors previously grouped as anonymous. Applying this taxonomy to the Minerva Press corpus shows that these books are no longer a blur of anonymous texts.

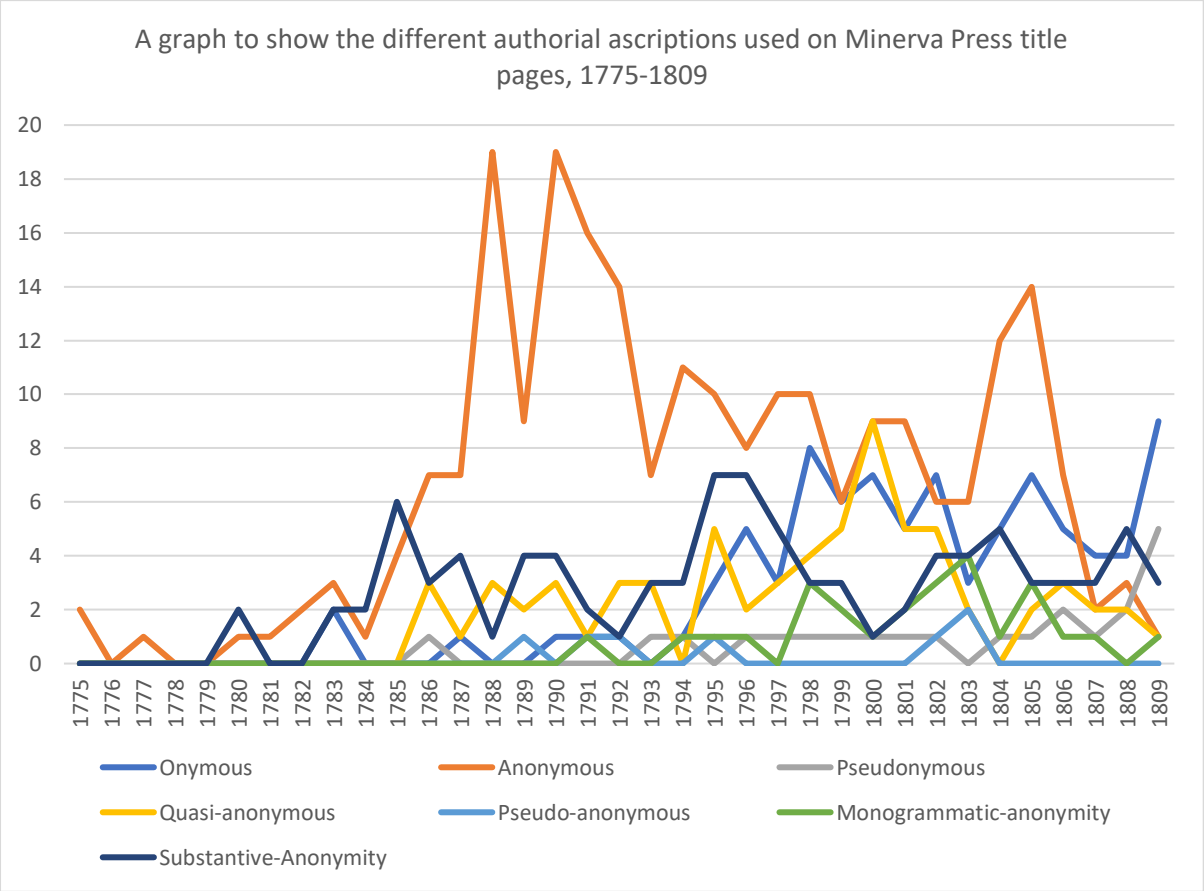


Figure 6: A graph to show the different authorial ascriptions used each year on Minerva Press title pages, 1775-1809.

This re-imagined approach to the Minerva Press corpus and its anonymous authors reveals that, in fact, pure anonymity is not always the dominant authorial ascription on title pages. In 1785, substantive-anonymity is the most popular authorial ascription and features on six works; in 1800, the number of quasi-anonymous texts equals anonymous texts; in 1802, onymity is the most popular ascription; and after 1807, onymity and substantive-anonymity surpass anonymity on title pages. Anonymity is fourth popular by 1809, joint with quasi-anonymity and monogrammatic-anonymity.

These insights refine Mark Rose's perspective that '[t]he name of the author becomes a kind of brand name, a recognizable sign that the cultural commodity will be of a certain kind and quality'.[32] Rose explains that:

> the very titles of the eighteenth-century novels suggests that what was changing hands in the purchase of reading matter was the record of a personality. Moreover, readers increasingly approached literary texts as theologians had long approached the book of nature, seeking to find the mark of the divine author's personality in his works.[33]

The eighteenth century's need to read biographically charges authorial ascriptions with even greater signification. This predilection and Rose's view are complicated when a book is substantively-anonymous, monogrammatically-anonymous, or quasi-anonymous. The first two provide the guise of an author-figure, but the author's personality is never fully realisable. A personality is not being exchanged, but rather a set of signifiers that prioritises the author-figure's gender, marital status, their professional record, or synechdotal elements which link them to a wider genre or reputation. The reader is always kept at a distance from the writer and the insight into the author-figure's personality is limited. Meanwhile, quasi-anonymity obscures the writer's personal identity while creating and projecting an image of a professional author. Quasi-anonymity spotlights the writer's previous work, operating as a record of their professional activities. Sometimes, the titles featured were of their books from other publishing houses. This reveals that an interconnected web of publishers is apparent on title pages, illuminating that a writer's authorial identity at other publishing houses may have influenced their identity at their current publisher. As such, quasi-anonymity complicates the question of ownership. It stakes a claim in a novel as being the author's work, rather than the sole property of the publishing house which produced it. Thus, Minerva Press title pages show an author-figure was connected to various different identities and projected various personalities. While the *Survey of Prose*

[32] Rose, *Authors and Owners*, p. 1.
[33] Ibid., p. 121.

Fiction connects texts to writers' names, its methodology misses the insight given into title page authorial ascriptions and author-figure's identities. A writer is not known as 'Mary Charlton' or 'Mary Ann Hanway'. Rather, the figure of the author has multiple components which can include their name, their publishing history, their married title, and sometimes even the dedicatee of a work. These multiple parts demonstrate that the identity of a writer is multifaceted and is not derived from a name alone.

As the next section illustrates in greater detail, title pages illustrate that the same writer had multiple identities. Different gradations and manifestations of identity were projected on title pages, attesting that identity is fluid and changeable. The author-figure the reader encountered on a title page was a specific, creative projection rather than a person.

1.2 The Chameleonic Identities of Anna Maria Mackenzie and Susanna Rowson

This section comprises case studies of two individuals' authorial ascriptions. Anna Maria Mackenzie and Susanna Rowson had long careers as writers, each produced multiple books, and each used a wide variety of ascriptions. Their title pages featured onymous, pseudo-anonymous, and anonymous ascriptions. Their extended and different careers provide insight into how a single writer could be presented across numerous title pages, allowing this section to trace the dynamics and fluxes of their authorial identities and, in particular, to illuminate the uses of pseudo-anonymity and its intricacies. The instances of pseudo-anonymity can be seen to correlate to specific biographical and professional events, supporting the observation that the Romantic writer had multiple identities rather than a singular identity and that, at times, an obscure identity was deemed judicious. In the cases of Mackenzie and Rowson, pseudo-anonymity occurs at moments which necessitated a change to a previously promoted identity. Mackenzie remarried multiple times while Rowson moved countries and had other careers while writing. Their differing contexts provide insight into some of the factors which result in the changing of ascriptions and identities.

Pseudo-anonymous works account for one percent of the total output of Minerva Press novels between 1775 and 1809. This infrequency suggests it was used in specific circumstances and for specific reasons. Pseudo-anonymity possesses elements of deliberateness, strategy, and temporality which Gillian Paku and Paula R. Feldman associate with open-secret anonymity. Paku argues that open-secret anonymity enables 'strategic authorial subject positions' and Feldman notes that 'anonymity, then, when practiced by women of the Romantic era, was often either a temporary state or a transparent pose'.[34] Any authorial ascription is a strategic manoeuvre and every identity is constructed and performed. Pseudo-anonymity enables scholars to look at the strategies of naming the author-figure in precise circumstances. Moreover, it allows Feldman's point to be developed; pseudo-anonymity is only temporary or transparent to the astute reader. A reader must follow the signals to other texts to discover the onym. I argue that pseudo-anonymity is a translucent construction of an individual which mingles allusions to privacy and modesty with references to fixed elements of an identity (e.g. previous published works) but that this strategy works for writers with presumed astute readers. This ascription is used at opportune moments when the writer's real name was changing or needed to be momentarily eclipsed, and so other professional elements of an author's identity are highlighted instead. Pseudo-anonymity is an innovative means of maintaining an authorial identity while facilitating the communication of a change or redirection in a personal identity to these readers.

1.2a Life Directions and Pseudo-anonymity: Anna Maria Mackenzie

Anna Maria Mackenzie's pseudo-anonymous title pages appear at moments of transition in her private life, occurring in the years when she remarried and therefore changed her surname. Pseudo-anonymity worked as a bridge, facilitating the strategic and discreet management of a change of name

[34] Paku, 'Anonymity in the Eighteenth Century', p. 1; Paula R. Feldman, 'Women Poets and Anonymity in the Romantic Era', *New Literary History*, 33:2 (2002), 279-289 (p. 281) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20057724> [accessed 29 January 2022]

while maintaining the image of an experienced popular novelist. It reveals, therefore, that authorial identities are simultaneously versatile and fixed. Authorial identities are versatile because the ways in which they refer to the author changes, but they are fixed because they contain traceable elements leading back to the same writer. From 1794 onwards, more Minerva Press title pages featured onyms. Perhaps this was because authors and publishers wanted to promote unique identities as more female authors entered the literary marketplace. Pseudo-anonymity was a means of sustaining a writer's authorial reputation while making fundamental changes to it.

Mackenzie was a prolific Minerva Press writer, writing fifteen multi-volume novels between 1783 and 1809. Her first two novels were published for the author in 1783. Steel and Baldwin published her next novel in 1785. Robinsons published the fourth in 1788, and they published another in 1792. The Minerva Press published nine of Mackenzie's works between 1789 and 1802 and Longmans published her final book in 1809. Her writing career demonstrates how some writers moved between publishers throughout their career, perhaps seeking better payment or perhaps seeking a different publisher willing to publish a manuscript rejected elsewhere. This changeability impacts on the authorial ascriptions used. Ten different ascriptions were used across these fifteen novels. Most of these were her married names, but she used a pseudonym once and pseudo-anonymity five times. Her authorial ascriptions highlight the composite nature of an authorial identity and consequently its versatility. This section traces the construction of Mackenzie's identities, including the occasions when a name is absent and the effects of this. It reveals that her identity, formed of an intricate and innovative compilation of names, substantive nouns, and previous works, is one of a versatile, prolific, and experienced author.

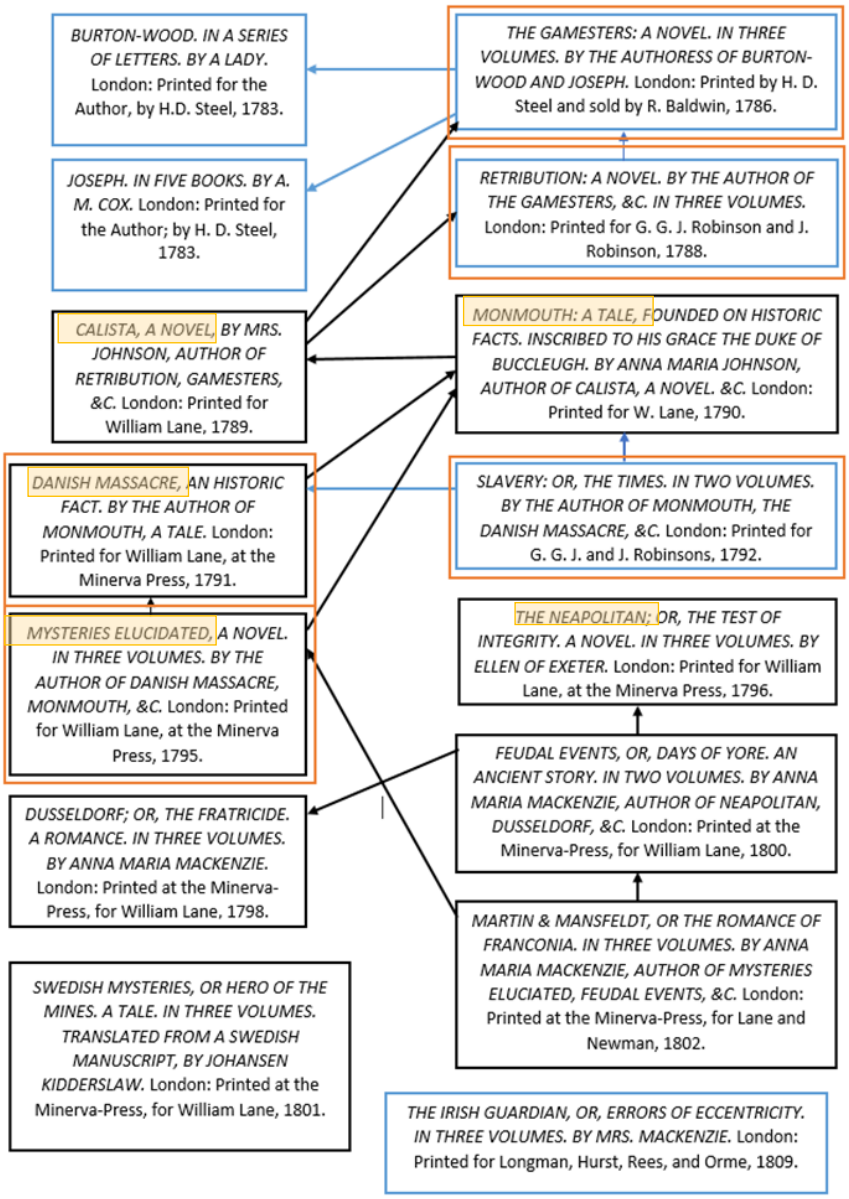


Figure 7: Authorial filiations between Anna Maria Mackenzie's novels.

Figure 7 traces Mackenzie's various authorial ascriptions throughout her career.[35] The works boxed in black were published by William Lane and the Minerva Press. The works encased in blue denote novels published by other publishers. The works in orange boxes are pseudo-anonymous. The yellow highlighted works are those featured in the Minerva Press 1798 Prospectus, which named and promoted ten women writers as 'particular and favorite [sic]' Minerva authors.[36] One of these was

[35] Anthony Mandal uses a similar graphic in 'Mrs. Meeke and Minerva: The Mystery of the Marketplace'. I use an adapted graphic as a visual aid for the title page chains and to show where pseudo-anonymity was used.
[36] 'General Prospectus', *Minerva Literary Repository, Library and Printing-Office* (1798). 7375 057.2 Shelf reference: T1. St Bride Foundation and Library, London.

Mackenzie. Mackenzie's works span three genres: sentimental novels such as *Burton-Wood* (1783) and *The Gamesters* (1785); historical fictions, *Calista* (1789) and *Monmouth* (1790); and historical gothic horrors such as *Danish Massacre* (1791). While there is great variation in the authorial ascriptions used, the writer responsible for these novels is consistently identifiable through a variety of means. This section traces how this is achieved and what it signifies about authorial identities.

A consistent element in Mackenzie's early ascriptions is her femaleness. 'By a Lady' is affixed to Mackenzie's first novel, *Burton-Wood* (1783), evidencing Feldman's view that 'By a Lady' was sometimes used to pave the way for a later revealing of the name as *Joseph* (1783) is by 'A. M. Cox'. *The Gamesters* (1786) is by 'the Authoress of Burton-Wood and Joseph'. Only one other novel in the Minerva Press corpus features the word 'authoress' on the title page: *Ella; Or, He's Always in the Way. In Two Volumes. By Maria Hunter, Authoress of Fitzroy* (1798). Like the word 'poetess' and its oscillating significations which Laura Mandell has investigated, 'authoress' is imbued with derogatory, reactionary, revolutionary, and commendatory meanings.[37] Mackenzie's ascriptions emphasise her femaleness, and this is supported by ascriptions within the text. Mackenzie's advertisement at the start of *The Gamesters* repeats 'authoress', emphasising her female authorship and suggesting she chose to use that term.[38] The repetition suggests that using this word was deliberate strategy, perhaps undertaken for marketing purposes. In the preface, she asks for critical leniency for being a woman writing about a male topic:[39]

> A Propensity to gaming having of late given strong encouragement to usury, and the fortunes of several distinguished families been irreparably hurt by that prevailing infatuation, the authoress presumes to hope she may stand excused for endeavouring to delineate the fatal consequences in their most glaring colours. –

[37] Laura Mandell, 'Introduction: The Poetess Tradition', *Romanticism on the Net*, 29-30 (2003), para. 3-4 <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/007712ar> [accessed 30 December 2021].
[38] Anna Maria Mackenzie, *The Gamesters* (London: H.D. Steel, 1786), Vol. 1, 'Advertisement'. *ECCO.*
[39] Mary Wollstonecraft identified 'gaming' as a masculine habit in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 72. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, ed. by Janet Todd (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

> Of this she is certain, though her characters and incidents may not be the most pleasing, yet are they drawn from real life.[40]

Mackenzie justifies writing about gambling because of her 'real life' experience of it. The implication is that her experience will educate others. Mackenzie's conservative view on gambling contrasts the attitudes embodied by other women connected to gambling; Georgiana Cavendish, for example, was notorious for her gambling losses.[41] Mackenzie assumes authority and distinction as a moral arbitress on the subject of gambling. Reviews emphasised Mackenzie's femaleness, establishing a connection between her moral take on gambling and her gender. Samuel Badcock praises her for a 'delicacy of sentiment that frequently places the fair author in an amiable light'.[42] Highlighting the 'fair' gender of the author suggests that this was advantageous to the reception of the novel and its topic.

Reviews of Mackenzie's first three works respond to her gender explicitly. Badcock commended Mackenzie's first production, *Burton-Wood*, and excused its faults because:

> As this is a *first* attempt, and especially the first attempt of a *female* author, candour should repress the vigorous of criticism, even though impartiality could not compliment with the warmth of applause. The story [has] the higher merit of encouraging the virtuous propensities of the human heart.[43]

In 1783, the gendered ascription 'by a Lady' was still novel enough to encourage this male critic's leniency, emphasised through Badcock's italicisation of 'first' and 'female'. Yet this leniency was not shared by others. Mary Wollstonecraft railed against it in her reviews for Joseph Johnson's *Analytical Review* from 1789 onwards: '[i]t may sound like high treason to our fair readers, yet truth compels us to declare that we open a novel with a degree of pleasure, when *written by a lady*, is not inserted into

[40] Mackenzie, *The Gamesters*, Vol. 1, 'Advertisement'.
[41] Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding, '"Sorting Out a Pack of Cards": Gambling, Card-Playing and Figuring Credit and Social Identity in Georgian England', *Etudes Epistémè*, 39 (2021). DOI: 10.4000/episteme.11620.
[42] [Samuel Badcock], '*The Gamesters*', *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, 75 (1786), 230 (p. 230). *British Periodicals*.
[43] [D.], 'Art. 50. *Burton Wood.* By a Lady', *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal* (1783), 457 (p. 457). *British Periodicals.*

the title page'.[44] Critics had become aware that many novelists were using it speciously or excessively. Indeed, in 1790, Henry Whitfield published *Villeroy; or, The Fatal Moment* under the ascription, 'by a Lady'. The aforementioned review of *Burton-Wood* indicates that reviewers, at times, were more forgiving with female authors. It seems possible, therefore, that male writers adopted a female figure to benefit from this lenient attitude.

Mackenzie's ascriptions alter in 1789, just at the time when anonymity and substantive-anonymity (including 'By a Lady') were most used in the Minerva Press. Mackenzie's authorial ascriptions move away from unspecific nouns revealing her femaleness, 'authoress' and 'lady', and more complex ascriptions appear which manage changes to her legal married surnames and her reputation as an author. After 1789, most of her title pages feature pseudo-anonymous ascriptions or her full name of 'Anna Maria Mackenzie'. Her authorial ascriptions become increasingly precise yet complex due to the shifting surnames and the chains created between novels. The following paragraphs explore when a new surname appeared on a title page and when pseudo-anonymity was used, theorising that pseudo-anonymity was used as a bridging device between surnames. It softened the change of identity by hiding the author's name for one or two title pages but ensured that an authorial onym was still discoverable to a reader.

Mackenzie's surname at birth was Wight, but this never appears on a title page. The first surname which appears is 'Cox' in 1783. The next surname to appear is 'Mrs. Johnson' on the title page of *Calista* (1789). Somewhere between November 1783 and June 1789, Mackenzie's marriage to Mr. Cox ended and she married Mr. Johnson. The novels published between 1784 and 1788, *The Gamesters* (1786) and *Retribution* (1788), do not state either 'Cox' or 'Johnson' on their title pages. A surname is absent. Instead, they connect pseudo-anonymously to her previously published works and therefore to 'Cox'.

[44] Unsigned, 'Volume IV. *June 1789*. ARTICLE LXV. *The Bastile, or History of Charles Townly. A Man of the World*', in *MWCW*, p. 121.

The same pattern is visible when Mackenzie's name changes from Johnson to Mackenzie. A marriage certificate detailing the marriage of 'Ann Maria Johnson' to 'Mackenzie Archibald' in the parish of St. Mary-Le-Bow, London, is dated 1789.[45] 'Mackenzie' does not appear on a title page until the title page of *Dusseldorf* in 1798. The name 'Mrs. Johnson' appeared on *Calista* in 1789 and then 'Anna Maria Johnson' appears on *Monmouth* in 1790. Then, an authorial onym does not appear on a title page until 1798 when 'Anna Maria Mackenzie' appears on the title page of *Dusseldorf*. In the intervening eight years, Mackenzie wrote four novels, three of which are pseudo-anonymous and link back to *Monmouth* with the authorial ascription 'Anna Maria Johnson'. *The Neapolitan* (1796) was published pseudonymously under the appellation 'Ellen of Exeter'. *The Neapolitan* was claimed retrospectively as Mackenzie's through the Minerva Press 1798 prospectus and through the title page of *Feudal Events* (1802). The interim periods of pseudo-anonymity correspond to the changes of Mackenzie's marital status. As this pattern of using a surname and then eliding all names is repeated as she changes from Cox to Johnson and then Johnson to Mackenzie, there is a feasible correlation between her private life, her marital status, and pseudo-anonymity.

Pseudo-anonymity reveals that a change in name and therefore identity had to be managed carefully. There is often a delay between the marriage occurring and the name change appearing on title pages. Anna Maria Johnson married Archibald Mackenzie in 1789. This date renders *Monmouth,* and potentially *Calista* (depending on when in 1789 the marriage took place), as published under 'Johnson' when her name had legally changed to 'Mackenzie'. Additionally, *The Danish Massacre* (1791) and *Slavery* (1792) link to 'Johnson'. Mackenzie's 1795 novel, *Mysteries Elucidated*, links to *The Danish Massacre* and to 'Johnson'. However, while the title page of *Mysteries Elucidated* is pseudo-

[45] Marriage certificate. 'Ann Maria Johnson to Archibald Mackenzie' (1789)', in *England, Pallot's Marriage Index, 1780-1837* <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=CgK1&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&indiv=1&dbid=5967&gsfn=Ann%20Maria&gsln=Johnson&cp=0&mssng=Archibald&mssns=Mackenzie&msgdy=1789&new=1&rank=1&uidh=mpw&redir=false&msT=1&gss=angs-d&pcat=34&fh=0&h=855902&recoff=&ml_rpos=1&queryId=19d0a31cb415477ef731b82409340991> [accessed 30 December 2021].

anonymous, its preface is signed 'Anna Maria Mackenzie' and the dedication to her Royal Highness Caroline Princess of Wales is signed 'A. M. Mackenzie'.[46] Mackenzie's new surname is not made as explicit as it could be as it is not on the title page. Instead, the new surname is veiled by being placed in the paratext. Furthermore, the 'Mrs' element disappears from her ascriptions after 1798. While *Mysteries Elucidated* is pseudo-anonymous on the cover, its content reveals a gentle introduction of a new name, providing a pathway for readers to connect the significant body of works published under the name of 'Johnson' to the new name of 'Mackenzie'.

The name which remains known is 'Anna Maria Mackenzie'. It appears in 1798 on *Dusseldorf*'s title page and on title pages of later works and it was on the Minerva Press 1798 Prospectus. Therefore, the proprietor of the Minerva Press also influenced Mackenzie's identity as an author. William Lane consolidated it as 'Anna Maria Mackenzie' when marketing Mackenzie as one of his ten 'Particular and Favourite Authors' in his 1798 Prospectus, despite the fact that the title pages of the five novels included in the Prospectus never show the name, 'Mackenzie'.[47] Therefore, through the Prospectus, Lane retrospectively established which texts were part of Mackenzie's oeuvre and aligned these texts with a specific construction of the author as 'Anna Maria Mackenzie'. The Prospectus and pseudo-anonymity complemented one another by projecting Mackenzie's identity as a female author of renown, being both 'particular and favorite', and with an extensive oeuvre of works published under her own name. This also illustrates that a writer's identity was influenced and established by numerous parties and written forms.

This taxonomy and Mackenzie's ascriptions suggest a new theory in the study of authorial identities: that the part of a novel or promotional text where the name appears has a bearing on the name shown and consequently the identity projected. In *Mysteries Elucidated* in 1795, Mackenzie is connected to a former surname, Johnson, on the title page, but to her new surname, Mackenzie, in

[46] Anna Maria Mackenzie, *Mysteries Elucidated* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1795), Vol. 1, p. xvi. *ECCO*; Mackenzie, 'Dedication', in *Mysteries elucidated*, Vol. 1, p. iv.

[47] 'General Prospectus', Minerva Literary Repository, Library and Printing-Office (1798). St Bride Foundation and Library, London.

the preface. The preface was dedicated to 'Caroline, Princess of Wales'.[48] It may have been necessary to identify Mackenzie as 'Mackenzie' in the preface if this was the surname by which the Princess knew her.[49] Therefore the different parts of the novel correspond to catering for different readers: the title page is for the general reading public, while the dedication is for the dedicatee. *Mysteries Elucidated* (1795) captures the complexity of managing and projecting an authorial identity during a change in surname. As this was a situation experienced only by women, as men's surnames did not change traditionally upon marriage, pseudo-anonymity enabled a simultaneously consistent yet shifting authorial reputation to be forged. Pseudo-anonymity nuances David A. Brewer's observation that 'authorial names were able to […] operate more like counters to be pushed around than straightforward indices pointing toward specific biographical individuals to whose personhood, in the ordinary sense, everyone was willing to accede'.[50] Rather, pseudo-anonymity ensures the person, Mackenzie, remains discernible (if not obvious) and her authorial career is evidenced on her title pages. It is in this nuanced management of Mackenzie's authorial identity that the individual emerges and her extensive works remain connected to her, remain her achievements, despite her changing surnames.

Mackenzie's correlating and chameleonic authorial ascriptions reveal the importance bestowed on a name and that names bore cultural and social implications, particularly for women. Veiling her new surname through pseudo-anonymity while pointing readers to previous works enables a strategic and softened rebranding of herself to her readers and the modernisation of her authorial identity. Pseudo-anonymity confirms that an authorial ascription is convoluted and comprises composite elements. Consequently, an authorial identity is paradoxically a point of reference to a

[48] Mackenzie, 'Dedication', in *Mysteries Elucidated*, Vol. 1, p. iv.

[49] The preface is not evidence that a connection between the Princess and Mackenzie existed, as some authors reached out to potential benefactors through dedications without a prior connection. Chapter 2.2 Dedicatees, Networking, and Prefaces expands on this.

[50] Brewer, 'The Tactility of Authorial Names', p. 196.

single individual while operating deictically to point outwards to previous works and to previous surnames. It illustrates the chameleonic properties of a female writer's authorial identities.

1.2b Susanna Rowson and the Complexities of Authorial Ascriptions

This chapter closes with an analysis of how other professions alongside authorship contributed to one writer's authorial identities. Susanna Rowson was an author, teacher, and actress. Rowson was born Susanna Haswell in England in 1762. Her family moved to Massachusetts, America, in 1768, before returning to England in 1778 during the American War of Independence. Haswell married John Rowson in 1786 and published her first work, *Victoria, a novel*, in the same year. Alongside writing, she was an actor and a teacher. In 1793 Rowson moved back to Philadelphia; she and her husband were among the first English theatrical families recruited for the Philadelphia New Theatre.[51] Rowson founded the Young Ladies Academy in Boston in 1797. Scholars observe her 'genuinely and significantly transatlantic life' but it was her novel *Charlotte*, first printed by Lane in 1791 and rebranded by Matthew Carey in Philadelphia in 1797 as *Charlotte Temple*, which means Rowson is known as 'early America's best-selling author and reputed foremother of American sentimental fiction'.[52]

Throughout her authorial career, Rowson had various ascriptions, ostensibly influenced by her other careers and by her geographical location. This section looks at Rowson's authorial ascriptions to propose that re-invention was a customary part of being an author; Mackenzie's authorial ascriptions evidenced that personal life changes necessitated rebranding, while Rowson's other simultaneous professional careers and geographical relocation capture other reasons for renaming oneself or being renamed by a publisher. Rowson's transatlantic and diverse careers mean that her identity was reworked differently compared to other British writers, making the reinvention more explicit as she

[51] Steven Epley, 'Rowson, Susanna (*bap.* 1762, *d.* 1824)', in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24232> [accessed 16 November 2017]

[52] Joseph F. Bartolomeo, 'Introduction', in Susanna Rowson, *Reuben and Rachel; or, Tales of Old Times*, ed. by Joseph F. Bartolomeo (Ontario: Broadview, 2009), p. 9; Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, p. 3.

was rebranded in different ways. Rowson's ascriptions reveal that her authorial identity was a blend of literary and lived experiences. My analysis aims to reveal that authorial identities are sites of re-invention, and this is made possible by pseudo-anonymity.

In England, Rowson published seven novels prior to 1800. These are depicted in Figure 8 below:

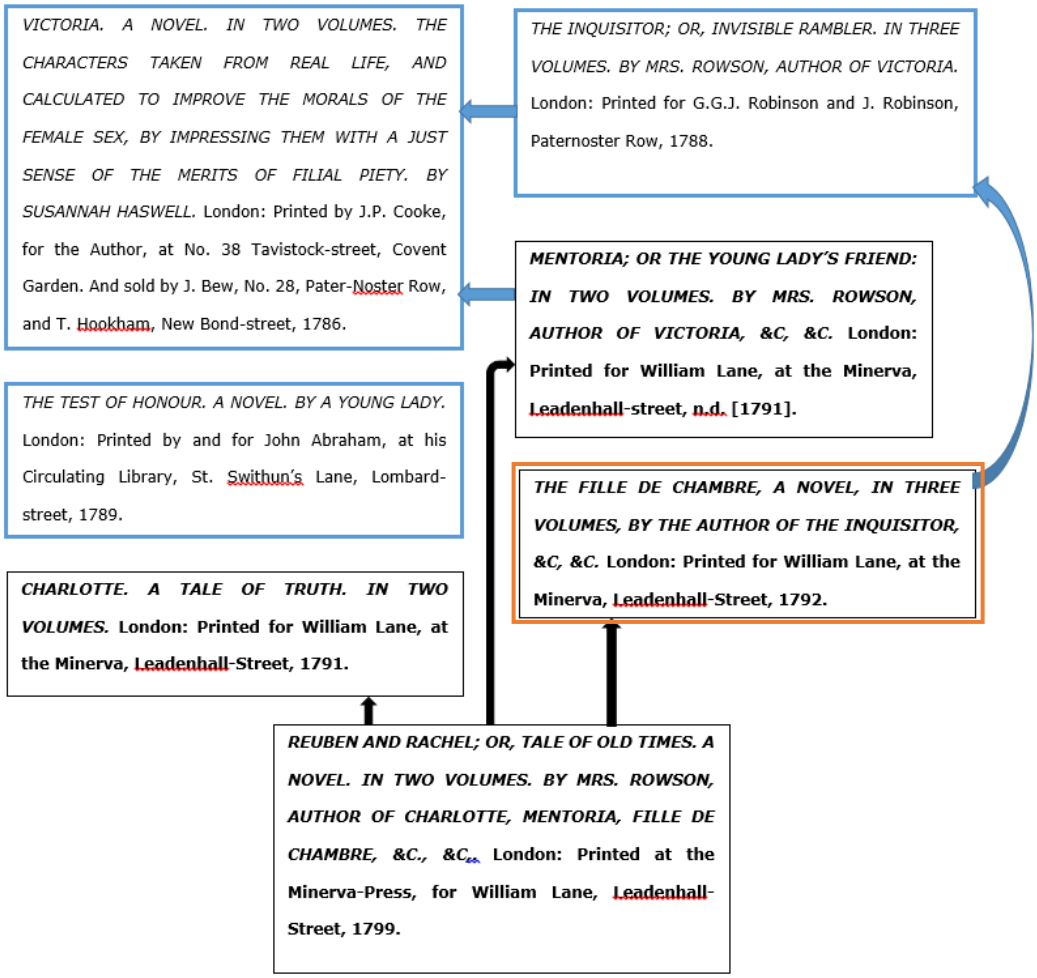


Figure 8: Authorial filiations between Susanna Rowson's novels published in England.

The novels in black boxes were printed by the Minerva Press. Blue boxes denote novels published by other publishing houses. The orange box encasing *The Fille de Chambre* signals that this was published pseudo-anonymously.

Each title page bears a different authorial ascription. *Victoria* (1786) was published onymously under her maiden name of 'Susannah Haswell'; *The Inquisitor* (1788) was published under the married appellation, 'Mrs. Rowson'; and *The Test of Honour* (1789) used the substantive-anonym, 'by a young

Lady', and had no title page chains. The first two works publicise the author's name, while the third obscures her name but not her gender. Rowson's debut novel with the Minerva Press, *Charlotte*, was published anonymously. The lack of authorial identity echoes the prevalence of anonymity in the Minerva Press corpus in 1791 but it could also reflect a fresh start for Rowson. Rowson had moved publishers four times by the time *Charlotte* was published. Her first work for Lane is anonymous and without title page chains, allowing a new guise of her authorial figure to be fashioned free from previous networks and associations. Additionally, anonymity may have been a precautionary measure: to protect her authorial reputation crafted by her three previous novels from being impacted by any reviews of *Charlotte*, in case they happened to be negative. Alternatively, it may have been a test of her own writing ability. To write anonymously is to experience the critical reception of a work without it being influenced by the previously established reputation of a named author. The constant change in ascriptions on these title pages sheds much light on authorial naming practices. They suggest that an authorial name was specific to that text and that it was a projection of a person, much like an actor performing a specific character's part. Furthermore, they show that names were considered and then reconsidered in an experimentative approach which blended personal situations and the fashionable tastes and trends of the literary marketplace.

Similarly to Mackenzie's early title pages, Rowson's title pages announce her femaleness. Rowson's do so through including the titles, 'Mrs', her first name, and also the substantive anonym, 'By a Lady'. Three of Rowson's novels were published under her married name, 'Mrs. Rowson', while the novel published under her maiden name of 'Haswell' omitted 'Miss' and instead gave her full name, 'Susannah Haswell'. Incidentally, the novels published under her married name did not mention her first name. Many other women published under their married titles; Elizabeth Meeke, the most prolific Minerva Press novelist published nineteen of her thirty works as 'Mrs. Meeke'; Isabella Kelly - another of William Lane's 'Particular and Favorite Authors' on his 1798 prospectus - published primarily as 'Mrs. Kelly' on her title pages. It suggests that the inclusion of 'Mrs' was not seen as a disadvantage to the work overall or as a disadvantageous aspect of the character of the female author

on title pages. The married title often replaced and eclipsed the woman's first name, as was convention. A woman's identity as a wife was often promoted above an individual female writer's full name.

The 1814 Minerva Press catalogue supports the proposal that the married title of 'Mrs' was seen by those at the Press as a propitious element of a female authorial identity at the start of the nineteenth century. This catalogue attaches names to 50 previously anonymous works published between 1775 and 1809.[53] Eleven married women's names are released, and three unmarried women's names. The sudden revealing of these names prompts questions about why any names, and why these specific names, were made public knowledge in 1814. No archival material explaining this release of name is known to survive and it is nearly impossible to establish if these names were real or invented. The surnames given are popular British ones: 'Mrs. Martin', 'Mrs. Johnson', 'Miss Street', and 'Miss Taylor'. Only four full, legal onyms are provided: Helen Craik, Mary Julia Young, Henry Summersett, and Frances Jacson. I propose that Newman, the proprietor of the Minerva Press after William Lane retired in 1809, released all these names (real or invented) to modernise the Press' catalogue by keeping it in line with the increasing fashion for onymity from the 1810s onwards. The large proportion of married titles cultivates the impression that Minerva texts were written by female authors for occupying conventional female roles.

That married titles outnumber unmarried titles suggests that the married woman was a more favourable projection of an author; it signified a woman who followed societal convention, and indicated a level of decorum and maturity which countered the widely held notion that the novel was written by and written for young misses. This conventional authorial subject position connoted a respectability, and this was then conferred onto the novel attached to that name. It also was a means a rebranding the novel; an anonymous novel was suddenly given an author and therefore a new factor to consider when reading the novel. If one considers that the 'Mrs.' title engenders a more respectable

[53] 'Catalogue of A.K. Newman and Co.'s Library. 1814-1820.' Newman A.K. and co. 1814[-20] Don. e.217. (Weston Stack). Post-1701 Weston 604023724. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

subject position, then Mrs. Rowson's, Mrs. Kelly's, and Mrs. Meeke's use of their married title indicates a desire for the authorial figure to be respected. The title page ascription is more about the figure it projects than the writer to whom it actually refers.

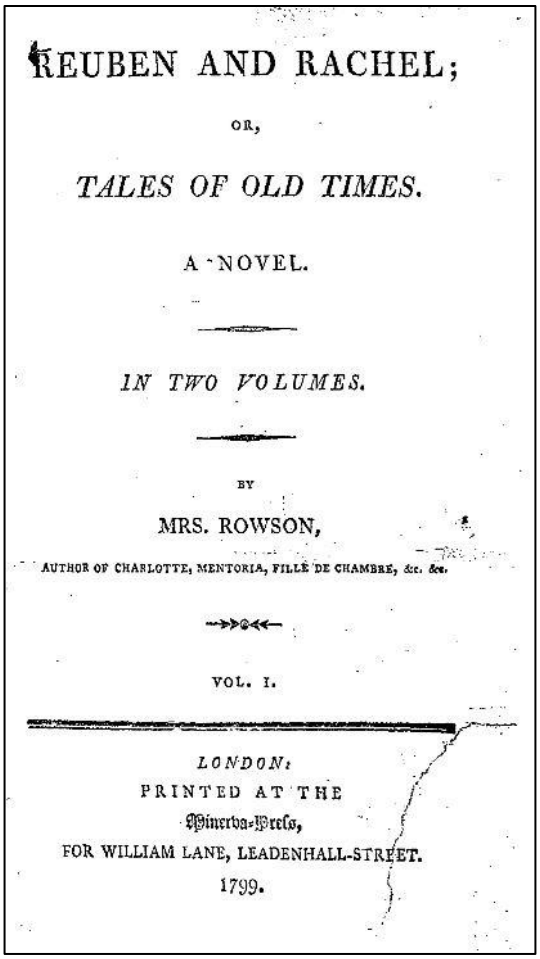
Thus, a title page had the potential to indicate respectability and convention. However, there are moments in Rowson's career where her married title and her surname disappears for precise reasons. *The Fille de Chambre* (1792) was published pseudo-anonymously; Rowson's name is not on the title page, but it is discoverable by following the title page chain to *The Inquisitor* (1788), which was published 'by Mrs. Rowson'. 'Mrs. Rowson' has published two works before *The Fille de Chambre*: *The Inquisitor* (1788) and *Mentoria* (1791). Her name was public and, to a degree, established as it was linked to *Victoria* (1786) as well. Therefore, something occurred to make the momentary elision of Rowson's name in 1792 advisable. This elision corresponds to her only known stage appearance on the British theatre scene. Then, in 1793, Rowson and her husband, William Rowson, moved to Philadelphia permanently, having been signed up by the Philadelphia Theatre Company. The omission of Rowson's name *The Fille de Chambre*'s title page controls her public presence, making the association between 'Mrs. Rowson' the writer and 'Mrs. Rowson' the actor harder to connect. It was perhaps the wider denigration of acting as a profession for women, notwithstanding exceptions such as Sarah Siddons, which made separating Rowson's writing and acting careers propitious.

Turning to Rowson's novels published in America, Rowson's authorship and acting careers were brought together on American title pages. Melissa J. Homestead and Camryn Hansen's research on Rowson's American title pages leads them to argue that Rowson successfully 'merged her interests as actress and author' on a regional scale, but not national.[54] Notwithstanding that it is very difficult to concretely assert who ultimately decided on the authorial ascription used (yet Homestead and Hansen aver Rowson's agency), the title page of *Charlotte*, which was republished by Mathew Carey in Philadelphia in 1794, rebranded the authorial ascription from anonymous to 'Mrs. Rowson, of the

[54] Melissa J. Homestead and Camryn Hansen, 'Susanna Rowson's Transatlantic Career', *Early American Literature*, 43:3 (2010), 619-654 (p. 639) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25800116> [accessed 29 January 2022]

New Theatre, Philadelphia'. Given that Rowson had travelled across the Atlantic with a theatre company, featuring her acting career on the title page signalled that this writer already had a presence and reputation in public society. The title page of the first American edition of *Charlotte* operates as a bridge which connects Rowson's transatlantic authorial career and her profession as an actor. Additionally, a Philadelphian publication of *Mentoria*, brought out by Robert Campbell, in 1794 also featured her acting career; *Mentoria* was published 'by Mrs. Rowson, of the New Theatre, Philadelphia' and with a title page chain of four novels: *The Inquisitor, Fille de Chambre, Victoria* and *Charlotte*. Unlike William Lane, Carey's and Campbell's editions announced and consolidated Rowson's identity as an actress and as an author.

Rowson's title pages illuminate how elements of a writer's life could be suppressed or emphasised through a title page. Indeed, while she remained in Philadelphia, she took care to retain her public presence in the British book trade as well, sending *Reuben and Rachel* to William Lane for publication in 1799. This was written 'By Mrs. Rowson, author of Charlotte, Mentoria, Fille de Chambre', as shown in Figure 9 below. This British version omits Rowson's acting career and her career as an educator. Notably, it also does not mention Rowson's latest publication: *Trials of the Human Heart*, printed for the author and published in Philadelphia in 1795 by Wrigley and Berriman. In contrast, the American edition of *Reuben and Rachel*, published in 1798, does reference *Trials of the Human Heart* as shown in Figure 10.



REUBEN AND RACHEL;

OR,

TALES OF OLD TIMES.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

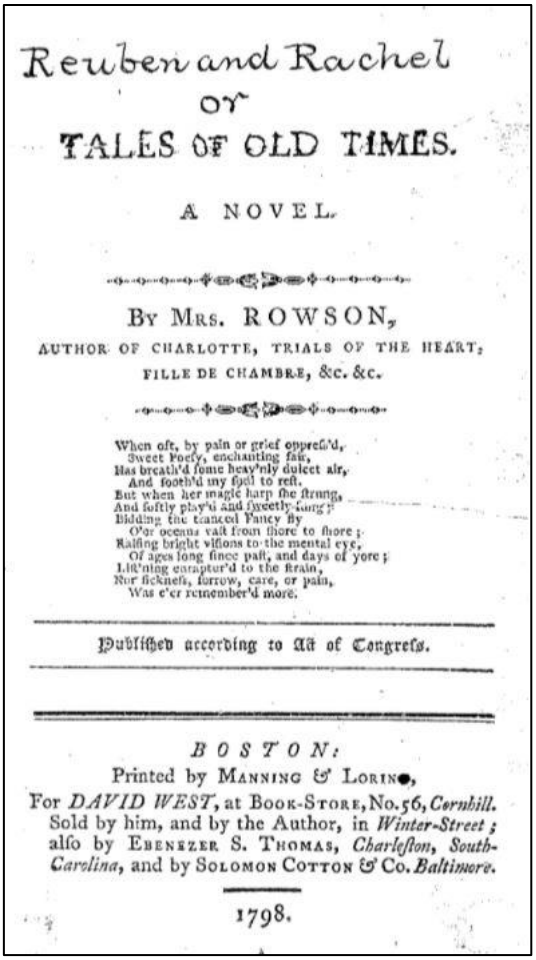
MRS. ROWSON,

AUTHOR OF CHARLOTTE, MENTORIA, FILLE DE CHAMBRE, &c. &c.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.
1799.

Figure 9: British title page of Susanna Rowson, *Reuben and Rachel; or Tales of Old Times* (London: Minerva Press, 1799). *ECCO.*



Reuben and Rachel
OR
TALES OF OLD TIMES.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. ROWSON,
AUTHOR OF CHARLOTTE, TRIALS OF THE HEART,
FILLE DE CHAMBRE, &c. &c.

When oft, by pain or grief oppreſs'd,
Sweet Poeſy, enchanting fair,
Has breath'd ſome heav'nly dulcet air,
And ſooth'd my ſpirit to reſt.
But when her magic harp ſhe ſtrung,
And ſoftly play'd and ſweetly ſung;
Bidding the tranced Fancy fly
O'er oceans vaſt from ſhore to ſhore;
Raiſing bright viſions to the mental eye,
Of ages long ſince paſt, and days of yore;
Liſt'ning enraptur'd to the ſtrain,
Nor ſickneſs, ſorrow, care, or pain,
Was e'er remember'd more.

Publiſhed according to Act of Congreſs.

BOSTON:
Printed by MANNING & LORING,
For *DAVID WEST*, at BOOK-STORE, No. 56, *Cornhill.*
Sold by him, and by the Author, in *Winter-Street;*
alſo by EBENEZER S. THOMAS, *Charleſton, South-Carolina*, and by SOLOMON COTTON & Co. *Baltimore.*

1798.

Figure 10: American title page of Susanna Rowson, *Reuben and Rachel or Tales of Old Times* (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1798). *ECCO.*

These title pages market the same person differently. Lane's title page does not mention Rowson's most recent work. The 'sales of Trials of the heart have been slow', wrote Rowson's publisher Mathew Carey in 1812, and, as far as we know, *Trials* was never sent an English publisher.[55] It may have been decided not to include *Trials* on Lane's version of *Reuben and Rachel* because it was not a success, or it may have been decided that the British public would not be interested in an American novel which they could not get hold of in England. The result of the British title page of *Reuben and Rachel* is that it eclipses her American careers and presence, marketing her as a British author of interest to British readers. The American edition still listed *Trials* – a commercial decision to drive its sales – and texts

[55] Mr. Carey to Mrs. Rowson, 23 April 1812. Letter transcribed in full in Homestead and Hansen, 'Susanna Rowson's Transatlantic Career', p. 641.

initially published in England: *Charlotte* and *Fille de Chambre*. As such, Rowson's identity in America is that of a transatlantic author meanwhile, in England, she is a British author. In turn, it could be argued that her British works provided the foundation for her American authorial identity and public presence, but this was not reciprocated in England. Her identity did not need to be bolstered by adding the title of another text, showing her consistent writing and her experience, to market her as a professional author with a history of commercial success. The versatility and chameleonic nature of Rowson's ascriptions reveal the geographic nature of identity-creation and the numerous means by which one person's identity can be created. Her agency is not as important as is the conclusion that the author was a site of reinvention and a space needing to cultivate market appeal and public presence along with a degree of respectability.

The flexibility and versatility of authorial ascriptions on Minerva Press title pages is evident. The gradations of anonymity and permutations of identities reveals that a writer's identity was crafted, designed, and bespoke to a specific title page. The title page was often where a reader would first meet the author-figure of the novel they were thinking of reading. Thus, the authorial ascription is imbued with great marketing potential and great significance. It creates the first impression and therefore it was managed with due care and due strategy, by writer or by publisher. My new taxonomy of authorial ascriptions reveals the deliberate craft behind quasi-anonymous novels and substantive-anonymous novels. These novels have previously been overlooked as 'anonymous' texts. Instead, the Minerva Press corpus reveals that an authorial identity is discernible even when no authorial ascription or an ascription pertaining to a person is featured on the title page. The oscillating uses of 'Mrs.' and 'by a Lady', along with the increasing use of the ascription 'by the author of …', show that the public presence of a writer was created in part by their oeuvre of works. The female authorial identity was constructed through their professional identity as a writer, their commercial success, and also their familial relationships. The Romantic period author is a commodified construction, where the other components of their identity were at least equally as important as an author-figure's name.

The Minerva Press corpus demonstrates also that there was a general increase in referring to writers using their onyms, using veridical pseudonyms, or divulging more aspects of an identity as the thirty-year period progressed. It demonstrates an increasing correlation between a text and an author-figure. However, once a writer's name was released, an authorial identity is more complicated to reinvent. Pseudo-anonymity captures instances where an author had to be reimagined and re-presented to the public. It offered a softened construction of the writer which maintained elements of professionalism by adverting to their previous work, but which distanced the correlation of specific texts with a writer's specific name.

This chapter has demonstrated that authorial identity needed to be both fixed and versatile; it includes multiple elements which were adapted, suppressed, or emphasised according to the needs of the author and the fashion of the reading public. Authorial identities are inherently bound up with notions of performance and of reinvention. Therefore, an author's identity or a writer's identity cannot derive or be understood from one title page. Instead, an oeuvre ought to be looked at and considered. This aims to shed new light on the figure of the Romantic author because it nuances the singularity the phrase connotes. Rather, we should understand that the Romantic author was a polyvalent, linguistic construction, especially on the title pages of popular novels. This construction was a changing, versatile entity and changes were made due to a number of factors: marriage, genre and content of text, year of production, wider naming conventions, geographical location, and others. The author-figure is a sign and a symbol, and each ascription in individualised even when it draws on rhetorical phrases used by other writers as well. As a shifting construction, the author-figure frustrates the correlation between the text and writer by inserting another entity in this relationship. This research could be taken further by comparing title page ascriptions of novels publishing by other contemporary publishing houses, those such as Hookhams or Lackingtons or Longmans. This could reveal if similar patterns of ascriptions, uses of pseudo-anonymity, and uses of substantive-anonymity were used elsewhere in the marketplace and, if so, what patterns become evident. It may reveal that different publishing houses used certain ascriptions more than others, providing insight into the

conventions of a publishing house and how this may have a bearing on the identity of the author-figure.

Title pages remain complex and somewhat confounding spaces due to the unclear ownership of them. Prefaces, the focus of the next chapter, demonstrate greater authorial agency and ownership. They provide an extended space for the construction of an authorial identity, for commentary upon the writer's milieu, and for criticism on the form and reception of the novel. They position the figure of the author in relation to other participants and frameworks, deriving meaning from the subject positions they create for others.

Chapter Two – Defining the Subject Position of the Author in Minerva Press Prefaces

Eliza Parsons' preface to *Ellen and Julia* (1793) covers a lot considering its short length. The entirety of it reads as follows:

> The following Work I submit to the Judgement of the Public with much greater diffidence and anxiety than when I first threw myself on its candour and indulgence; because the many late excellent productions of other female writers painfully convince me of my own inability and deficiencies, and at the same time lays me open to the imputation of presumption and undue vanity. But as the foil sometimes serves to give additional brilliancy to the Diamond, I may be at least pardoned for the attempt to follow, though I cannot overtake, those celebrated Ladies to whom the Public are so much obliged for their amusement. To the shafts of criticism I bow with respect, neither deprecating their severity nor imploring their indulgence, since either would equally offend their impartiality and judgement.[1]

This preface presents its author as meek and unpretentious; it praises 'celebrated' female writers; and it anticipates and even welcomes reviewers' criticisms. It calls the novel it introduces 'foil' while other novels are diamonds, casting *Ellen and Julia* as an inferior text through this material paradigm. Yet, as I have explored elsewhere, the foil paradigm simultaneously proposes an alternate way of valuing and appreciating this and, by extension, other popular, imitative novels.[2] By alluding to the period's cultural appreciation for imitative jewellery, the foil paradigm implies that some novels can be valuable for their wide appeal, for how they innovate upon tropes they imitate, and for how they reflect back on the 'diamond' texts of the book trade. Thus, while displaying overt pretensions to

[1] Eliza Parsons, *Ellen and Julia* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1793), Vol. 1, a1^{r-v}. *ECCO*.
[2] Colette Davies, 'Foils and Diamonds: Using material culture, reviews, and prefaces to reappraise the Minerva Press', *Romanticism on the Net*, 76 (forthcoming 2022).

authorial modesty and acknowledging her novel's inferiority, Parsons' preface positions her text and its author strategically and cleverly in the Romantic literary marketplace by suggesting ways in which readers may understand the work's value. If read at face-value, the preface's speaker embodies a self-effacing female writer; if one considers the subtexts, it is arguing for cultural value and appreciation for the popular author and her work.

Parsons' preface is not unique in these respects. The Minerva Press prefaces and dedications covered in this chapter comprise strategised representations of the author and of the novel. In this chapter, I view dedications as a subset of prefaces and therefore treat them alongside one another. The Minerva Press dedications covered herein are lengthy texts which are more than a simple address to an individual. Along with naming their dedicatee, these dedications explain at length why they have dedicated their work to that person. In so doing, the dedications introduce the novel's characters, content, and morals and shed light on the writer, functioning similarly to a preface. Both prefaces and dedications provided opportunities for specific authorial voices to speak to a reader, therefore enabling precise and nuanced representations of writing and of the author. Perceived by writers as an integral part of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century novel – indeed *Ellen and Julia* has both a dedication and a preface – the preface and the dedication are important spaces. They shed light on the construction, representation, and reception of the author and of the novel.

It is clear that sophisticated strategies are being deployed in preface writing and that dedications should be studied at face-value and for their subtexts. In the wake of Gérard Genette's *Seuils*, published in 1987 and translated in 1997, book historians and literary scholars have become fascinated with the preface: the textual space Genette characterised as one of 'creative power', potential, and strategy.[3] Genette observes that the paratext, a category that includes the preface and the dedication, is a 'privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better

[3] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 11.

reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it'.[4] The high frequency of prefaces in Romantic period novels indicates that writers perceived the preface to be an integral and useful part of a novel. Indeed, as Jennie Batchelor writes, prefaces in mid-eighteenth-century novels were 'carefully crafted' and 'complex spaces', and yet these texts have 'too often been given short shrift' by scholars.[5] This chapter will address the current gap in scholarship on Minerva Press prefaces by exploring a selection of prefaces in Minerva novels published between 1785 and 1800.[6] As this chapter will argue, many Minerva Press writers used their prefaces as a textual space for self-fashioning, achieving this by defining the subject position of the novelist by presenting it in comparison with other participants in the marketplace. Through respectful, even obsequious, addresses to reviewers and patrons, the prefaces demonstrate an explicit and overt adherence to literary convention and hierarchy while probing the nature of patronage. Through paradigms of parenthood, the prefaces refine the intentions of a writer and redefine the relationship between a writer and their text. Through positing alternate canons, prefaces forge a framework of reception for the popular novelist and for the novel in the late-eighteenth century book trade. I argue that these prefaces demonstrate behaviours which simultaneously conform to and destabilise expectations of the Romantic novelist. While accepting their inferior position as novelists, some Minerva prefaces suggest alternate evaluations of what constitutes literary value. The first section turns to prefaces which address reviewers and acknowledge and aggrandise the authority of the reviewer. It is in the subsequent sections, with their foci of dedications, parents, and canons, that the prefaces undermine the implicit inferiority of the novelist.

[4] Ibid., p. 2.

[5] Jennie Batchelor, ''[T]o strike a little out of a road already so much beaten': Gender, Genre, and the Mid-Century Novel', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830*, ed. by Jacqueline M. Labbe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp 84-101 (p. 89); Ibid., p. 89; Ibid., p. 89.

[6] Please note that Mark A. Weinstein produced a compilation of Walter Scott's prefaces to his Waverley novels: Mark A. Weinstein, *The Prefaces to the Waverley Novels* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1978). This edition includes brief critical material. No other Romantic period novelist's prefaces have received similar attention.

2.1 Reviewers, Power, and Politeness in Prefaces

The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed an explosion of review culture. Six major review periodicals were founded between 1749 and 1800.[7] The *Monthly Review*, founded in 1749, and the *Critical Review*, founded in 1756, promised to provide a comprehensive review of new works; the *Monthly* stated it would provide 'a compendious account of those productions of the press' while the *Critical Review*'s aim was to 'exhibit a succinct plan of every performance'.[8] The *Monthly* and the *Critical* did not achieve this but, in practice, most novels were covered by at least one of the era's periodicals. Taking the 225 novels published by the Minerva Press in the 1790s as a case study, 152 works were reviewed by one periodical while 33 had two reviews. One work had three reviews and 39 texts are thought not to have been reviewed at all. 83 percent of Minerva Press works were covered in review periodicals in the 1790s.

Thus, reviewers were prominent participants in the literary marketplace. With this large output came a form of influence. Reviewers' opinions could shape public taste. There is evidence that some readers sought out review periodicals before then choosing which books to borrow from libraries. Anna Larpent's journals indicate that she took out the *Gentlemen's Magazine* and the *British Critic* regularly in order to decide which books she should borrow.[9] Therefore, a review of a novel could influence its reception and its sales to some degree, and it was in the interest of the writer to appeal to a reviewer.

Moreover, some reviews illustrate that reviewers paid great attention to information in prefaces. Two reviews of Eliza Parsons' debut novel *The History of Miss Meredith* (1790) specifically reference information she revealed in the preface. Parsons admitted that she wrote for 'the

[7] Antonia Forster, 'Book reviewing', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 5, 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael Suarez and Michael Turner (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 631-648 (p. 636).

[8] 'Advertisement', *The Monthly Review* (London: R. Griffiths, 1749), p. 9. *British Periodicals*; 'Preface', in *The Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature* (London: R. Baldwin, 1756), A2^{r}. *British Periodicals.*

[9] See the indexes of Anna Larpent's diaries in Vol. 2, 1796-1796. The Huntingdon Library, HM31201. Available at: <http://www.eighteenthcenturydrama.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/Documents/Details/HL_LD_mssHM31201v2> [accessed: 20 August 2020].

preservation of eight fatherless children!'[10] Reviewers latched onto this image. *The English Review* acknowledged 'the peculiar distresses of its author, a widow with nine children, reduced from affluence to absolute penury' and the *Monthly Review* echoed this, calling Parsons 'a widow, reduced from a state of affluence to the hard necessity of *writing*, to provide for a numerous family'.[11] Similarly, the preface to Mary Sherwood's novel, *The Traditions* (1795), explained that the subscriptions for her novel would relieve a family friend's debt. Two reviews noted the 'dedicatory epistle' and the purpose for writing the novel, commending the novel as 'an offer of benevolence to distress'.[12] Reviewers frequently took note of the prefaces' contents and heeded this when articulating their judgement of a text. This makes the preface a germane space in which the writer could strategically introduce and orientate their work and themselves.

This section focuses on how writers addressed reviewers, concentrating on the language used to describe the role of the reviewers. The language used goes beyond flattery; it demonstrates the writer's acute awareness of the reviewer's power. The chapter then turns to the form of these prefaces. They share some formal qualities of a letter, commencing with a greeting and closing with a form of signature. This, I argue, emphasises that both the author and the novel exist in a nexus of subject positions and expectations and that the identity of an author gains definition, in part, from the identity and role a writer projects upon the reviewer. The reviewer's subject position is one of power; writers operate within this hierarchy and consequently assume an inferior position.

The way the author is presented in a preface is dependent on the preface's speaker. Genette devised three categories of the prefatory speaker: the authorial, the actorial, and the allographic. The

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[10] Eliza Parsons, *The History of Miss Meredith* (London: Printed for the author and sold by T. Hookham, 1790), Vol. 1, p. ii. *ECCO*.

[11] 'ART. 18. *The History of Miss Meredith; a Novel*', *English review, or, An abstract of English and foreign literature*, 15 (1790), 467-467 (p. 467). *British Periodicals;* 'Art. 25. *The History of Miss Meredith; Dedicated, by Permission, to the most noble the Marchioness of Salisbury*', *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, 3 (1790), 90-90 (p. 90). *British Periodicals*.

[12] '*The Traditions, a Legendary Tale*', *The Critical review, or, Annals of literature*, 14 (1795), 353-5 (p. 353). *British Periodicals*; E., 'Art. 41. *The Traditions*, a Legendary Tale', *Monthly Review, or, Literary* Journal, 18 (1795), 229 (p. 229). *British Periodicals.*

authorial is a preface written by the real or alleged author of the novel; the actorial is a preface by a character from the novel's plot; and the allographic is a 'wholly different (third) person' who is outside of the narrative: a new persona who is neither the author of the novel or character within the novel.[13] Using another character to narrate the preface increases the fictionality of the preface, augmenting the distance between the novelist and their novel. Meanwhile, most Minerva Press writers created *authorial* prefaces, speaking to the reviewers directly from their position as writers. As such, the voices present in the Minerva prefaces combine the roles of writer and prefatory speaker, making the prefaces increasingly performative and significant when studying the presentation of the author of popular fiction. Prefaces allowed Minerva Press writers an extratextual yet liminal space which was adjacent to their work of fiction in which to present authorship.

Many Minerva writers spoke to reviewers directly through the preface. Anna Maria Mackenzie entitled her preface 'TO THE REVIEWERS' in *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786).[14] The anonymous author of *Adeline* and the anonymous author of *Sutton-Abbey* did the same.[15] Frances Burney addressed 'THE AUTHORS OF THE MONTHLY and CRITICAL REVIEWS' in the preface to her *Evelina, or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778).[16] Similarly, Elizabeth Bonhote and Robert Bage dedicated individual paragraphs within their prefaces to reviewers.[17] These authors address reviewers explicitly, seeking their attention and foregrounding the expectation that what follows in their preface will be of specific interest to reviewers. Writers conceptualised the subject position of reviewers specifically as a

[13] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 178. For an example of the allographic prefatory speaker, please see Ann Hatton's novel, *Cambrian Pictures, or Every One has Errors* (London: Minerva Press, 1810). *NCCO*. My thanks go to Ruby Hawley-Sibbett for alerting me to this text.

[14] Anna Maria Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions* (London: W. Lane, 1786), Vol. 1, p. ii. Early Novel Collection, University of Bristol Library.

[15] See Anon., *Adeline; or the Orphan* (London: W. Lane, 1790), Vol. 1, p. i. *ECCO* and Anon., *Sutton-Abbey* (Dublin: James Williams, for the Company of booksellers, 1780), Vol. 1, p. iii. *ECCO*.

[16] Frances Burney, *Evelina, Or, a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (London: T. Lowndes, 1778), Vol. 1, p. v. *ProQuest* eBook.

[17] See Elizabeth Bonhote, *Bungay Castle* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1797), Vol. 1, p. xix. *ECCO* where the final paragraph begins 'To the Reviewers …'. Robert Bage opened the final paragraph of his preface with 'To the reviewers then, …' in *Man as he is* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1792), Vol. 1, p. vii. *ECCO.*

powerful entity by merging the position of the reviewer with that of a patron. In *Evelina*, Burney elevated the position of the reviewer to the position of the gentlemanly, aristocratic patron, writing that as she was '[w]ithout name, without recommendation, and unknown alike to success and disgrace, to whom can I so properly apply for patronage, as to those who publicly profess themselves Inspectors of all literary performances?'[18] A 'patron' is 'one who countenances, supports, or protects' and an 'advocate; defender; vindicator', according to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.[19] The anonymous author of *Adeline* also asks for the reviewers' 'patronage' in the preface.[20] While 'a traditionally aristocratic practice', according to Griffin, the form of patronage curried by Burney and the anonymous author is reputational.[21] Burney and the anonymous author sought the protection of the reviewers, positioning them as individuals who can defend their works against others who may criticise it. There is some irony in that the writers turn to the participants in the book trade who can and often did lambast novelists and their novels. Their appeals to the same party highlight a reviewer's ability to make or ruin literary reputations. In contrast, Parsons' preface to *Ellen and Julia* specifically eschewed expecting 'indulgence', but the allusion to it reveals the implicit expectation that flattery can lead to favour. Through a flattering appeal to their power and elevating their status, writers do what they can to appeal to a reviewer by acknowledging the reviewer's power.

Some writers positioned the power of the reviewer to be extreme: a matter of survival. In alluding to writers who write 'for a substance' and stating that this work must 'seek its fortune', the writer of *Adeline* highlights that writing is often due to financial necessity.[22] 'Fortune' is ambiguous; it may mean chance, luck, fate, or it may mean money. Yet, as the preface mentions writers who write for a living, its subtext alludes to how a reviewer can influence the life and earnings of an author. Indeed, in 1794, the Minerva author Karl Friedrich Kalhert aggrandised the impact of reviewers even

[18] Burney, *Evelina*, Vol. 1, p. vi.

[19] Samuel Johnson, 'patron, n.s.' in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/views/search.php?term=patron> [accessed 29 January 2022]

[20] Anon., *Adeline*, Vol. 1, p. i.

[21] Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p. 13.

[22] Anon., *Adeline*, Vol. 1, p.ii; Ibid., pp. ii-iii.

further, heralding them as 'the dread Arbiters of Literary Life and Death'.[23] This proclamation can refer to the life and death of the novel's sales, but it can extend to the life and death of the novelist. Such a judgement can appear hyperbolic but, when read in the context of the economic privation of many Minerva writers such Parsons, Mary Pilkington, and Elizabeth Helme, the judgement and influence of a reviewer assumes a graver tone. Kahlert's description of the 'Critick's Eagle Eye' reveals that he, and other writers, saw reviewers as uncompromising, unforgiving, and as sharp-sighted.[24] They were powerful presences whose reviews could be predatory attacks on writers which damaged a writer's reputation and income. Writers' addresses to critics through prefaces were appeals to them, but they were also exchanges which exposed how the literary power of a reviewer could translate into real life consequences.

In this channel of communication, Minerva Press writers project authorial humility by referring to themselves as 'servants' as they sign off their prefaces. Bennett used her preface to introduce herself as a 'humble Servant'.[25] Identical phraseology was used by Elizabeth Bonhote, Anna Maria Mackenzie, Eliza Parsons, and Regina Maria Roche.[26] Elizabeth Bonhote's *Bungay Castle* (1797) proclaims she is a 'humble servant' on the title page of the novel, emphasising this seemingly subservient positioning of the author of fiction. Mary Charlton exaggerates her humility, closing her parodic preface with: '[y]our obedient and ever Devoted humble Servant'.[27] Male authors also used this signature: 'servant' appears in the preface in *Tancred* (1791) by Joseph Fox and in the preface to

[23] Karl Friedrich Kahlert, *The Necromancer: or the Tale of the Black Forest* (London: Minerva Press, 1794), Vol. 1, a1^{r}. *ECCO.*

[24] Ibid.

[25] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. iii.

[26] See: Bonhote, *Bungay Castle*, title page; Anna Maria Mackenzie, *The Neapolitan*; *or, The Test of Integrity* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1796), Vol. 1, p. iii. London, British Library; Eliza Parsons, *The Errors of Education* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1791), Vol. 1, p. vii. *ECCO*; Regina Maria Roche, *The Children of the Abbey* (London: Printed for William Lane, at the Minerva-1796), Vol. 1, p. iii. *ECCO.*

[27] Mary Charlton, *The Parisian; or, Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1794), Vol. 1, a1^{v}. *ECCO.*

the *Mystery of the Black Tower* (1796) by John Palmer Junior.[28] These authors consistently refer to themselves as 'servants', indicating their adherence to this expected and conventional form of politeness and also the implicit hierarchy between the reviewer and the inferior author. The signature is a convention, but it is also used in letters to the Literary Fund where the imbalance of power and the female writers' need is clear. The authors, as servants in prefaces, recognise that their existence depends on the reviewers' actions, akin to how a house-servant's livelihood depended on the master of the house.

While being 'servants', many Minerva Press authors used preface as an opportunity to sign themselves through their profession, as 'The Author'. Anna Maria Bennett, Anna Maria Mackenzie, and Mary Charlton used this signature which emphasises their professional occupation and therefore their right to address reviewers in this capacity.[29] I read this signature as a reflection of convention and as a linguistic and visual assertion of their profession as writers. Writers such as Bennett signed prefaces with this professional signature repeatedly; the preface to Bennett's first novel, *Anna; or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785), dedicated to Princess Charlotte, is signed 'THE AUTHOR'.[30] In *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786), Bennett's dedication to His Royal Highness Prince William Henry is from 'THE AUTHOR' and 'THE AUTHOR' writes the address 'TO THE REVIEWERS'.[31] Bennett's *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797) was dedicated to her Royal Highness the Duchess of York and signed 'THE AUTHOR'.[32] To all readers, Bennett's prefaces and dedications emphasise her professional occupation and assert her presence as the texts' creator visually. Bennett's repeated use of this signature can read as a performance of authority; as the novel form was widely denigrated, using a signature of

[28] Joseph Fox, *Tancred. A Tale of Ancient Times* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva, 1791), Vol. 1, p. viii. *ECCO*; John Palmer, Jun., *The Mystery of the Black Tower* (London: printed for the author, by William Lane, at the Minerva-Press 1796), p. vii. *ECCO*.

[29] Anna Maria Bennett, *Anna; or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress. Interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob* (London: William Lane, 1785), Vol. 1, p. xii. *ECCO;* Elizabeth Bonhote, *Olivia; or Deserted Bride* (London: W. Lane, 1787), Vol. 1, p. v. *ECCO*; Mary Charlton, *The Parisian* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1794), Vol. 1, a1^{v}.

[30] Bennett, *Anna; or memoirs of a Welch* heiress, Vol. 1, p. xii.

[31] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. xi; Ibid., p. iii.

[32] Anna Maria Bennett, *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1797), Vol. 1, p. vii. *ECCO.*

one's professional occupation could be an attempt to cultivate the authority or respect afforded to writers of other, more respected literary forms. Like the 'Reviewers' they address, the writer who signs as the 'Author' has a presence in the marketplace derived from their professional label.

Writing prefaces and signing them emphasises the author's presence in this network of reception and reputation. Prefaces were important and significant spaces because of the attention reviewers bestowed on them and because of the attention writers expected them to receive. These are textual spaces in which the potential power of the reviewer was acknowledged by writers; writers demonstrated their awareness of the social and economic influence a review could wield. Signing off the preface as 'The Author' and also as a 'humble Servant' exemplifies the complex subject position of the author of popular novels. The Minerva Press writers simultaneously define the authority of reviewer's role as they define the subject position of the author against it. In a way, therefore, these prefaces play to expectations of authority which are not conducive for an author. By framing the reviewer as an arbiter of life and death and by signing themselves as servants, authors reinscribe the literary hierarchy which belittles and subjugates their labour. The next section turns to dedications. In these prefaces, writers stage an intervention in the inferiority of the novelists by implying elite societal connections.

2.2 Dedicatees, Networking, and Prefaces

To further understand the portrayal and framing of the popular novel and the popular novelist, this section turns to another nexus of relationship found within prefaces, that between the writer and dedicatee. It concentrates on how dedications imply or reflect relationships between individuals. Recollecting that these prefaces are authorial, to use Genette's term, and that they foreground the voice of the novelist, the dedication provided Minerva Press writers with means of portraying connections with patrons but also of appropriating others' names and reputations as they sought patronage through their published works. Patronage can take various forms: financial, intellectual,

and social.[33] Sometimes, however, a dedication can be to an unknown individual or to a person unconnected to the writer. By considering who the dedicatees are and the language used to describe them, this section uncovers the speculative and therefore venturous social networking effect of some Minerva Press prefaces. The following prefaces offer insight into the profoundly complex, personal, political, and performative art inherent in prefaces, specifically the subset of dedications. They are performances of social and literary networks and, as such, emphasise the performability inherent in the figure of the Romantic-period author.

Prefaces, specifically dedications, are linguistically performative. By addressing an individual, the dedication devotes a work to a person, but it also solicits the attention of that individual, publicly demonstrates a connection between the writer and dedicatee, and provides a specific incarnation of the dedicatee and author. However, the dedication implies rather than proves a connection. In cases where the dedicatee and writer are unacquainted, the dedication is a masquerade, conveying a connection which is unsubstantiated personally. While Helen Smith observes that 'dedications perform intimacy in private, over and again, initiating a series of book-bound exchanges', I argue that the Minerva Press dedications perform connections rather than prove 'intimacy' and attempt to initiate a series of book-bound exchanges rather than concretely achieve them.[34] Indeed, it is because the preface is a public and visible space right at the start of the book and which reviewers and readers paid attention to, that the preface is the ideal place to perform and advertise a connection between a writer and dedicatee that may be real or may be imagined. It is a strategic foregrounding and emphasis of a relationship which may be real or imagined.

Dedications enable specific interpretations of a relationship to be promoted before an audience. These interpretations may not be truthful or accurate. This is exemplified in Elizabeth Meeke's preface to *The Mysterious Wife* (1797). Her dedication to her aunt, 'Mrs. Arthur Young',

[33] For more on the transition and the relationship between patronage and the market economy through the century, see Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650 – 1800* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).
[34] Helen Smith, 'Acknowledgements and Dedications', in *Book Parts*, ed. by Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (Oxford: OUP, 2019), pp. 95-108 (p. 104).

prompts questions about a writer's choice of dedicatee and how these choices reflect on the presentation of the author. Elizabeth Meeke asked 'what could be more advantageous to me than to have it known, that you approve of me as a writer, and acknowledge me as a friend?'.[35] She continued to state '[w]hat success I may have in the former character must depend on futurity; but I am in possession of all the credit of the latter'.[36] She hints that a dedication implies that a dedicatee endorses a writer and acknowledges explicitly the advantages this has for her. Meeke's tone is triumphant as she poses this question and her confidence obscures the later admission that only the future can reveal if she will be a successful writer. Announcing her friendship with Mrs. Young in her dedication is a specific, material form of public testimony. The physical pages of this dedication reinforce the friendly connection Meeke implies exists between herself and Mrs. Young.

This dedication reveals the more complex side of dedications and that perception and deception can flood the subtext of a preface. Meeke avows that '[the] most accurate observer of the beauties of nature must be the best judge of their imitations; and the same elegance of imagination which forms the romance, must enlighten the critic: it was natural for me, under this persuasion, to address myself to you'.[37] Her flattery of her aunt is overt. However, texts have a capacity to project a façade and to construct a fabricated impression of a person or a relationship. The French moralist and author, François de la Rochefoucauld, described Mrs. Young as 'hideously swarthy', 'exactly like a devil', and 'frequently ill-tempered'.[38] These two accounts provide contrasting images of Mrs. Young, highlighting the ability of any text to present its subject as it wished and for specific purposes and effects.

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[35] Elizabeth Meeke, *The Mysterious Wife* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1797), Vol. 1, p. ii. *NCCO.*

[36] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. ii.

[37] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. i.

[38] Jean Marchand, ed., *A Frenchman in England, 1784* (Cambridge: CUP, 1784), p. 38, qtd. in G. E. Mingay, 'Young, Arthur (1741–1820), agricultural reformer and writer', in *ODNB* <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30256> [accessed 13 December 2019]

Additionally, Meeke's dedication shows how prefaces can signal relationships other than the one between the writer and the dedicatee. In dedicating her novel to Mrs. Young but including her uncle's first name, 'Arthur', Meeke directs a reader to another figure: Meeke's uncle Arthur Young, the notable agricultural reformer and publicist. The dedication connects Meeke's statement about being 'approve[d] of as a writer' to Arthur Young's respected and public position. Meeke had other family members to whom she could have dedicated her work. She was the stepdaughter of music historian and composer Charles Burney, the stepsister of Frances Burney, the novelist, and of Charles Burney, the classicist and literary reviewer, and the half-sister of the novelist Sarah Harriet Burney. Not attaching the Burney name to her publication keeps her novel and her authorship separate to the Burney family and their reputation. Meeke displays her connections within the world of art and letters but, of these connections, she chooses to publicise select ones and she specifies how this will be advantageous to her.

The sophisticated strategies deployed in preface writing indicates that prefaces and dedications should be studied at face-value and for their subtexts. Even when a writer openly states the advantages for having a dedicatee or patron, there exist subtexts which introduce alternate reasons for having a dedicatee and which reveal alternate presentations of the author. Maria Hunter's preface to *Fitzroy* (1792) blends the explicit reasons for having a preface with more complex subtexts. She made the social and reputational benefits of a patron explicit in her preface to *Fitzroy* (1792):

> WHEN an author seeks a patron for his book, his first care is to find a man of eminence, and his second (if he be a wise author) a man of virtue. In the first, the name operates as a kind of introduction to usher the work into good company; and in the latter case, it stands as a security for the principles contained in the pages that follow.
>
> In you I have found both united.[39]

[39] Maria Hunter, *Fitzroy; or, Impulse of the Moment* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1792), Vol. 1, pp. i-ii. *ECCO*.

Hunter details the social and professional reasons for a dedication, revealing the strategizing possible when selecting a patron or writing a dedication. The author 'seeks' a patron, using their writing as a means of forging connections but also uses the patron as a means of protection for their work. Hunter dedicated *Fitzroy* to 'John Doyle, Esq. M.P. Major of the late 105th Regt. Secretary to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales'.[40] Like Meeke's *Mysterious Wife*, Hunter's preface began with an encomium of Doyle's character and, also like Meeke's preface, Hunter points the reader to two individuals. Hunter address Doyle as 'Secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales'.[41] In 1792, the Prince of Wales was King George III. Including the reference to the King within Doyle's job title is a subtle way of addressing the King. Hunter's dedication publicises a form of connection between herself, her book, and the Royal Household.

Robert Griffin writes that '[i]f a work comes complete with a dedication to a noble lord who has in some sense authorized it or given his stamp of approval, it will tend to sell better'.[42] As many Minerva Press writers wrote for a living, sales figures were important and so including a dedication seems logical. Indeed, Hunter wrote to the Literary Fund for financial assistance in 1794, and, although her later appeals were dismissed as disingenuous by the Committee of Investigation in 1806, her dedication of *Fitzroy* to the Royal Household may have been with a wish to increase sales. Reading Hunter's dedication alongside Griffin's theory would mean that this dedication implies that the Royal Household approved of Hunter's work, whether or not that was actually the case.

Yet, the Minerva Press prefaces invite reconsideration of Griffin's conclusion due to the presence of phrases such as 'by permission' or 'without […] permission' appearing in their dedications or title pages. Explicitly stating the permission, or lack of, has ramifications on the stamp of approval awarded to a writer and a work and, in turn, shapes the impression of the author encountered by the reader. Some books make the permission of the dedicatee explicit. The title page of *Errors of Education* (1791) by Eliza Parsons records that it was 'Dedicated (with permission) to the Right Hon. Countess of

[40] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. i.
[41] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. i.
[42] Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, p. 24.

Hillsborough'.[43] The title page announces this, indicating that the permission for a dedication is as important a piece of information as the novel's title and its author's name. Similarly, Isabella Kelly's dedication of *Joscelina, or the Rewards of Benevolence* (1797) to the Duchess of York was also undertaken 'by Permission'; this was emblazoned on the title page too.[44] Kelly repeated and explained her connection to the Duchess in greater detail in the dedication by writing '[t]hat your Royal Highness has vouchsafed to patronize the following publication…', thereby reinforcing tacitly that permission was granted.[45] Perhaps it was the Duchess' permission, or that of a member of the Royal Household, which made Kelly confident to announce that the patronage 'attaches to it [*Joscelina*] a degree of consequence and honor [sic], for which I am grateful, proud, and happy'.[46] Or, perhaps it is that Kelly anticipates the advantages of this connection for her novel, and therefore herself. *Joscelina* was first released in 1797 by Longmans and a second edition was printed by Lane in 1798. It was also translated into French in 1798. These repeat editions suggest that her book did sell well, but this cannot be solely attributed to the presence of a dedication or that it was dedicated 'by permission'. Rather, repeating that permission was granted reflects more on Kelly's ability to construct and convey a relationship between her and a member of the Royal Household on her title page and in her preface. It shows that to advertise this connection repeatedly was deemed beneficial, even if it is harder to substantiate if that translated into higher sales.

Some Minerva Press prefaces are dedicated to individuals on a more spurious basis and without the dedicatee's permission. Some state that the author presumed to seek the dedicatee's approval through the dedication while others admit that a book was dedicated 'without […] permission'. [47] Eliza Parsons' dedication of *Ellen and Julia* (1793) to Mrs. Crespigny declared '[t]hat I

[43] Parsons, *The Errors of Education*, title page.
[44] Isabella Kelly, *Joscelina: or, The Rewards of Benevolence.* 2nd edn. (London: W. Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1798), Vol. 1, title page.
[45] Ibid., p. vi.
[46] Ibid., p. vi.
[47] Eliza Parsons, *Women as They Are* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1796), Vol. 1, p. vii-viii. *ECCO.*

presume to shelter under your Patronage the following Sheets, will not, I hope, be deemed too great an intrusion on that goodness and favour I have so constantly experienced'.[48] This dedication is presumptive, suggesting that Parsons did not have Mrs. Crespigny's permission to dedicate a novel to her. The language is simple, but its signification is ambiguous. Parsons flatters Mrs. Crespigny, seeking to benefit from the association with her and experience a continuation of her 'goodness and favour'. Griffin observes that patronage was a 'traditionally aristocratic practice of publicly displayed benevolence'.[49] As such, I propose that a dedication functions as an advertisement for a patron's previous behaviour towards a writer. In Parsons' case it would be Mrs. Crespigny's previous benevolence towards her. Thus, dedications entwine two individuals' actions and reputations; the reception of the writer is influenced by the identity and the reputation of the patron, and the patron's good reputation is reinforced by being publicly acclaimed as a benevolent individual in a preface. Parsons' dedication to Mrs. Crespigny alerts the reader to Mrs. Crespigny's kindness in a public manner and emphasises it, while she simultaneously seeks to benefit from this very attribute by dedicating her novel to her without permission. Parsons did not dedicate any of her other novels to Mrs. Crespigny, suggesting perhaps that this relationship was brief, or it never existed in the first place. The dedication, therefore, performs this relationship and creates Mrs. Crespigny's magnanimous disposition, without substantiating it.

Two other Minerva dedications made their speculative nature very explicit. In 1789, the anonymous author of *Louisa Forrester* dedicated it to 'the right honourable Lady Middleton, of Middleton', placing the book under her 'Ladyship's protection' due to an 'irresistible impulse' and hoping that Lady Middleton 'will pardon [the] presumption'.[50] The author tentatively seeks to use Lady Middleton's reputation to protect her work from criticism and then seeks forgiveness for appropriating Lady Middleton's name, rather than asking permission. Meanwhile, Eliza Parsons

[48] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia,* Vol. 1, a[r].
[49] Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, p. 13.
[50] Anon, *Louisa Forrester; or, Characters Drawn from Real Life* (London: W. Lane, 1789), Vol. 1, p. i. *ECCO*; Ibid., p. ii; Ibid., p. iii.

dedicated *Women as They Are* (1796) to 'Mrs. Anson, of Shuckborough-Manor [sic]'.[51] Parsons thanks Mrs. Anson for the 'favour and indulgence' she had received from this 'truly respectable family'.[52] She implies that she is acquainted with the Ansons as she vaguely references how they have behaved towards her. However, her preface reveals that she dedicated this work to Mrs. Anson without permission:

> I have only then, madam, to request your acceptance of this trifling mark of my respect, and entreat pardon for sheltering it under your patronage without first obtaining your permission. - Permit the motive to sanctify the deed, - an earnest desire of avowing myself with all possible respect and gratitude.[53]

Similarly to her dedication to Mrs. Crespigny, these plaudits could be an attempt to curry a continuation of this favourable treatment. Financial imperatives are likely to have motivated Parsons' dedication, at least in part. Parsons was impoverished throughout the 1790s and had to support eight children. Thus, perhaps she reached out to Mrs. Anson, and Mrs. Crespigny, as potential future benefactors and used her novel to broker contact. Other novels published in the 1780s and 1790s with speculative dedications did result in financial patronage. Cheryl Turner uses the example of the writer Susanna Rowson to observe that 'Rowson's dedication of her novel *Victoria* (1786) to the Duchess of Devonshire led to an introduction to the Prince of Wales, who subsequently granted her father a pension'.[54] It is unclear if Rowson was already acquainted with the Duchess of Devonshire, but this dedication created a new acquaintance with the Prince of Wales which resulted in financial assistance.

Books could be a means of forging or extending connections, but these were nebulous and were not guaranteed to be successful. Charles Burney solicited Royal attention when he dedicated *The General History of Music* to Queen Charlotte in 1776. Yet it was his daughter, Frances Burney, who became acquainted with the Royal Household. Her introduction to the Royal Household came from

[51] Parsons, *Women as They Are*, Vol. 1, p. v.
[52] Ibid., p. v; Ibid., p. vi.
[53] Ibid., pp. vii-viii.
[54] Turner, *Living by the Pen*, p. 104.

her friendship with Mrs. Delaney, for whom the King and Queen were patrons, rather than her father's dedication of his *History of Music*. Frances Burney became the Second Keeper of the Robes for Queen Charlotte from 1786 until 1791, when she retired due to ill health with a royal pension of £100 per annum. Claire Harman observes that Frances Burney's dedication of her third novel, *Camilla* (1796), to Queen Charlotte cemented this connection: [t]he sense that she [Burney] was using this book to ingratiate herself with the Royal Family is evident in the fulsome dedication to the Queen, an honour that Fanny solicited'.[55] Despite leaving the Royal Household, Frances Burney used her novel as a means of maintaining her connection and to smooth over the circumstances under which she left their employment. Furthermore, her pension from the Royal Household made a dedication expected.

In 1815, Jane Austen dedicated *Emma* to the Prince Regent. Her nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, writes that the Prince's librarian, Stanier Clarke, had given Jane Austen 'verbal permission' for this dedication.[56] An invitation to dedicate a work to the future King could not be refused. The Prince Regent, the future King George IV, has been identified as 'the earliest known purchaser of a Jane Austen novel' from an 1811 bill.[57] However, neither the dedication, as Claire Tomalin observes, nor this bill prove that the Prince actually read *Emma*.[58] It does suggest, however, that the Prince admired Jane Austen's writings and wanted this to be publicly communicated. By itself, the dedication does not reveal that the admiration was one-sided; but Austen's letters reveal that she 'hate[d]' the Prince Regent.[59] The dedication in *Emma* creates a brief material connection between the Prince and Austen. There is no lavish praise of the Prince, reflecting a cold, impersonal relationship; Austen was not using her preface to curry favour. By contrast, the lengthy panegyrics to dedicatees in

[55] Claire Harman, *Fanny Burney; a biography* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000), p. 249.

[56] James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A memoir of Jane Austen by her nephew J.E. Austen Leigh; to which is added Lady Susan and fragments of two other unfinished tales by Miss Austen* (London: Macmillan and co.; New York: Macmillan company, 1901), p. 112. *Hathi Trust Digital Library*.

[57] Nick Foretek, 'A Royal Purchase: The First Jane Austen Novel Sold', *Notes and Queries*, 66:2 (2019), 272–273 (p. 272).

[58] Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen, A Life* (London: Viking, 1997), p. 248.

[59] Jane Austen to Martha Lloyd. 16 February 1813. In *Jane Austen's Letters,* ed. by Deirdre Le Faye. 4th edn. (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 216-217 (p. 217).

Minerva Press novels suggest the subtextual desired effect of the dedication was to ingratiate themselves with the dedicatee and that they wanted to emphasise their connection with this patron.

Thus far, dedications have been used to curry favour and protection and to co-opt a portion of the status of the dedicatee for a work. It is explicit and implicit that a dedicatee was advantageous to a writer and a book. One Minerva author, however, reversed this relationship, proposing that the novel would be of benefit to the dedicatee. In 1790, Anna Maria Mackenzie dedicated *Monmouth* to Henry Scott, the 3rd Duke of Buccleugh, the same man to whom Walter Scott dedicated *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802). Henry Scott's son, Charles Montagu-Scott, the 4th Duke of Buccleugh, later became Walter Scott's friend and patron. Mackenzie addresses the 3rd Duke of Buccleugh because James Scott, the 1st Duke of Monmouth and a relative of the Duke's, was executed at the Tower of London in 1685. Mackenzie claims her novel would 'emancipat[e] [him] from decided infamy'.[60] In *Monmouth*, Mackenzie offers to correct history through her novel; her preface indicates that she is defending rebellion, a standpoint of pointed and contemporary resonance given the turmoil in revolutionary France at the time. Furthermore, Mackenzie's ambitious statement to correct history blurs the limits between fiction and history, a quality which Porscha Fermanis has identified in Joanna Baillie's *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters* (1821).[61] Fermanis argues that Baillie is 'preoccupied with the instructive potential of history' as Baillie's preface reveals that 'neither romance nor biography provides a solution to history's methodological defects'.[62] Mackenzie's viewpoint indicates that she had opinions which were similar to Scott's about the inextricable yet mutually beneficial relationship between fiction and history. Fermanis writes that Scott 'maintains that romance and history once had a common origin'.[63] History is used to furnish fiction and fiction is used to provide a

[60] Anna Maria Mackenzie, *Monmouth: a Tale, Founded on Historic Facts* (London: W. Lane, 1790), Vol. 1, p. vii. *Chawton House Novels Online.*

[61] Porscha Fermanis, 'Countering The Counterfactual: Joanna Baillie's *Metrical Legends Of Exalted Characters* (1821) And The Paratexts Of History', *Women's Writing*, 19:3 (2012), 333-350 (p. 333). DOI: 10.1080/09699082.2012.666417

[62] Ibid., p. 334; Ibid., p. 334.

[63] Ibid., p. 340.

specific interpretation of history. Mackenzie's preface alludes to fiction's capacity for narrative and it is this capacity which will assist the Duke's family and legacy. She elevates the status of fiction and of her novel by suggesting that it can correct a historical record; fiction was a means of influencing reality. Her novel did not alter the history of James Scott, but it did provide her with a means of forging a connection to an aristocratic family through the material form of a book. Moreover, her choice of dedicatee lends an authenticity and authority to her novel; it is as if the narrative and scene setting begins before the novel's plot starts. She has co-opted the name of an established, land-owning family to improve the opening of her novel's setting and purpose.

The frequency with which Minerva Press novels addressed themselves to members of the Royal Household or social elite signals both a boldness and a desperation on the part of the writers to perform a connection with them. Looking only at the writers on the 1798 Prospectus, Anna Maria Bennett addressed Royalty repeatedly: Bennett addressed *Anna; or Memoirs of a Welch heiress* (1785) to 'her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte-Augusta-Matilda', the Princess Royal.[64] *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1787) was dedicated to 'His Royal Highness Prince William Henry' and *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797) was to 'her royal highness the Duchess of York'.[65] This was Princess Frederica Charlotte, wife of Prince Frederick, the Duke of York. Kelly addressed *Joscelina* (1797) to the same person: 'her Royal Highness the Duchess of York'.[66] Similarly, Parsons dedicated *Women as she should be* (1793) to 'her royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester' and *Girl of the Mountains* (1797) to 'her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia Matilda of Gloucester'.[67] Parsons did have some connection to the Royal household by being a seamstress in the Royal wardrobe. Collectively, Minerva prefaces make their way through the offspring of King George and Queen Charlotte. These dedications indicate a desire to forge connections and to advertise these connections, be they genuine or unsubstantiated

[64] Bennett, *Anna; or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress*, Vol. 1, p. i.
[65] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. v; Bennett, *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors*, Vol. 1, p. i.
[66] Kelly, *Joscelina*, Vol. 1, title page.
[67] Eliza Parsons, *Women as She Should Be; or, Memoirs of Mrs. Menville* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva, and sold by E. Harlow, 1793), Vol. 1, p. 5. *ECCO*; Eliza Parsons, *The Girl of the Mountains* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1797), Vol. 1, B0^{v}. *ECCO.*

by a personal connection. The frequency of these dedications suggests that a dedication and the social network it implies was perceived as a nearly essential part of a popular novel. Through a dedication to a member of the Royal Household, a novel implies that there is a specific network in which the author and the novel circulate and that this aspirational network involved individuals at the highest echelons of society.

The choices made by Minerva Press women writers in their dedications reveal that these novelists viewed the dedication as a powerful space by which they may imply or even mobilise support for their work, even when there was none. The fact that some authors explicitly stated that permission for a dedication was granted is a strategy designed to further substantiate that a connection existed between a writer and a text. It also opens up questions about the relationships and purposes of dedications when this phrase is missing. That others admitted that dedications were made without permission reflects the desire individuals had to either gain support or to be perceived as having this support and connection. Attaching another's name and their title to the work of fiction was a way to promote the work and publicise it. For some, it was a textual means of networking. Isobel Grundy writes that a 'proto-feminist concept of networking is evident in writers who dedicated to women only, like Davys, Elizabeth Elstob and Isabella Kelly'.[68] Indeed, a lot of writers dedicated their works to female members of Royal Household, but men were addressed as well. Moreover, network implies a reciprocated relationship, whereas the Minerva writers addressed patrons with whom they likely never interacted. I read these dedications as texts which are more concerned with the projection of a specific, social network rather than a reflection of an actual, extant network. Dedications were one means through which Minerva authors could imply access to specific social networks, as a dedication did not necessarily have to arise out of a personal acquaintance and reciprocated interaction.

[68] Isobel Grundy, 'Women and print: readers, writers and the market', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 5, 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael Suarez and Michael Turner (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 146-160 (p. 155).

Taking into account the frequency of dedications reveals that these Minerva Press novelists, and other novelists, could not be novel writers alone. The dedications eschew the image of the author as a autonomous or self-originating figure. Rather, it was more important to project the idea of a sociable and connected individual through dedications. On occasions when the dedication was written without permission, it also underscores the desperation of the Minerva writers to showcase these connections, for promotional or financial benefit. It appears that the identity of a novelist was incomplete without the image of a real or fictitious patron lending support. The Minerva Press dedications demonstrate that these writers evoked an image of the author who did not want to or could not stand alone as the creators of their works. In addition, the appropriation of another's name without their permission are courageous textual moves affixing another's name and reputation to a work.

To understand more how the Minerva Press authors positioned themselves and their novels in the literary marketplace and drew on preconceptions of specific subject positions, this chapter now turns to an analogy found frequently within Minerva prefaces and within other late-eighteenth century prefaces. The novel-as-child and author-as-parent are common paradigms which female and male novelists drew on. Using these images when describing a book or authorship commingles the role of the author with the duties of parents. The next section posits that the specific biological take on the parenthood paradigm by female and male writers shows this trope to have specific cultural currency in the era. Moreover, that each writer has their own take upon it shows the trope to be fruitful for reinvention and unique appropriation. I argue that the writers' innovative approaches to this trope reveals how each writer constructed their own configuration of authorship.

2.3 Metaphors of Parenting in Minerva Press Prefaces

An important strand of scholarship on Romantic period authorship looks at it through the lenses of domesticity and motherhood. Scholars have argued that these paradigms valorised the labour inherent in being a mother and pushed the mother-figure increasingly into public and political

discourses.[69] Many authors presented their authorship and their novels using the rhetoric of motherhood: Jane Austen is one example; she called *Pride and Prejudice* her 'Child' in a letter to her sister, Cassandra.[70] Austen's invocation of children and parenthood is incisive in that it reveals the universality of this paradigm; people without children of their own, like Austen, were able to access the emotions and responsibilities of a parent, and expected others without children to be able to as well, like Cassandra. Turning to Minerva Press and contemporary texts when studying the intersection of authorship, motherhood, and the broader paradigm of parenthood illuminates the multifarious ways in which female and male authors innovated upon this trope of parenthood and applied it to authorship. This paradigm was considered adaptable and universal. Moreover, many authors constructed a biological manifestation of motherhood; they refer to conception, breastfeeding, and childbirth. This aligns authorship with natural acts. The injurious view that female author was unnatural was propounded by many, as seen in Polwhele's poem 'The Unsex'd Females'. Couching authorship in ways which emphasised the naturalness of it counters such criticism. The role of the parent gave credible and respectable qualities to the role of the author, hence its widespread use.

Bennett and Austen both create a biological manifestation of authorship. In her preface to *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794), Bennett writes that the novel was written at a time of ill-health when she took refuge in 'the airy Regions of Fancy'.[71] As a result, 'at this Time, and under these circumstances, was Ellen conceived and brought to maturity'.[72] *Ellen* is presented as an idea and as a child. Referring to her writing process through the metaphor of conception casts Bennett as the text's mother. This aggrandises the role of an author and the nature of authorship by equating the writing of her novel with the role of the mother in birthing and raising a child. Jane Austen also aligned

[69] Please see Batchelor, *Women's Work*, pp. 3-5 and Tanya Evans, 'Women, marriage and the family', in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 57-78 (p. 71).

[70] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, Friday 29 January 1813. Letter 54, in *Jane Austen: Selected Letters*, ed. by Vivien Jones (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2004), pp. 136-138 (p. 136).

[71] Anna Maria Bennett, *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1794), Vol. 1, a1^{r}. *ECCO*.

[72] Ibid, a1^{r}.

authorship specifically with the female body when discussing *Sense and Sensibility* in a letter to her sister Cassandra. Austen wrote that she was 'never too busy to think of S&S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child'.[73] Austen equates her feelings for her first novel with that of a mother suckling a new-born. While a baby could be suckled by a mother or a wetnurse, this specific representation of writing a novel as breastfeeding a child reinforces the intense and vital connection between author and text. It attaches a degree of nurture and care, just as a breastfeeding woman gives sustenance for her child. The sincerity with which these authors present novel-writing contrasts the dismissive and flippant approach articulated in some review periodicals.

Mary Wollstonecraft emphasised the importance of mothers breastfeeding their own children in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She argued that women can access social and political power as citizens by fulfilling certain roles and duties, one of which is breastfeeding: '[t]he wife […] who is faithful to her husband, and neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of wife, and has no right to that of a citizen'.[74] Wollstonecraft's writings reflect that motherhood was a socially conventional role expected of women who are 'citizens', signifying that women have a place in society through being mothers. Many upper-class mothers used wetnurses, yet Wollstonecraft presents this as an aberration of duty as it demonstrates a lack of maternal affection because 'what sympathy does a mother exercise who sends her babe to a nurse?'.[75] Reading that it is a mother's duty to breastfeed alongside biological invocations of authorship joins discourses of conventional duty and naturalness to female authorship. Authorship is a natural act; therefore, by implication, female authors are natural figures. The emotions Austen and Bennett attach to their novels-as-children explains and emphasises the devotion a writer feels for their novel in rhetoric which conventionalises female authorship.

[73] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, Thursday 25 April 1811. Letter 49, in *Jane Austen: Selected Letters*, p. 123.
[74] Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' in *A Vindication*, p. 227.
[75] Ibid., p. 234.

Female and male Minerva Press writers drew on the broader image of the parent to present authorship, using this image to align authorship with a conventional role and to justify their actions as writers. Elizabeth Bonhote's preface to *Darnley Vale* (1789) casts the novel as her child and therefore positions the speaker of the preface, Bonhote, as its parent:

> It appears to me that the first wish of every prudent and tender parent is not only to secure a competent provision for their family, but to place them in those situations that will make them appear in the most favourable light. And as it is neither unusual nor unnatural for Authors to consider their works as their children, it has been the custom of almost all ages to send them into the world under the patronage of persons most distinguished for virtue, solidity or judgment, candour, and sensibility.
>
> Acting, then, upon the principles of a Parent, anxious for the welfare of a favourite Child, the author of the following little work ventures to address it to Doctor and Mrs. Cooper, not doubting but under the sanction of such respectable names, if it deserves not praise, it will find security from contempt.[76]

Bonhote appeals to a situation with which she expects her readers to be familiar, that of being a parent, as her preface assimilates the publication of a book with the maturation of a child. Bonhote also explains that 'it is neither unusual nor unnatural' for a parent to want the best for their child, using this to explain her presumptuousness in dedicating her novel to Reverend and Mrs. Cooper. In the preface to *Turkish Tales* (1794), Joseph Moser frames his novel as a child and the writer as its parent: 'they have nothing to offer in their own defence; nor will their afflicted parent be able to say a word in their behalf, except it is to request the Public to consider them as infants'.[77] In his role as its parent, therefore, he is simply acting as a parent would care for his defenceless child. These prefaces demonstrate that male and female authors harnessed the emotive rhetoric of parenting when

[76] Elizabeth Bonhote, *Darnley Vale; or, Emilia Fitzroy* (London: William Lane, 1789), Vol. 1, pp. iii-iv. Chawton House Library.

[77] Joseph Moser, *Turkish Tales* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1794), Vol. 1, p. iv. *ECCO.*

attempting to improve a work's reception and present their authorship favourably to the reading public.

William Godwin, meanwhile, in the preface to his only Minerva novel, the anonymously published *Imogen: a pastoral romance* (1784), compared the position of the author to that of the midwife:

> if he [the author] be not blinded by that partiality, which the midwife is apt to conceive for the productions, that she is the instrument of bringing into the world, the Pastoral Romance contains as much originality, as much poetical beauty, and is as happily calculated to make a deep impression upon the memory.[78]

His preface shows a different take on authorship, creation, and responsibility. Godwin envisages the writer as a midwife: the professional individual responsible for delivering a child into the world but then removed of all responsibility. Obstetrics had developed as a medical specialisation from the 1750s onwards.[79] As such, Godwin's adaptation of the parental paradigm increasingly professionalises the act of writing. There is also an implicit critique of women in Godwin's midwifery metaphor. Godwin acknowledges that 'he' – a writer – could be biased towards his work, much like the female midwife is towards a child whose birth she manages. The contrasting genders – male for the writer and female for the midwife – and the fact that the purportedly objective perspective about emotions proceeds from a male speaker disassociates the male author from the emotion and prejudice displayed by the female midwife. Godwin's rhetoric and pronouns implicitly construct men as impartial by contrast. The irony is that he then continues to praise his text three times, consequently illustrating the difficulty of approaching a text impartially. Male authors' use of the parenting trope indicates that they too saw a cultural and professional value in aligning authorship with parenting; the trope of parenting would

[78] William Godwin, *Imogen: a Pastoral Romance* (London: William Lane, 1784), Vol. 1, p. xi-xii. *ECCO*.
[79] Angela Muir, 'Midwifery and Maternity Care for Single Mothers in Eighteenth-Century Wales', *Social History of Medicine*, 33:2 (2018): 394-416. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hky092>

be widely understood and the values and morals ascribed to a parent-figure could and should be transferred to the figure of the author.

I propose that the frequent use of parenting metaphors by male and female writers suggests that these roles offered the author an accessible and productive means of communicating the role of the author. The role of the parent was widely understood in society. The innovative adaptations of the parenting trope demonstrates that each writer had their own take on this widely understood trope and that each nuance to the trope afforded the writer an opportunity to emphasise something specific about authorship. Austen and Bennett presented authorship as a natural and conventional part of a female's life through invoking the image of the breastfeeding mother or the pregnant woman. Bonhote and Moser talked more broadly of parenting a child, excusing the way in which they promoted their novel to the reading public by aligning their motives with those of a parent. Godwin professionalised authorship, but his preface contains a subtextual message which implies that male authors were more able to judge their text with more impartiality. I would also propose that it is because of a writer's inherent predilection for their own work and their desire for it to be received well that writers innovated so widely upon the trope of parenting; authorial need begets innovation. For the Minerva Press writers in these prefaces, it is that the role of the parent – the near universal understanding of the emotions and actions of the parent – provided a useful way to frame authorship, rather than actually being a parent. Being a parent oneself could also be turned to literary advantage, as Chapter Five of this thesis explores in relation to the letters sent to the Literary Fund.

Alongside presenting the act of writing and the figure of the author innovatively, some Minerva writers also took care to craft a specific framework of reception for their work. The next section concentrates on prefaces which can be read as essays of literary criticism. Such texts demonstrate that specific writers adopted the role of the literary critic when introducing their novel, appropriating the authority and expertise writers attached to reviewers and critics in prefaces addressed 'to the reviewers'. In the next set of prefaces, writers provide nuanced accounts of the origin of the novel and establish specific frameworks of reception within which they position their

works. They outline the standards to which they wish to be held and draw the receptive framework within which their works should be judged.

2.4 Designing Frameworks of Reception in Prefaces

Throughout, this chapter has traced how authors conceptualised the identity of the author by defining the author in comparison with other individuals, enabling writers to emphasise different attributes of authorship. This section sustains this by looking at examples of prefaces in which the writer assumes the role of the literary critic by: discussing the development of the novel; referencing other writers and their works; and invoking canons of novelists. These prefaces repeat established canons of earlier novelists, signalling an author's awareness of literary history and paying the expected homage to their literary forefathers. However, some writers – predominantly female Minerva writers – reorient the canon around contemporary female authors, writing women writers into their contemporary frameworks of reception and, by extension, into literary history. These prefaces adjust the focus away from the male novelists of the mid-eighteenth century and redirect the focus onto female writers, demonstrating the importance of contemporary female novelists in literary histories and in forming current fashionable literary taste. In so doing, these prefaces illuminate a comparative critical female framework against which their novels ought to be read and judged.

Many prefaces include a brief history of the novel and include references to earlier male writers. Anna Maria Mackenzie, Frances Burney, Robert Bage, and Mary Ann Hanway list respected, established male writers in their prefaces, but I argue they do so in a way which nuances the automatic reverence literary critics afforded them. Mackenzie's preface to *Mysteries Elucidated* (1795) surveys the origin and development of romance, historical, and gothic novels. She identifies a canon of male authors responsible for the initial success of the modern romance: Miguel de Cervantes, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson. Horace Walpole is referenced as the 'great original' writer of gothic

novels.[80] Moreover, Mackenzie declared that 'numerous copyists' have 'in a great measure spoilt the designs of the excellent originals' of 'FIELDING and RICHARDSON'.[81] She provides a survey of the literary marketplace, consequently implying that she is well placed to write a novel due to her expertise and familiarity with the book trade and with writing. She is also paying homage to her literary forefathers. In similar fashion, Frances Burney's preface to her debut novel, *Evelina* (1778), declares that it drew its inspiration from the works of 'Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett'.[82] Burney appears more knowledgeable than Mackenzie as she is more specific in her praise of the male writers. She was 'enlightened by the knowledge of Johnson, charmed with the eloquence of Rousseau, softened by the pathetic powers of Richardson'.[83] Her preface implies her awareness of the field, indicating that she therefore has knowledge enough to write. Jennie Batchelor has also investigated Burney's canon and asks:

> Should we, for example, read Burney's attempt to align herself with an illustrious list of male authors, as Betty Schellenberg has done, as evidence that she was complicit with 'the Great Forgetting' of female novelists that gathered momentum in the eighteenth-century's latter decades and culminated in Ian Watt's homocentric rise of the novel thesis? Or, might we understand her writing out of literary history those figures such as Frances Brooke, Sarah Fielding, and Charlotte Lennox, all of whom undeniably influenced her fiction, as disingenuous?[84]

I read Burney's list as revealing her knowledge that she needs to operate within convention and to project a crafted, deliberate persona through a preface. This results in writing out female figures. However, while Burney namechecked male authors, she displays her extensive understanding of literature through her quotations. Burney's declaration that her heroine is '[n]o faultless Monster that

[80] Mackenzie, *Mysteries Elucidated*, Vol. 1, p. xv.
[81] Ibid., p. iii; Ibid., p. iii; Ibid., p. iii.
[82] Burney, *Evelina*, Vol. 1, pp. xi-xii.
[83] Ibid., p. xiv.
[84] Batchelor, ''[T]o strike a little out of a road already so much beaten', p. 85.

the world ne'er saw; but the offspring of Nature, and of Nature in her simplest attire' predates Richardson and the others.[85] It comes from John Sheffield's 'Essay on Poetry' (1723). I propose that it is in these wider, more elusive references that there is an implicit recognition that more writers influenced the development of literature and the development of the novel. Within this, there is a minute female presence. One of the quotations Burney uses comes from Portia in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1599). Burney quotes Portia's speech on the quality of mercy; 'it droppeth like the gentle rain from heaven…'.[86] While giving this speech, Portia is disguised as a lawyer, a man. Citing this speech signals a woman's need to conduct herself in a specific way. It is not that women must behave as men, but that women must behave in a way that satisfies a patriarchally-informed convention. Burney does write women out of literary history but she is also disingenuous in how she does so; Burney meets convention by listing male writers, but her wider array of quotations show that her writing does not stem from a pool of reading which solely includes male voices. In Burney's preface, other voices, including those of women, are implicitly present.

Both Burney and Mackenzie demonstrate their knowledge of the novel by writing their own literary history of it. The lists featured in each writer's preface indicate, if they do not prove, that they have read these acclaimed novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Citing them suggests that Burney and Mackenzie are aware that they are writing their own novels under the influence of their literary forefathers and their canons demonstrate they know they have to perform this part. They join their voices with a history of the novel in which critics expect men to be shown to dominate. While Burney covertly broadens the field of literary references, Mackenzie's *Mysteries Elucidated* inserts a female authorial presence through using the signature 'Anna Maria Mackenzie' at the bottom of the preface. Mackenzie asserts her right to speak on matter of canonicity and literary value despite her subject identity as a female author. Each nuance the male tradition of the novel.

[85] Burney, *Evelina*, Vol. 1, p. xiii.
[86] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. vii.

Bage and Hanway also paid homage to their predecessors in their prefaces. Bage's discursive preface to *Man as He Is* (1792) – in which he uses Rousseau to valorise the form of the novel and justifies with some facetiousness that he wrote because 'fame is fame' – applauds the works of 'les Sages, les Marivaux, the Fieldings, the Smollets'.[87] Bage namechecks male authors. However, the fact that they are plural makes them appear generic while signifying that these names are renowned enough to operate as a collective noun for a wider body of authors writing in the same style. It is a reference which emphasises their presence while effacing their individuality. Bage also says these male authors are 'dead and buried', a frank statement which simultaneously acknowledges their legacies while suggesting that they are representative of a bygone era.[88] Hanway states that 'we shall reap instruction, and renovated delight, from perusing the writings of a Richardson, a Fielding, and a Smollett'.[89] Hanway uses the indefinite article, 'a', before the writers' names. These modifiers imply that there is not a unique Alain-René Lesage nor a single Samuel Richardson. There is not 'the' Tobias Smollett, but 'a' Tobias Smollett. These indefinite articles allude to how these writers have been set up as models by critics and used by them to capture the novel's past achievements; this has resulted in imitations of each male writer. These prefaces indicate Bage's and Hanway's awareness of their literary heritage but conjoin this with allusions to the fact that the Romantic literary marketplace is replete with novelists who write in styles akin to each of these esteemed writers. Indeed, Bage refers to Rousseau as 'John James': an anglicisation, imitation, or indeed bastardisation, of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's name.[90] Bage's colloquial reference to Rousseau can be read as, to some extent, indifference. His modification is emblematic of how writers innovate upon established tropes and how a canon of respected writers and their works will inevitably experience some imitation and adaptation.

Some writes propose new canons, as the rest of this chapter explores. Mackenzie's preface to *Mysteries Elucidated* opens with homage to Fielding and Richardson but it then applauds an

[87] Bage, *Man as He Is* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1792). Vol. 1, p. v. *ECCO*. Ibid., p. ii.
[88] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. ii.
[89] Mary Ann Hanway, *Ellinor; or, the World As It Is* (London: Minerva-Press, 1798), Vol. 1, p. v. *ECCO.*
[90] Bage, *Man as He Is*, Vol. 1, p. ii.

alternative canon. Mackenzie declares that a select number of novelists to be exempt from the general criticism of the novel: 'with the sincerest admiration of their talents, let me exclude Burney, Bennet, Parsons, &c. from a share in the censure, whose elegant performances will, I trust, remove much of the contempt which has fallen upon works of this denomination'.[91] While she is aware of her male literary predecessors, Mackenzie moves away from solely invoking their names and, instead, directs the reader's attention to a modified canon, promoting the names and works of female writers. She also observes the novel's 'downfall was assisted by some of the beautiful periodical writings', sarcastically referring to the influence of review periodicals on the reception of the novel.[92] As such, her preface takes it upon itself to instate a more respected reception for some, but not all, novels.

Mackenzie draws a female canon: 'Burney, Bennet, Parsons, &c.' refers to Frances Burney and Eliza Parsons, and 'Bennet' most likely refers to the Minerva novelist Anna Maria Bennett through a variant spelling. Two of these writers wrote for the Minerva Press and all three writers wrote sentimental fiction. They otherwise had different experiences of the literary marketplace and have different literary legacies today. Burney had published two works of fiction, *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782), by 1795. In comparison, Bennett had published four novels between 1785 and 1795 and Eliza Parsons had written six novels between 1790 and 1795. Parsons and Bennett were published by the Minerva Press whereas Burney published *Evelina* with Thomas Lowndes and *Cecilia* with Thomas Payne and Thomas Cadell. Investigating the critical reception of these writers may provide a reason why Mackenzie joined these three names together. Burney's first work, *Evelina* (1778), was commended by *The Critical Review*: '[t]his performance deserves no common praise, whether we consider it in a moral or literary light. It would have disgraced neither the head nor the heart of Richardson'.[93] Bennett's first novel, *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress*, was also commended: '[t]he performance before us exceeds in no common degree the mass of novels which are every day

[91] Ibid., p. ix.

[92] Mackenzie, *Mysteries Elucidated,* Vol. 1, p. iii.

[93] 'Evelina, *or a young Lady's Entrance into the World*', *The Critical Review* 46 (1778), 202-204 (p. 202). *British Periodicals*.

obtruded upon the public'.[94] *The Monthly Review* also reviewed *Anna* with some praise: '[t]hese volumes, though by no means written with the elegance or spirit of Cecilia, of which they appear to be an imitation, have a sufficient variety of character and incident to keep up the reader's attention, and make them in some degree interesting'.[95] Furthermore, Bennett's second novel, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, published as 'By the Author of *Anna, or the Welch Heiress*', was first accredited to Frances Burney.[96] Parsons' first novel, *The History of Miss Meredith*, was admired by the critics: 'it appears guarded by modesty and simplicity. A natural and interesting tale is related in neat and unaffected language'.[97] The reviews praise each of the works, suggesting that the writers' positive initial critical reception may be one explanation why Mackenzie grouped these writers' names together, drawing parallels between a famed and respected female writer and other, less known women writers.

Burney was frequently held up as an estimable novelist in reviews. She took Richardson's place as the novelist against which others were compared. In 1785, the anonymous author of *The Platonic Guardian*, published by William Lane, was said to follow 'in the footsteps of Miss Burney' by *The Critical Review*.[98] Then, in 1788, *The Critical Review* devised the phrase 'the Burney-school' when discussing *Henry and Isabella* published by William Lane.[99] Reviewers clearly traced the continuities of style and plot between Burney's novels and later Minerva works they believed to be similar. Burney was a benchmark against which the works of other writers were measured and Mackenzie, for her part, desired to emphasise this comparison in her preface.

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[94] 'Art. III. Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress', *The English Review* 5 (1785), 420-424 (p. 420). *British Periodicals.*

[95] [E.], 'Art. 36. *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress*', *The Monthly Review* 73 (1786), 153 (p. 153). *British Periodicals.*

[96] This is according to Ernest Baker's *The History of the English Novel, Volume 5, The Novel of Sentiment and Gothic Romance* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968), p. 173.

[97] '*The History of Miss Meredith*', *The Monthly Review* 3 (1790), 90 (p. 90). *British Periodicals.*

[98] '*The Platonic Guardian, or the History of an Orphan'*, *The Critical Review, or, Annals of* literature, 64 (1787), 392 (p. 392). *British Periodicals.*

[99] '*Henry and Isabella; or, A Traite through Life', Critical Review, or, Annals of* literature, 65 (1788), 485-486 (p. 485). *British Periodicals*.

By placing Burney, Bennett, and Parsons next to one another, Mackenzie's preface stages a literary intervention on some levels. Mackenzie invited and prompted specific comparisons to be made, welcoming a culture of comparison of female-authored works instead of comparing a work to a male-authored text. Writing in the 1790s and referring to a lauded female novelist of the 1770s and 1780s also creates a female literary heritage. While Burney chose not to break convention by naming the female authors, Mackenzie boldly stated the names which ought to form the standards against which future novels were held.

It is apparent that Mackenzie's canon is not wholly unique in its formation or tone; the Minerva Press writers such as Eliza Parsons and Sarah Lansdell reworked the literary history of the novel into a female canon which was increasingly reflective of the most popular novel writers of the late-eighteenth century. Eliza Parsons' canon in the preface to *The History of Miss Meredith* (1790) overlaps considerably with the names found in Mackenzie's list; 'the presumption of writing after a BURNEY, a SMITH, a REEVE, a BENNET, and many other excellent female novelists, subject the Author of MISS MEREDITH to the imputation of Vanity'.[100] Parsons places Frances Burney alongside Charlotte Smith, Clara Reeve, and Anna Maria Bennett, forming her own canon of female novelists in her debut work. Batchelor reads Parsons' canon as Parsons' 'want[ing] her work to be read in the context of an established female literary geneology'.[101] In addition to this, Parsons preface projects an image of an author who is aware of her literary contemporaries and, moreover, who is aware that a female writer must craft and establish the female framework, rather than inserting her work into a female canon. Parsons inaugurates and creates a legacy, rather than just accessing a pre-existing genealogy.

Indeed, Parsons' creation of her female framework was successful. Mackenzie's preface to *Mysteries Elucidated* appeared in 1795, five years after *Miss Meredith* was published. In it, Mackenzie placed Parsons alongside Burney and Bennett, making Parsons' ambition come true. Thus, these prefaces to novels work to reorient, recreate, and expand the canon of novelists. As such, they reflect

[100] Parsons, *The History of Miss Meredith*, Vol. 1, p. v.
[101] Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 165.

more accurately the female literary production prevalent in the late-eighteenth century. These canons demonstrate the critical tastes against which novelists defined themselves and, moreover, they mark and market themselves against a distinctly female canon.

Similarly, the anonymous author of *Eloise de Montblanc* (1796) wrote, 'when she recollects the perfect pen of a Burney, a Radcliffe, a Bennet, or a Smith, she shrinks at the scrutinizing Eye of Criticism'.[102] Likewise, Sarah Lansdell declared that '[i]t may be considered as presumptuous in a young authoress to venture her little productions abroad in the world, when there are so many works extant of Ratcliffe's, Smith's, Bennett's and Burney's, who so greatly excel in this species of composition'.[103] The authors referenced by the anonymous author and Lansdell are Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe, Anna Maria Bennett, and Charlotte Smith, misspellings notwithstanding (typesetting errors or accidental mistakes of spelling were not unusual). Both Lansdell and the anonymous author reference the exact same women writers as each other, suggesting that there is a shared framework of inspiration and reception for novels in the 1790s and, moreover, that this is conveyed to readers to be an explicitly female one. From 1796, Radcliffe was included in this framework of reception, illustrating the flexible nature of these frameworks.

Additionally, just as Hanway and Bage modified their references to 'the Fieldings', Lansdell and the anonymous author draw parallels between these female authors and the male predecessors. These female authors' names are also pluralised, indicative that these women merit wide respect and are emblematic of a certain level of popularity or high sales figures. The women writers forge a female canon of the novel through their prefaces and, in so doing, move away from their male predecessors and contemporaries. These canons are echoed and modified throughout the 1790s. Mackenzie, along with Parsons, Lansdell, and the anonymous author, redirects the reader's attention to the female novelists who they deem to be worthy of recognition. It is an active recovery of the novel and of the

[102] Anon., *Eloise de Montblanc* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1796), Vol. 1, a^{r-v}. *ECCO.*

[103] Sarah Lansdell, *Manfredi, Baron St. Osmund* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1796), Vol. 1, p. vi. *ECCO*.

woman writer. Yet this act of recovery is subjective and selective as a limited number of female novelists are elevated above the rest and praised. There are a select number of writers who appear in all the lists: Burney, Radcliffe, Smith, and Bennett. In a way, each novelist who is promoted through these prefaces is to the detriment of numerous other novelists whose names do not appear on the page. In clever ways, the Minerva Press writers elevate their own profiles and literary productions by championing the achievements of select fellow female novelists rather than attempting a wholesale revaluation of the female author.

While the novelists who forge a female canon appear courageous as they revise the parameters of literary history, this act can be a means of self-promotion. A later part of Mackenzie's preface to *Mysteries Elucidated* contains another reworked canon, but this time Mackenzie promotes her own works as well as those of others. When praising the historical novel, Mackenzie writes that '[t]he success of *the Recess*, *Warbeck*, *Monmouth*, the *Danish Massacre*, *Duke of Clarence*, founded on particular periods in the history of this country, and one or two more, have proved the utility of the undertaking'.[104] This time, Mackenzie references the titles of the works rather than the authors' names. *The Recess* was written by Sophia Lee in 1783 and Lee translated *Warbeck* in 1786. The *Duke of Clarence* (1795) was written by Mrs. E. M. Forster. Notably, Mackenzie wrote *Monmouth* (1790) and *Danish Massacre* (1791). She has included her own name in her list of writers whose historical novels she states were successful and introduced female readers to historical novels but shrouds her commendation of her own works by creating a title-oriented list. Mackenzie's preface is a vehicle facilitating self-aggrandisement, a printed space where she may elevate the reputation and the reception of her own works under the guise of acting as a critic. In this respect, she is comparable to Mary Wollstonecraft who, when embarking on her career for the *Analytical Review*, wrote a favourable notice of her own translation of Jacques Necker's *On the Importance of Religious*

[104] Mackenzie, *Mysteries Elucidated*, Vol. 1, p. x.

Opinions.[105] These two women used the resources available to them to attempt to influence the reception of their works favourably. They acted shrewdly to advance their own texts.

Mackenzie's preface and the Minerva writers' canons forge links between the Minerva Press and their contemporaries. These prefaces invite specific comparisons between a work and those works and writers cited, creating the critical framework against which to read the novels. In some ways, this aligns with William Wordsworth's maxim that 'every great and original writer in proportion as he is great and original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished'.[106] Mackenzie, Lansdell, Parsons, and the anonymous author are positioning themselves against other writers with whom they desire to be compared. They are not forging a new literary taste in that they suggest their novels follow in the steps of those writers they invoke, but they are suggesting the specific tastes against which their texts ought to be enjoyed. Even when the novel was published anonymously or pseudonymously – which complicates the view that there was a feminist networking agenda at play – the preface still promoted female names, showing the female presence in the book trade and cultivating a specific female framework of reception for their text.

However, the Minerva Press writers' self-promotion and revised canons encounter a problem on a more practical level. While writers eschewed the critical denigration of novelists by creating their own canons, the grouping of novelists was material as well. Other members of the book industry – publishers, booksellers, librarians – placed Minerva works alongside the works Mackenzie criticised as the 'general run' of novels from circulating libraries in promotional documents, prospectuses, and on the bookshelves. This notably affects and mitigates the way in which the recrafted canons reposition the writer and those they mention. Mackenzie's preface draws a network of authors, working against the intellectual isolation and prejudiced values of literary society, but it cannot overcome the fact that others collected these texts together, as demonstrated by Troughton's Library Catalogue, Liverpool,

[105] T., 'Volume III. *January, 1789*. ARTICLE IX. *On the Importance of Religious Opinions*. Translated from the French of M. Necker', in *MWCW*, p. 66.
[106] William Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 21 May 1807, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), Vol. 1, p. 130.

which stocked the Minerva Circulating Library.[107] The introductory essay of this catalogue, 'Utility of Books, by Dr. Moore', forges its own canon. Moore remarks that Jane West, Eliza Parsons, Anna Maria Bennet, Sophia Gunning, Miss Porter, and Sophia Woodfall are authors from 'whose works may be gleaned pleasure with useful instruction'.[108] He creates a canon of writers he believes are of especial interest. While Moore promotes novelists whose works he says are of moral worth, his list is interesting for other reasons as well: it features all women and five of the six published with the Minerva Press. As such, this list crafts a specific projection of these books and therefore the Minerva Press to be ones specifically for women readers and for moral instruction. Notably, Moore's canon is very different to those devised by the female writers, emphasising how each individual crafts a canon befitting their own purpose and tastes.

The Minerva Press writers' resourcefulness can be read as a sad necessity. Mackenzie's debut novel *Burton-Wood* (1783) anticipates and expects the denigration of female writers and underappreciation of women. The novel closes with the bold and determined Lady Trevor writing a letter in which she 'insist[s] upon the capability of female genius' and castigates men as they 'suppose it impossible for a woman to attend, at the same time, to scholastic learning and domestic offices'.[109] Lady Trevor highlights the double standards present in society. She challenges her husband by asking,

> Who will dare to pronounce a woman incapable of those attainments, when acquainted with a Cowley, - Barbauld, - Griffiths, - Cartwright, - More, - and many others? Do you think we cannot oppose those respectable names to the renowned poets of your sex. – Most certainly. – And I could now name fifty ladies whose performances do honour to their sex[110]

[107] 'Catalogue of the Minerva Circulating Library', (Liverpool: Printed by T. Troughton, [1805?]. GEN *EC8.T7576.805m. Houghton Library, Boston.

[108] Dr. Moore, 'Utility of Books, by Dr. Moore', 'Catalogue of the Minerva Circulating Library', v-vi (p. vi).

[109] Anna Maria Mackenzie, *Burton-Wood* (London: printed for the author, by H. D. Steel, 1783), Vol. 2, p. 153. *ECCO*; Ibid., p. 154.

[110] Ibid., pp. 155-156.

Lady Trevor lists Hannah Cowley, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Elizabeth Griffith, Mrs. Cartwright, and Hannah More. She invokes their names as examples of respected and capable female writers and wants to place them alongside – or 'oppose' them against – 'renowned' male poets, implying that there is space for writers of both sexes to be respected alongside one another. Her declaration illuminates the double standards against which women writers are held. Despite publishing respectable texts, women are not treated with the same esteem as their male peers and it is left to a female character to insert these women into literary history by specifically writing them into it.

In prefaces, female writers had the capability to remind the book trade of other esteemed and exceptional female writers (and themselves). By designing specific frameworks of reception and citing the names of fellow female writers, these lists in prefaces and in novels embody the reception and acknowledgement these women ought to receive by creating it and performing it explicitly themselves. Designing frameworks of reception which promote women's voices is one way in which women writers of the late-eighteenth century paid homage to their contemporaries and crafted a modified framework of reception advantageous to women writers. Grouping writers together creates a specific image of the writer and of their texts. It suggests shared features while creating a framework of reception and establishing a specific reputation for them. Many members of the literary marketplace invoked lists and canons, demonstrating the multifaceted ways in which writers could be grouped together to create specific impressions for specific purposes and to specific effect. The Minerva Press writers' canons, Lady Trevor's list, and Moore's collection of Minerva moral novelists demonstrates the co-existence of diverse frameworks of reception and therefore the complexity inherent in adjusting the framework of reception of an author, a text, or a publishing house against established literary tastes and prejudices.

Prefaces, therefore, shed light on how the Minerva Press authors perceived their roles as authors. They used the preface as a strategic space to define authorship in relation to the other subject positions of reviewer, dedicatee, and the parent and to revise the traditional canon of novelists.

Through these reworked canons, the writers contribute to literary history, and redefine its parameters. Baudouin Millet argues that prefaces were seminal in creating a new status for works of fiction in the early eighteenth century, arguing that

> During the 1750s, fiction-writers attempted more and more frequently to legitimize their works through new critical arguments.
>
> The preface becomes the site of a struggle for legitimation, as fiction gradually and increasingly justifies its existence in the eyes of the reading public. But the substitution of a new critical discourse for the old claim to historicity was not as smooth and immediate as it may appear, and occasionally involved a fierce struggle. Often, this struggle took place inside the paratexts themselves, which offer competing discourses both negating the fictionality of a fiction and acknowledging its fictional status.[111]

Thus, prose works from the 1750s featured a 'new species of preface' which 'emphasize[d] the importance of models'.[112] Millet concludes that prose works of the 1750s were aware of their 'intended and self-conscious relationships between contemporary texts'.[113] His identification of the struggle of paratexts is upheld by the Minerva Press novels investigated in this chapter. Some Minerva Press prefaces perform authorial and textual humility – or false modesty – and self-consciously and cannily acknowledge the power of the reviewers and the legacies of their forefathers. The Minerva writers' struggles, therefore, are over the role and status of the female author of popular fiction; they authors do not want to be perceived as independent entities in the book trade but must portray connections in the forms of dedications and canons.

I conclude that Minerva Press writers used the preface as an area of self-expression which was outside the confines of the plot of the novel and the title page. However, like title pages, the preface

[111] Baudouin Millet, *In Praise of Fiction: Prefaces to Romances and Novels, 1650-1760* (Leuven; Paris; Bristol: Peeters, 2017), pp. 18-19.
[112] Ibid., p. 21.
[113] Ibid., p. 23.

allows a shifting, flexible portrait of an author and, due to the increased space of the preface, the complex position of the author becomes more obvious. Gérard Genette writes that 'this fringe [is] always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author'.[114] In Minerva prefaces, the writers publicise the complexities of authorship; their labour is unrealised by the participants in traditionally more powerful and respected positions – reviewers and patrons – but writers both adhere to and subvert this power dynamic, at times being complicit in the novelist's inferiority. By drawing on the role of the parent, and by redrawing frameworks of reception, prefaces afforded Minerva Press women writers some autonomy and authority and a means of repositioning themselves and their work in the expanding and commodified literary marketplace. Susan Egenolf argues that some novels 'encourag[e] a look both at and away from the narrative itself, calling the reader's attention to particular worldly concerns in the very act of highlighting the ways the narrative is constructed'.[115] Similarly, Minerva Press prefaces draw attention to the physical environment of production and often the mercenary needs to write a novel. They are not explicit commentaries on the social and political environs, but rather exposés of the effects of the literary and social attitudes held by the Romantic period society and experienced by professional novelists. The writers' efforts to explain why they write and to justify their authorship reflects that they felt a need to defend their position to an extent. In defining their position, they write certain women into literary history while capitulating to popular and historical literary expectation.

The next chapter complements Egenolf's focus on 'worldly concerns' by focusing on the characterisation of the female writer. It argues that these characters perform stock types of the female writer which are both denigratory to female authorship and call attention to the commercial viability and public demand for these works. The female author is shown to operate within denigratory perceptions but commercial practicalities.

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[114] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

[115] Susan B. Egenolf, *The Art of Political Fiction in Hamilton, Edgeworth, and Owenson* (Farnham; Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 9.

Chapter Three – Writer-Characters in Minerva Press and Contemporary Novels

Women writers of popular fiction in the early Romantic period were subject to much scrutiny, and they were often characterised in negative ways. In 1799, the conservative writer Hannah More asked,

> Who are those ever multiplying authors, that with unparalleled fecundity are overstocking the world with their quick succeeding progeny? They are novel writers; the easiness of whose productions is at once the cause of their own fruitfulness, and of the almost infinitely numerous race of imitators to whom they give birth. Such is the frightful facility of this species of composition, that every raw girl while she reads, is tempted to fancy that she can also write.[1]

Hannah More associates the authorship of fiction with women and with images of motherhood, proliferation, and imitation.[2] Her contempt for these women is clear. More derided female novelists, characterising female writers to be simple, naïve, and young – 'raw girls' – and by declaring that it is easy to write novels. It is ironic that a decade later More would turn novelist herself; her debut novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* was published in 1809.

Mary Shelley would later echo More's vocabulary and positioning of the female author by introducing *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as her 'hideous progeny'.[3] Shelley's 'progeny' was a gothic novel which debated complex ethical and scientific issues through the creation of Victor Frankenstein's Creature. Thirty-five years on, Walter Scott would sustain this paradigm of female authors, inability, motherhood, and monstrosity in his study of Charlotte Smith, writing that 'unless

[1] More, *Strictures*, pp. 169-170.

[2] Amelia Dale has also drawn on this quotation to make comparisons between motherhood and novelists in 'The Quixotic Mother, the Female Author, and Mary Charlton's *Rosella*', *Studies in the novel*, 52.1 (2020), 1-19 (p. 5). DOI: 10.1353/sdn.2020.0001. I use More's quote here to illustrate the dramatization and denigration of the female novelist. More's disrespectful view of female authorship is accessed through the motherhood paradigm.

[3] Mary Shelley, 'Introduction [1831]', *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, ed. by M. K. Joseph (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 5-11 (p. 10).

the author is powerfully gifted with the inventive faculty, [they are] more likely to produce monsters than models of composition'.[4] More's and Scott's critical commentaries demonstrate the accusations of unoriginality and incompetence directed at authors, particularly at female novelists. Moreover, while there is no expectation that they should acknowledge the popularity of this derided figure's writing with the wider reading public in their reviews, that they neglect to mention it suggests the narrow parameters within with they would identify value and skill in texts.

Some female novelists joined the debate on the character, ability, and purpose of the female author by characterising her in their novels. The writer-characters created by Anna Maria Bennett, Frances Burney, and Ann Radcliffe offer a variety of reflections upon the status and idea of the female author and these speak to the multiplicity of preconceptions about the female author and the preconceptions of readers. Analysing the fictional female writer-character reveals that this figure highlights tensions regarding conventional femininity, female comportment, female education, professionalism, and literary value extant in the 1790s.

Burney, Radcliffe, and Bennett approach the female writer-character differently. The first two writers create female writer-characters who develop socio-political commentaries about the roles and expectations of women and who write to process and articulate refined and complex sentiments. Their literary endeavours are treated seriously, suggesting a sincere appreciation for the value and potential of women's writing in terms of individual expression and female empowerment. Burney's female philosopher in *Camilla* (1796), Eugenia Tyrold, articulates the injustice of patriarchy in her memoirs. By contrast, Bennett's writer-characters are figures of ridicule whose writing endeavours are constantly portrayed with a mocking disdain comparable to that found in contemporary critical commentaries and review periodicals. Caricature, lampoon, and parody are narrative devices threaded throughout Bennett's three novels. These devices suggest that there is an implied reader who ought to be laughing with Bennett at her fictionalised women writers. It creates a critical distance

[4] Walter Scott, *The Lives of the Novelists* [1834] (London: J.M. Dent & Sons; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1910), p. 332 <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.499526/mode/2up> [accessed 25 November 2020].

between Bennett, a popular novelist herself, and the "other" lampooned writers, separating and elevating Bennett above the band of women writers who are naively tempted to fancy they can write. Yet, the fact that Bennett caricatures real life women writers, namely Ann Radcliffe and Catherine Macaulay Graham, draws a clear distinction between the real women and their fictionalised and lampooned counterparts. I argue that it distinguishes those women who did write successfully, Graham and Radcliffe, from the numerous imitators mocked in periodicals and underscores the false equivalency between the era's preconceptions of authorship and the actualities of authorship. As such, Bennett's writer-characters defy straightforward reading as they simultaneously lampoon the female writer and exaggerate her failings, while alluding to real eighteenth-century writers who succeeded in publishing and, at least in Radcliffe's case, were widely respected and enjoyed significant sales.

This chapter begins by examining critical commentaries and speculations on the figure of the female author in contemporary reviews and periodicals and in Richard Polwhele's 'The Unsex'd Females' (1798). Polwhele caricatures Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Burney, and Ann Radcliffe: his poem affirms the vexed status and reception of the female writer in the late-eighteenth century, and illustrates the tendency to polarise women writers as either monstrosities or models of virtue. The chapter then turns to Bennett's female writer-characters, Mary Meredith, Miss Franklin, and Mrs. Woudbe. They feature in *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794), *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786), and *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797), respectively. The chapter closes by considering Eugenia Tyrold in Frances Burney's novel, *Camilla, or, A Picture of Youth* (1796). References to Mary Wollstonecraft's eponymous heroines in *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) and *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798) and Ann Radcliffe's female sonneteers are also considered to provide a wider perspective on the presentation of the female writer in novels.

I argue that it is of paramount importance to study women writer-characters crafted by women writers because of the perspicacity female authors of the 1790s had on figures designed in their own likeness. While their writer-characters are not self-portraits, they offer insight into the ways

in which they believed writer-characters were perceived by society and they suggest that writer-characters are thought to be interesting to readers. They also, potentially, speak to how writer-characters ought to be perceived. Fictionalising writer-characters offered writers an opportunity to intervene in debates on the status of the writer. The only article published on the presentation of the woman writer in late eighteenth-century fiction states that Susanna Rowson's women writer-characters are subject to 'confinement' and to 'public censure'.[5] Widening this focus to include Bennett's and Burney's writer-characters illustrates different approaches to the female writer-character. Burney's female philosopher experiences specific criticisms from society due to her physical disabilities but, in turn, she uses her writings to censure others and to disprove of certain societal expectations of women and female beauty. Bennett's writer-characters speak more to the perceptions of the female writer and the stereotyping of this figure; her novels do not intervene in the reputation of the female writer but they illuminate the extent to which a fictionalised presentation of a person is controlled by contemporary stereotypes.

3.1 The Presentation of the Female Writer in Review Periodicals and Critical Commentaries

The woman writer was subject to frequent critical inspection and speculation. Her disposition, intelligence, comportment, and appearance were considered appropriate subjects for critical commentary. The anonymous reviewer of the anonymously-published novel *The Fair Hibernian* (1789) bemoaned, '[w]ithout a knowledge of life, or the human heart, why will young misses presume to write?'.[6] This review illustrates two things: that the anonymous author of fiction was female, young, immature, and inexperienced in writing. Hannah More used a similar phrase, 'raw girl', in 1799,

[5] Desirée Henderson, 'Windows and Writing: Susanna Rowson and the Scene of Female Authorship', *Studies in the Novel*, 49:2 (2017), 149-169 (p. 165) DOI:10.1353/sdn.2017.0014; Ibid., p. 157.
[6] 'Art. XXIV. *The Fair Hibernian*', *The Analytical Review: or, History of Literature*, 5 (1790), 488-489 (p. 489). *British Periodicals.*

indicating that the female writer was often imagined to be young and inexperienced. The anonymous review also shows the frequent assumption made that a bad novel was the product of a female pen. The reviews of *Delia* (1790) and *Iphigenia* (1791) provide other instances where inferior novels were automatically assumed to be written by a woman.[7]

Furthermore, reviewers combined reviewing with physiognomy, inferring aspects of the writer's appearance and disposition from the content of the reviewed text. An anonymous reviewer wrote that '(knowing her only by her writings) we will venture to add the *amiable* authoress of the present performance' of Charlotte Smith in *The Monthly Review*.[8] This commentator makes it clear that he bases his guess about Smith's character on the content and style of her novels. Meanwhile, Wollstonecraft fictionalised the appearance of the novelist Miss O'Connor, author of *Almeria Belmore* (1791): 'we will, to heighten the scene, suppose her fair'.[9] Wollstonecraft continues to invent an interaction between the young authoress and an older clergyman, hypothesising that Miss O'Connor used her beauty to secure the clergyman's approval for her to publish her work. Miss O'Connor's licentiousness and her salacious behaviour is commensurate with Wollstonecraft's expectation that 'novels […] only serve to heat and corrupt the minds of young women', effectively reinforcing Wollstonecraft's own maxim.[10] Yet Wollstonecraft's characterisation of the novelist was pure conjecture and there is no evidence for causation or correlation between the content of a work and an author's appearance, or vice versa.

Hypothetical and false equivalencies existed between texts and authors which could either do a disservice to a writer or compliment a writer; commentators connect moral novels to authors having pleasant characters and licentious novels to salacious writers. Ina Ferris terms this a 'figural slide from

[7] See 'Volume V. *December 1789*. Article XIX, *Delia; a pathetic and interesting Tale*', in *MWCW*, p. 195 and '*Iphigenia, a Novel*', *Critical Review*, p. 114.

[8] 'Art. VIII. *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle*. By Charlotte Smith', *The Monthly Review* 79 (1788), 241-244 (p. 242). *British Periodicals*.

[9] M., 'Volume V. *December 1789*. ARTICLE XXV, *Almeria Belmore*', in *MWCW*, p. 192.

[10] T., 'Volume VIII. *October 1790*. ARTICLE XLIII*, Euphemia.* By Mrs Charlotte Lennox', in *MWCW*, p. 308.

text to body' in Romantic period review culture.[11] Extending Ferris' view, this slide is reciprocal; reviewers' denigration of the novelists' bodies reflects on and shapes the reputation of the novel. The reviews reveal wider concerns around the immoral, deleterious nature of fiction; and the women who wrote such texts were perceived as transgressive, divergent, and dangerous. Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 in this thesis examine this in greater detail in relation to Bennett's novels. Her narratives entwine the writer and the writing form, using the author's physicality and actions as a site of commentary on the form of writing.

Women who embodied transgressive or divergent manifestations of femininity could be subject to vicious criticism. Richard Polwhele took Mary Wollstonecraft as representative of such women. His *The Unsex'd Females* (1798) lambasts her alongside the other women whom he termed her disciples: Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mary Robinson, Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, Anne Yearsley, and Mary Hays. As the Introduction outlined, Polwhele wrote that these women defy and despise 'NATURE'S law'; they have 'crane-like neck[s]', 'borrow'd hair', and display a 'sapient sneer'.[12] They embody a divergent form of femininity and this manifests physically as well as intellectually. Judith Pascoe writes that 'Polwhele's diatribe helps modern critics demonstrate how impossible it was for late eighteenth-century women writers to be received in gender-neutral terms'.[13] It also suggests that Romantic society predominately viewed women in physical terms rather than viewing them as autonomous intellectual individuals. The women's physical appearance is the first concern in reviews of their texts.

Yet Polwhele's poem does not dismiss all novelists wholesale. Some indeed are criticised; Charlotte Smith must be suffering from a 'disorder' when she is writing novels 'infected with the Gallic

[11] Ina Ferris, 'From trope to code: The novel and the rhetoric of gender in nineteenth-century critical discourse', in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, ed. by Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 18-30, p. 25.
[12] Polwhele, 'The Unsex'd Females', p. 7; Ibid., p. 8; Ibid., p. 8; Ibid., p. 25.
[13] Judith Pascoe, ''Unsex'd Females': Barbauld, Robinson, and Smith', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740–1830*, ed. by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 211-226 (p. 213).

mania'.[14] Mary Robinson's poetry has a 'peculiar delicacy: but her Novels, as literary compositions, […] merit the severest censure'.[15] Burney's novels, however, are praised for displaying 'united merits' in a 'delightful species of composition' while Radcliffe's 'Mysteries of Udolpho, […] have all that is wild, magnificent and beautiful, combined with the genius of Shakspeare, and the taste of Mason'.[16] Polwhele's different treatment of different novelists is germane for this chapter's consideration of the presentation of fictionalised women writers. It shows that not all novels and novelists were maligned, and that criticism of novelists is a means of evidencing one's own literary taste, judgements, and knowledge of the marketplace and of writing. In these reflections in *The Unsex'd Females*, Polwhele evaluates novelists without the general and generalising prejudice against novelists found in other contemporary critical writings. Articulating nuanced literary taste is a means of distinguishing oneself. Bennett's novels turn a similarly critical eye on the character of the female-writer, revealing a discerning insight into the appeal of this ludicrous female character but also providing a commentary on the commercial viability of popular novels.

This chapters turns now to Bennett's writer-characters. Bennett's female writer-characters aspire to write an epistolary novel, a gothic novel, and a history. Bennett's portraits of the author contribute to Betty Schellenberg's view that 'women writers' interventions in the public realm were by definition transgressive'.[17] They encourage discussion about if and how a fictional and indeed lampooned female writer-character could be transgressive, and if a real woman writer could be conventional. Bennett's women writers defy straightforward reading as they are lampooned for their actions but Bennett acknowledges the market appeal of the epistolary novel and the gothic novel in ways which justify real and fictional female writers' literary activities.

[14] Polwhele, 'The Unsex'd Females', p. 23.
[15] Ibid., pp. 21-23.
[16] Ibid., p. 45; Ibid., p. 45; Ibid., p. 45.
[17] Schellenberg, *Professionalization of Women Writers*, p. 2.

3.2 Mary Meredith: a Portrait of the Author as a 'scribbling' 'girl'

Mary Meredith in Anna Maria Bennett's novel *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794) is a plain girl who enjoys scribbling letters to her female friend. She dreams that these letters will be published one day as a book. Thus, she is a characterisation of the female epistolary novelist, a common figure writing in a popular form in the late-eighteenth century literary marketplace. As Ros Ballaster contends, the 'novel in letters was […] a thriving, indeed blooming, product' between 1770 and 1800 but its popularity declined after 1800.[18] This section concentrates on the nuanced ways in which Bennett describes her female letter-writer and her writing. Presenting Mary as young and 'plain' and portraying her writing as 'scribbling' reflects the contemporary society's dismissive attitude to the writer. Yet, Mary's presentation is equivocal; the belittling adjectival descriptions of the writer are mediated by the popularity of the form in which she writes. The value of Mary's epistolary novel is its popularity. Thus, Bennett's narrative illuminates the double standards against which the women writer is judged; they knowingly cater for public taste by writing in a popular form, but they are derided nonetheless for a lack of skill.

Bennett's narrative crafts the framework by which Mary Meredith's writing is judged. This framework does not focus on her physicality as Mary is described passingly as a 'very plain girl of twenty-two'.[19] Bennett's narrator portrays her as unremarkable physically, disassociating her from the sexualisation of female writers seen in reviews. Reviewers often concentrated on the physical appearance of a female author. Specifically, women were characterised as seductresses and this was used as a means to condemn their work. This thesis has already mentioned how Wollstonecraft fictionalised the seductive behaviour of the novelist Miss O'Connor (see the start of section 3.1). Similarly, *The Monthly Review* exclaimed, '[a]nother virgin pen! – Though, unless we took the lady's words for it, we should rather have supposed that this was not the first time. There is a great deal of

[18] Ros Ballaster, 'The Rise and Decline of the Epistolary Novel, 1770-1832', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by J. A. Downie (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 409-425 (p. 410).
[19] Bennett, *Ellen*, Vol. 1, p. 9.

deception in these matters'.[20] 'Virgin' acknowledges the text's claim to be a debut work. It reinforces the association of authorship with literary promiscuity and connects this to a discussion of marital promiscuity and deceit. The female writer is brought into comparison with women claiming dishonestly to be virgins. There is, to my knowledge, no review of a male-authored Minerva Press novel which comments on the author's sexual proclivities. Thus, some critics presume licentiousness in some female authors and weaponize this as a means to criticise them. Unlike contemporary reviews, Mary's physicality is not focused on at length in *Ellen*. Bennett's narrative separates one's physicality and ability to write and directs the focus onto the written product rather than the body of the author.

The presentation of Mary Meredith's writings is cryptic; her writings are simultaneously mocked and validated as commercially viable. Her juvenile letters meet public taste, illustrating in part that the reading public's appetite was for sentimental letters on popular subjects, designed to amuse and to entertain. Mary corresponds with her unnamed friend, and these epistles constitute the material for 'the letters of LUCRETIA and AMANTHIS'.[21] The narrator's grandiose and sardonic statement that the 'world may be one day favoured with the letters of LUCRETIA and AMANTHIS' insinuates a disbelief that such works are popular with readers.[22] Yet, Mary's chosen title and form echoes the titles of publications published by the Minerva Press such as *Theodosius And Arabella, A Novel, In A Series Of Letters* (1786) and *Laura; or Original Letters* (1790). Mary's character has replicated, knowingly or subconsciously, the titling conventions of her book trade for her own work. While it shows that conventions can be easily recognised and imitated, it also places Mary's juvenile writing as symptomatic and representative of popular literature. It directs attention to the cultural contemporary value of popular novels, simultaneously mocking that such works have an audience but reminding a reader of the high demand from this thriving form in the 1790s.

[20] [B…K], '*The Sentimental Deceiver: or the History of Miss Hammond*', p. 77.
[21] Bennett, *Ellen*, Vol. 1, p. 9.
[22] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 9.

The description of Mary's writing style also resists straightforward reading. Mary Meredith has 'the rage of scribbling on her'.[23] 'Scribbling' was a polyvalent term prevalent in the Romantic period. *The Critical Review* entitled the Romantic period the 'scribbling age'.[24] The term could be deprecating. Lord Byron satirised the 'scribbling' of the Bluestocking circle in his 1820 play, 'The Blues: A Literary Eclogue'.[25] Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* defined a 'scribbler' as a 'petty author' or a 'writer without worth'.[26] Yet, when employed by novelists, the implications of 'scribbling' become equivocal as novelists can use it, paradoxically, to advocate for their writings. The Minerva Press author Sarah Lansdell represented herself as a 'scribbler' in the preface to *Manfredi, Baron St. Osmund* (1796) to present herself as a humble yet courageous writer:

> Let it be considered, that however inexperienced the judgment, or confined the circle of ideas, few persons who find in themselves an inclination to scribbling, but are willing to make one trial of their ability in that flight, wherein some rise to the highest pitch their sanguine hopes could reach, while others fall to rise no more.[27]

Lansdell's deliberate framing of this work as 'scribbling' worked in her favour; a reviewer quoted the 'scribbling' passage and appreciated the authorial 'modesty' it demonstrated.[28] Lack of ambition, real or affected, was praiseworthy. Lansdell's use of scribbling was complicit with the culturally denigrating definition of the term but she appropriated it in a way which worked to her advantage.

Furthermore, using Mary Wollstonecraft's view that 'scribbling' had social and educative purposes offers another way of realising value in Mary Meredith's writing. Wollstonecraft's debut

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[23] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 9.

[24] '*The Fair Methodist; or, Such Things Are*', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of literature*, 12 (1794), 235-236 (p. 235). *British Periodicals*.

[25] Lord Byron, 'The Blues: A Literary Eclogue', qtd. in Caroline Franklin, 'Enlightenment feminism and the bluestocking legacy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Devoney Looser (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), pp. 115-128 (p. 115).

[26] Johnson, 'scribbler, n.s.', in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/views/search.php?term=scribbling> [accessed 30 January 2022]

[27] Lansdell, *Manfredi*, pp. vi-vii.

[28] '*Manfredi, Baron St. Osmund*', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of literature*, 20 (1797), 353 (p. 353). *British Periodicals.*

novel, *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), remarks that '[y]oung people are mostly fond of scribbling; Mary had had very little instruction; but by copying her friend's letters, whose hand she admired, she soon became a proficient'.[29] Wollstonecraft highlights scribbling's educational value. By copying first, children learn to create independently. Indeed, Frances Burney said she 'scribbled' as a teenager, and Justine Crump argues that this term reflects Burney's 'early difficulties with literacy'.[30] Scribbling, as such, paved the way for Wollstonecraft's and Burney's later literary successes. Given that the 'friendship between Mary and Ann is modelled on Wollstonecraft's youthful relationship with Fanny Blood', as Michelle Faubert observes, Wollstonecraft has drawn on her first-hand experience of the benefits of scribbling for her novel.[31] Both *Mary, A Fiction* and Bennett's *Ellen* embody Edmund Burke's principle that '[i]t is by imitation far more than precept that we learn every thing […]. It is one of the strongest links of society'.[32] *Ellen* and *Mary, A Fiction* embody Burke's adage, emphasising the social and education functions of scribbling and novel-writings and covertly validating the writing of a culturally denigrated form. The connotations of scribbling are thus multifaceted. Bennett's and Wollstonecraft's comments reveal a sympathetic approach to neophyte writers and their scribbling as they highlight a developmental process of writing and the fundamental role scribbling plays in a writer's career.

Therefore, Bennett's novel *Ellen* navigates the era's condemnation of young female writers by nuancing commonplace criticisms of the popular novel. *Ellen* sheds light on the reviewers' propensity to focus on a female writers' bodies as Mary is inconspicuously plain. Moreover, it complicates an initial dismissal of Mary's writings through the equivocality of 'scribbling'. The narrator captures the

[29] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, A Fiction* in *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. by Michelle Faubert (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012), pp. 86-87.

[30] Frances Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney, arranged from his own manuscripts, from family papers, and from personal recollections. By his daughter, Madame d'Arblay* (London: Moxon, 1832), Vol. 2, p. 124, qtd. in Justine Crump, *A Known Scribbler: Frances Burney on Literary Life*, ed. by Justine Crump (Toronto: Broadview Literary Press, 2002), p. 7.

[31] Michelle Faubert, *Mary, A Fiction* in *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. by Michelle Faubert (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012), p. 87, n1.

[32] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 29. *ECCO.*

tensions about the perception and reception of popular woman writers and offers an alternate way of appraising such novels; epistolary novels are popular texts and the humble scribbling author is a favourable demeanour for a female author to project. This incisive presentation of the writer-character illuminates Bennett's own position as an author. As a writer of popular novels published by the Minerva Press, the house culpable for encouraging these reading tastes and enabling young women such as the fictional Mary Meredith to gain publication, Bennett had first-hand experience of the complicated position of female novelists.[33] Her novel provides both a criticism of Mary Meredith, in line with that found in reviews, while creating a character who is a shrewd reflection of Romantic readers' literary tastes. Mary's character is a foil reflecting the public's proclivity to read scribblings, their taste for epistolary novels, and the predisposition of young women to turn to writing, yet it also spotlights critics' chagrin for such works and the conflation between the text and the authorial body in reviews, capturing the conflicted position of the female author of popular texts in the 1790s.

3.3 Mrs. Woudbe and 'out-waxing' the Gothic Novelist

While Mary Meredith's character indicates the public demand for a denigrated literary form, the difficulty of catering for the reading public, and of writing more generally, is illustrated in Anna Maria Bennett's novel, *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797). The novel invites comparisons between the female writer-character who aspires to be a gothic writer, Mrs. Woudbe, and the most famous female gothic novelist of the 1790s, Ann Radcliffe, and Radcliffe's female sonneteer-characters. Mrs. Woudbe desires to supersede Radcliffe's fame and literary success. She brags that she can '"out-horror the wax figure all to nothing" – a reference to Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in which Emily St. Aubert discovers a corpse and only realises it is made of wax at the novel's denouement.[34]

[33] Anthony Mandal writes that authors turned to the Minerva Press for 'almost guaranteed publication' in Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular* Novel, p. 60. Elizabeth Neiman upholds the view that the Press 'opened doors for relatively obscure female novelists, many of whom were unlikely to have published novels otherwise', in Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, p. 1.

[34] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl,* Vol. 6, p. 21.

With this reference and the fact that Mrs. Woudbe's 'studies were the thumb'd volumes of a little circulating library at the next market town', she anticipates Hannah More's view that 'every raw girl while she reads, is tempted to fancy that she can also write'.[35] However, Mrs. Woudbe's gothic novel remains an hypothetical whim, reflected by the modality of her name. I read Mrs. Woudbe as an amusing character who mocks the belief that anyone can write while covertly indicating the skill required to write a gothic novel in line with those of Radcliffe. An author cannot write based on a whim; it takes inspiration, talent, and patience. Bennett lampoons Mrs. Woudbe's efforts, creating a comedic and pathetic writer-character. In turn, the characterisation of Mrs. Woudbe creates a distance between Bennett and the other popular novelists of the 1790s. Ultimately, Mrs. Woudbe's failure to write augments the achievement of published female writers, such as Radcliffe and Bennett, in the real literary marketplace.

In her derogatory characterisation of authors as 'raw girls', Hannah More proposed that female authors wrote out of 'fancy'. She presents novel writing as a self-indulgent hobby. Mrs. Woudbe personifies More's view, but the subtexts of this female writer-character also underscore the false equivalency between this perception of writing and reality. Mrs. Woudbe writes to 'kill time in the country'.[36] Secondly, she believes novel writing will make her famous: 'there was a point of notoriety, which her residence in the country could only attain - she would write a book'.[37] The characterisation of the female novel-writer as frivolous and naïve is echoed in Isabella Kelly's novel, *Edwardina* (1800), written under the pseudonym of 'Catherine Harris'. In it, Arabella (Edwardina's friend) declares '"when I have too much time, and too little money, why beshrew me, but I will turn Novel writer!"'[38] Preceding this, she declares that '"the Minerva offers liberal encouragement"'.[39] The narrative conceptualises the female author as whimsical and naïve with the erroneous belief that it is

[35] Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 40; More, *Strictures*, p. 170.
[36] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl*, Vol. 6, p. 20.
[37] Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 20.
[38] Catherine Harris [Isabella Kelly], *Edwardina* (London: Printed for the Author at the Minerva-Press, 1800), Vol. 2, p. 51. *ECCO.*
[39] Ibid., p. 51.

easy to earn a decent living by writing novels. Kelly's novel also draws attention to the Minerva Press, presenting it graciously as a well-paying publishing house. Bennett's and Kelly's novels implicitly criticise this construction of the female writer through the bathos present in the narration and speech. These women voice naïve impressions of the easiness of novel-writing, and therefore the subtext indicates the opposite is true. Writing was hard work and often financially unrewarding, as the letters to the Literary Fund discussed in Chapter 5 and collected in Appendix B reveal. Many non-Minerva and Minerva novelists wrote to earn a living. Burney and Wollstonecraft depended on the income they gained from writing at times. Some authors were forced to write prolifically because they were dependent on the inconsistent yet crucial income from writing. Mary Julia Young claims that she 'sent sheet by sheet as I finished them to the press without time even to reperuse them'.[40] Young could not write fast enough to earn enough, however, and was forced to apply for charitable assistance. Similarly, Eliza Parsons made five applications to the Literary Fund to supplement her income from writing in the 1790s, her most prolific decade as an author. The idealised impression Mrs. Woudbe and Arabella have of writing highlights the grim reality of the intense and protracted labour of many Minerva authors, countering the notion that writing is an easy pastime but also providing the reader with entertaining and artless characters.

Mrs. Woudbe's character embodies common preconceptions about novelists and novel-writing, but the subtext of her character reveals the skill required to write a novel. The gothic novel of the 1790s was criticised as formulaic and assumed to be easy to write. The 'Jacobin novelist' who wrote a letter to the editor of the *Monthly Magazine* in 1797 contends that

> we have […] shown by what easy process a writer may attain great celebrity in circulating libraries, boarding schools, and watering places. What has he to do but build a castle in the air, and furnish it with dead bodies and departed spirits, and he obtains the character of a man of a most wonderful imagination, rich in imagery,

[40] Mary Julia Young to the Royal Literary Fund, 26 March 1808. London. RLF Loan 96 1/216/1. British Library, London.

> and who has the wonderful talent of conducting his reader in a cold sweat through five or six volumes.[41]

In *The Beggar Girl*, Mrs. Woudbe echoes this disparaging attitude to writing a novel but in such a way as to undermine it. Mrs. Woudbe's belief that anyone can write, revealed through her conglomeration of writers, 'Burneys, and Smiths, and Moores, and Pratts, and such odd quizzes', is incorrect.[42] This list is heterogenous and has no organised sense, amalgamating writers of different forms, different eras, and different topics. It suggests Mrs. Woudbe's lack of knowledge of the book trade which implies that her ability to write a novel for the book trade would be similarly limited. This is then borne out by her inability to write a gothic novel. She protests it would be easy to write if she could only '"write a little faster, and spell a little better"'.[43] To try and gain creative inspiration, she takes up various activities she believes conducive to novel-writing. Mrs. Woudbe takes herself to spaces of extreme natural beauty or to dangerous places in tempestuous weather, developing habits such as:

> the whim of night rambling; sometimes through a wilderness at the back of the house, to a cascade of water that fell into a large bason [sic]; at others to a thick-grove, at the extremity of the park, and this often in weather that should endear a comfortable fire-side, for the express purpose of writing.[44]

Mrs. Woudbe writes not a single line despite being situated in landscapes which are germane for other writer-characters' literary productions. Radcliffe's Adeline, for instance 'find[s] it impossible to forbear attempting to paint in language what was so beautiful in reality, [so] she composed the following'.[45] The ease with which Adeline creates and delivers a twenty-eight-line sonnet contrasts Mrs. Woudbe's fruitless struggles to write. Thus, Bennett's gothic novel writer illuminates that one is gifted with artistic inspiration or is not, and it demonstrates that it is a difficult task to be a gothic novel writer.

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[41] A Jacobin Novelist, '*To the Editor of the Monthly Magazine', Monthly Magazine, and British Register* 4:21 (1797), 102-104 (p. 102). *British Periodicals.*

[42] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl*, Vol. 6, p. 21.

[43] Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 21.

[44] Ibid., Vol. 6, pp. 47-48.

[45] Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. by Chloe Chard (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. 262.

Mrs. Woudbe's actions suggest, in an ironic and metafictional commentary, that she is better suited to be a character within a gothic novel, as she does not have the intelligence or inspiration to be a writer of them.

Indeed, Mrs. Woudbe becomes a character in newspapers. The newspaper reports Mrs. Woudbe's night-time escapades and Mrs. Woudbe's husband is 'exceedingly proud of seeing his wife's name in the newspapers', showing he understand the writing process as little as she does.[46] Bennett satirises Mrs. Woudbe's endeavours to be an author by clarifying that it is Mrs. Woudbe's person which becomes a public spectacle, rather than her writing. Mrs. Woudbe is the antithesis of Radcliffe. Radcliffe was famously reclusive throughout and after her literary career. Her most recent biographer, Rictor Norton, notes that Radcliffe was 'one of the most celebrated women of the late eighteenth century, yet the least known'.[47] Andrew Warren reads her retiring heroines, such as Ellena Rosalba in *The Italian* (1797), as a reflection of Radcliffe's own eschewal of literary fame.[48] Mrs. Woudbe, while believing she can 'out-wax' Radcliffe, is wholly unsuited and unable to even imitate Radcliffe's literary creations. Mrs. Woudbe's egocentric and trivial intentions, her mind, and her behaviour convey the labour and skill it takes to write.

Taking a darker turn, Bennett's narrative assumes a Wollstonecraftian message as Mrs. Woudbe provides a cautionary tale about the wider social consequences of uneducated women. *The Beggar Girl* creates a parallel between raising children and writing a novel. Mrs. Woudbe has one grown up daughter who she has married off and she is now in 'despair' as to what to do.[49] The narrator states that Mrs. Woudbe's 'literary brat remained in embryo'.[50] Comparing Mrs. Woudbe's novel to one of the earliest stages of an unborn child indicates that the novel has not progressed or developed,

[46] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl*, Vol. 6, p. 48.
[47] Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, p. 1.
[48] Andrew Warren, 'Designing and Undrawing Veils: Anxiety and Authorship in Radcliffe's "The Italian", *The Eighteenth Century*, 54:4 (2013), 521-544 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24575100> [accessed 30 January 2022]
[49] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl*, Vol. 6, p. 18.
[50] Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 48.

despite Mrs. Woudbe desiring to be an author. The significances of this are twofold. This comparison indicates that Mrs. Woudbe does not know what to do with herself once her maternal duty is fulfilled. Her daughter is married and left home, and with this Mrs. Woudbe's daily purpose has also left. Without being a mother, she struggles to define her role in the quotidian. Additionally, however, describing the novel as a 'literary brat' speaks to the implied dissatisfaction Mrs. Woudbe has with her current life and her 'tall daughter', where 'tall' reads as a criticism and an undesirable characteristic.[51] The embryonic novel indicates an absence of care and nurture on Mrs. Woudbe's part. The maternal displeasure of Mrs. Woudbe warns any readers of *The Beggar Girl* who may also be tempted to indulge in authorial fancies instead of wifely and motherly duties, and it is epitomised by the gothic novel's embryonic status. More widely, the narrative indicates that uneducated women are women with misguided priorities, and they threaten the future of society. This maxim also evident in Wollstonecraft's writings.[52] She writes that 'the rearing of children, that is, the laying a foundation of sound health both of body and mind in the rising generation, has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of woman'.[53] Thus, in both *The Beggar Girl* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, women need to be educated but they also need to know what to do with this education. They also should be mothers, but this should not be their sole role. The consequences of an insufficient education and the narrow confines of a wife's role (e.g becoming a mother) are emphasised by Mrs. Woudbe's misinformed desire to write a novel. The novel weaponizes miseducation and novel writing, and warns of the derailing effect of women aspiring to be authors. Underneath this cautionary tale, however, remains the fact that Mrs. Woudbe lacks the intellectual and emotional depth required to be an author. She is a stunted individual. Thus, through reading of the entertainingly deluded gothic

[51] Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 18.

[52] See Rachel Seiler-Smith's article, 'Bearing/Barren Life: The Conditions of Wollstonecraft's Morbid Maternity', *European Romantic Review* 28:2 (2017), 163-18. <https://doi-org.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10509585.2017.1289930> for her interpretation of Wollstonecraft's use of the childless woman as a symbol of the Romantic society's mistreatment of women and the state's consequent future barrenness.

[53] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 278.

novelist, a reader becomes conflicted between being complicit in the narrator's jibes at Mrs. Woudbe's inability to write and accepting the more serious point this belies about the contemporary miseducation of women. That Mrs. Woudbe had a poor and short education and that she was pushed into an early marriage is not her fault, yet if a reader laughs they are condoning the patriarchal society that resulted in this pathetic aspirational novelist.

Mrs. Woudbe is a complex character who illuminates various points about female authorship and about education. It is precisely for her literary shortcomings and her covert socio-political commentary on motherhood that the narrator intimates that Mrs. Woudbe is the perfect character for a 1790s popular novel. The narrator originally mocked Mrs. Woudbe's boast that she can 'out-horror the wax figure all to nothing', conspiring to laugh with the reader at Mrs. Woudbe. However, the narrator then concludes that Mrs. Woudbe's frustration at her inability to write makes her so furious that 'if her own feelings had been at that moment committed to paper, her reality would have outdone the best horror-monger of the age'.[54] Mrs. Woudbe's anger transforms her into a terrifying character to rival those of Ann Radcliffe. She is a monstrous characterisation of the female writer-character for both her lack of education and for her attitude as she fails to write.

This reads as a metafictional narrative about writing a popular novel. While Mrs. Woudbe may not be able to write a novel equalling that of Radcliffe, the narrator implies that Mrs. Woudbe is as successful a character as any of Radcliffe's heroines. The narrator declares that Mrs. Woudbe's superficiality, her eccentric behaviour, and her anger 'out-horror' Radcliffe's fictions, implying that Mrs. Woudbe as a character is of equal success and popularity as Radcliffe's characters. Therefore, the narrative implicitly holds that Bennett designed a character which out-horrors Radcliffe's characters in the decade which Radcliffe gained her popular and respected reputation. This observation of out-horroring comes from the narrator, a subject position which is afforded some critical distance from the action of a novel. As such, the narrative implicitly praises Bennett's abilities

[54] Bennett, *The Beggar Girl*, Vol. 6, p. 181.

to observe and cater for popular readers' taste efficiently and judiciously through her creation of the Radcliffe-worthy Mrs. Woudbe.

The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors illuminates Bennett's ability to discern and write according to popular taste, revealing her subtle yet shrewd balance of valuing the labour of a female author while meeting popular expectations of plot and character. There are two shared features in Bennett's characterisation of the female writer of epistolary novels and the gothic novelist. Both Mary Meredith and Mrs. Woudbe perform expected, derided traits associated with the woman writer and are belittled for their authorial efforts. Yet, on varying subtextual levels, each character enables Bennett to nuance observations about popular reading tastes and the women who cater for them. The allusions to 'scribbling', to 'out-horroring', and to other published female authors reveals Bennett's perspicacity of the late-eighteenth century book market. Her parodic presentation of Mrs. Woudbe indicates Bennett's own ability to create a character who responds hilariously to the stereotypes attached to gothic novelists in the Romantic period while turning a critical eye on them.

3.4 Miss Franklin and the 'masculine' Woman Writer

Mary Meredith and Mrs. Woudbe were lampooned characters who portray the labour it takes to write a publishable manuscript. Mary Meredith scribbled as a juvenile writer while Mrs. Woudbe failed to produce a novel. These writer-characters reveal that being an author takes time and dedication. The character analysed in this section, Bennett's female historian Miss Franklin, demonstrates how expectations of gender and social expectations cause the position of the woman writer in the 1780s and 1790s to be conflicted. There is a complex and tangled relationship between gender and writing form. Miss Franklin is an unconventional woman in two senses; she is rather masculine in demeanour and looks and she writes a history. Her characterisation as a masculine woman and a female historian invites comparison with contemporaries such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay Graham, and with the contents of writings by James Fordyce and Richard Polwhele who disdained such figures. In *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Miss Franklin's transgressive and unconventional gender subject

position articulates conservative and, at times, reactionary views about the roles, responsibilities, and characteristics of women. Bennett's characterisation of the female writer as a masculine female historian illuminates the perceived causal relationship between sex, gender, writing form, and authorial ability, reiterating that there are appropriate forms for women to write.

Bennett's female historian, Miss Franklin, exists uneasily alongside conventional expectations of women and definitions of masculinity and femininity. This is made explicit by the fact that she attempts to write a history, which Laura Runge has identified, along with politics, as 'masculine fields of knowledge' in the Romantic period.[55] In eighteenth-century society, 'masculinity and chivalry became unstable and contested', as Tim Fulford writes.[56] Fulford turns to male writers to see how they participated in this period of transformation, which he argues was caused by the political tumult in France and in Britain. Taking a different approach, this section argues that the female writer-character captures the tensions around the shifting perceptions of women and therefore of men in the 1790s. That Miss Franklin aspires to write a history is an important part of her character. The narrative implies a causal relationship between writing a history and Miss Franklin's masculine tendencies. Given that 'gender is performatively produced and compelled by regulatory practices of gender coherence', as Judith Butler establishes, Miss Franklin's performance as a historian results in a masculine woman.[57] In *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Miss Franklin's unconventional behaviour frustrates her attempts at courtship and her interactions with other characters. Like Mrs. Woudbe, she fails to write a publishable manuscript. Thus, Miss Franklin's nonconformity does not herald future female empowerment. Rather, Bennett's novel cautions against progressive gender ideologies through the condemning presentation of the female historian.

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[55] Laura Runge, 'Churls and Graybeards and Novels Written by a Lady: Gender in Eighteenth-Century Book Reviews', *Corvey Women Writers 1796-1834 on the Web*, 1 (2004), para. 18 <https://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3journal/issues/runge.html> [accessed 17 June 2020]

[56] Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 5.

[57] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, 2nd edn. (New York; Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

The negative presentation of Miss Franklin and her writing begins with her introduction. Miss Franklin is not an easy character to like. The narrator presents her as conceited as she views herself as superior to other women. She is 'a learned lady, and a patroness of literature. She was acquainted with the dead languages, and her understanding was so truly masculine, that she held her own sex in contempt'.[58] Miss Franklin prides herself on her education; it marks her out from other, less educated women. Mrs. Woudbe in *The Beggar Girl* revealed the disadvantages of an insufficient education for a woman, but Miss Franklin is used to suggest that overeducating a woman is equally problematic. She has a classical education, rendering her understanding 'masculine'. However, the narrator insinuates that it will be in vain. Miss Franklin is educated in the 'dead languages', casting her learning as obsolete and irrelevant. Indeed, Miss Franklin's history is neither finished nor published, meaning that her extensive learning does not culminate in a written or published text. Her education achieves no significant end.

Miss Franklin's conceit manifests further in her attitude towards different genres of writing, particularly novels. The narrator relates that Miss Franklin 'was also an authoress, not of modern poetry, *that* was beneath the greatness of her soul, and the sublimity of her talents; not of novels or common bagatelles; those she despised'.[59] Miss Franklin echoes established (but notional) generic literary hierarchies: the epic was superior to the sonnet; her history will be superior to novels. While she repeats society's belief that the novel is a generally inferior form, her arrogance is made evident by her belittlement of the more lauded form of poetry. Even the form of modern poetry was better esteemed than novels. Instead, Miss Franklin prides herself on writing a history; 'she was at this period far advanced in a work of labour and consequence, the history of her own country' which 'she flattered herself […] would be handed down to posterity; that succeeding ages would venerate her memory; that her fame would be immortal'.[60] The erudition associated with writing a history boosts her egoism,

[58] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. 12.
[59] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 68.
[60] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 68; Ibid., p. 105.

and it is this egoism that the narrator criticises sardonically and that a reader is meant to find distasteful. Another Minerva novel presents female authors to be vain and self-centred. In *Nobility Run Mad* (1802), a female author declares her 'wish, which all female authors feel, to hear their works descanted upon in a mixed company to whom they are not personally known'.[61] The female author is characterised as vain and obnoxious in *Nobility Run Mad*, *The Beggar Girl*, and *Juvenile Indiscretions*. Specifically, in *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Miss Franklin's egoism is critiqued more sharply as she transgresses gender and writing form, wishing to be venerated for writing a history. The 'masculine' educated woman is conceived as egotistical and obnoxious. Despite Miss Franklin's conviction that she is able to write a history, her history is never finished, let alone published. Miss Franklin's method of writing is described as 'continually having recourse to the anecdotes of many other authors, which consequently prolonged the history, and delayed its conclusion'.[62] Assuming the role of the literary critic, the narrator condemns her unfinished work as 'voluminous'.[63] This framing of her work and her arrogant attitude sets her literary activity up to fail, as it indeed does.

Miss Franklin's literary activity results in her masculine demeanour. Her masculinity is shown to have ramifications for her relationships with other characters and the narrator mocks this. Miss Franklin's becomes infatuated with her ward Henry Dellmore, the male protagonist who is more than ten years her junior. This dynamic is a gendered inversion of the common courtship plot, comparable in some ways to that found in Mary Hays' novel *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) in which the eponymous heroine pursues Augustus Harley. Miss Franklin's initial attempt to attract Dellmore's notice is presented as unfeminine and comical because she 'entered the dining-parlour, armed for conquest, her *tout ensemble* ten years younger than the preceding day'.[64] The narrator jibes at her 'armed' conquest by presenting her attempt at attracting Dellmore in elevated terms through the French phrase and by exaggerating it through the military language, creating a comedic bathos. The

[61] Anon., *Nobility Run Mad; or, Raymond and his Three Wives* (London: Minerva Press, for Lane and Newman, 1802), Vol. 1, p. 2. *NCCO.*
[62] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. 84.
[63] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 84.
[64] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 176.

narrator affords Miss Franklin no respect, observing that 'the present deformity served as a foil to past beauty' while stating that Dellmore deems her a 'disgusting personage'.[65] Here, Dellmore embodies James Fordyce's view that 'masculine women' were 'unamiable creatures'.[66] Dellmore's reaction to Miss Franklin illustrates the emphasis society placed on female beauty and adhering to social convention, revealing the derisive reception of unconventional women.

This description implies that Miss Franklin's unattractiveness is due to her extended pursuit of learning. The 'past beauty' has faded as she spent her time dedicated to her books to write her history. *Juvenile Indiscretions* fictionalises the Burkean belief that female learning and thinking destroy feminine charm. Edmund Burke contended that '[t]he beauty of woman is considerably owing to their weakness, or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it'.[67] Miss Franklin is not weak; she sallies forth to conquer Dellmore's heart with conviction, but Burke's principle is borne out by the fact that Dellmore finds her repulsive. Hays' *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* also considers Burke's precept. An old gentleman in the novel articulates that '"lines of thinking destroy the dimples of beauty; aping the reason of man, they lose the exquisite, fascinating charm, in which consists their true empire"'.[68] As this is spoken by an old gentlemen, it is framed as a dated view, yet the inclusion of it emphasises that some in society maintained the view that learning and beauty could not coexist in a woman. While Hays treats this view with ambivalence, Bennett has Miss Franklin embody it faithfully. Miss Franklin's beauty has gone, faded during the time she spent learning, and she is barred from the life she desires; she does not engage the affections of the young man she admires, her history is never published, and she ends the novel married unhappily to Lieutenant Downes – a licentious rake. Bennett's presentation of Miss Franklin hinges on her 'masculine' education and her aspiration to be a historian. The female historian is a figure that causes social dismay, does not adhere to the conventional female role, and ultimately is shown to be an

[65] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 179; p. 56.
[66] Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, p. 104.
[67] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, pp. 101-102.
[68] Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, ed. by Eleanor Ty (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. 23.

unsatisfied individual. Lampooning her, as Bennett's narrator does through the narration and the other characters, serves as a caution which, although portrayed comedically, is a specific warning to women not to reject stereotypical femininity.

The masculine woman was a provocative figure in the 1780s and 1790s. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft wrote that 'from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women'.[69] While Bennett's novel issues a conservative message about her, Wollstonecraft venerated this figure. She used 'masculine' as an accolade when writing about the real female historian, Catherine Macaulay Graham, and four others: Sappho, Eloisa, the Empress of Russia (Catherine the Great), and Madame d'Eon.[70] She champions women who emulate the mental masculine characteristics that she defines somewhat loosely as 'talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character'; and wishes that women 'may every day grow more and more masculine'.[71] Wollstonecraft's admiration of 'masculine' women was consistent; she praised Graham throughout Graham's career. In November 1790, Wollstonecraft reviewed Graham's *Letters on Education: with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, and commended Graham as a 'masculine and fervid writer'.[72] 'Fervid' was defined in the eighteenth century as 'vehement; eager; zealous'.[73] Thus, Wollstonecraft praised ambition. This was also voiced in a letter to Graham, in which she enclosed a copy of *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*:

> You are the only female writer who I coincide in opinion with respecting the rank our sex ought to endeavour to attain in the world. I respect Mrs Macaulay Graham because she contends for laurels whilst most of her sex only seek for flowers.[74]

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[69] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 72.
[70] Ibid., p. 149.
[71] Ibid., p. 72.
[72] M., 'Volume VIII. *November, 1790*. ARTICLE I. *Letters on Education: with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*. By Catherine Macaulay Graham', in *MWCW*, p. 309.
[73] Johnson, 'fervid, adj.', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/fervid_adj> [accessed 30 January 2022]
[74] Mary Wollstonecraft to Catherine Macaulay Graham, December 1790, qtd. in Bridget Hill, 'The links between Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay: new evidence', W*omen's History Review*, 4:2 (1995), 177-192 (p. 177) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200078>

Wollstonecraft views Graham as superior to the rest of her sex, represented by Graham's shunning of ornamental flowers in favour of the classical symbol of erudition, the laurel wreath. Graham reciprocated, writing that she was 'highly pleased that this publication [*A Vindication of the Rights of Man*] which I have so greatly admired from its pathos & sentiment should have been written by a woman and thus to see my opinion of the powers and talents of the sex in your pen so early verified'.[75] The 'masculine' woman, and the woman who appreciates the masculine woman, sees this characteristic as a sign heralding future change in the rights and roles of women.

However, there was widespread condemnation of this masculine manifestation of womanhood. One critic remarked that '[t]o discard the softer feelings, refinement of taste, and delicacy of sentiment is, we think, to be no longer women'.[76] Indeed, Wollstonecraft was criticised for being a masculine woman herself. Richard Polwhele lampooned her as 'unsex'd' and as 'despising NATURE'S law', in *The Unsex'd Females*.[77] Polwhele's diatribe has been called 'the most notorious of "rants"' by Elizabeth Johnstone.[78] It captures the era's heightened sensitivity to masculine women in the late-eighteenth century. Polwhele's response to Wollstonecraft demonstrates his concern that altering ideals of gender will undermine institutions such as marriage and motherhood, neither of which Wollstonecraft opposed, calling them a woman's 'duties'.[79]

Contemporary novelists made much of the era's interest in and the provocation caused by the masculine woman. Possibly one of the first manifestations of the masculine woman in fiction was Burney's Mrs. Selwyn in *Evelina* (1778). The masculine woman was an interesting subject for works of fiction and she featured in several other popular novels. The spinster Mrs. Murray in *Caroline* (1787)

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[75] Ibid., p. 178.

[76] '*Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, *Critical Review* 4 (1792): 389-98', qtd. in Harriet Devine Jump, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Critics, 1788-2001*, Vol. 1 (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 54.

[77] Polwhele, 'The Unsex'd Females', p. 7.

[78] Elizabeth Johnston, '"Deadly Snares": Female Rivalry, Gender Ideology, and Eighteenth-Century Women Writers', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 47:2 (2014), 1-21 (p. 7) <http://nottingham.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/deadly-snares-female-rivalry-gender-ideology/docview/1747235584/se-2?accountid=8018> [accessed 30 January 2022]

[79] Wollstonecraft, 'Dedication', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. v.

echoes Miss Franklin's masculinity in terms of her attitude; Mrs. Murray 'was a woman of a masculine mind and manners, and rendered insolent by the flatters of her relations, whom she generally treated with the greatest rudeness'.[80] Mrs. Murray's masculine mind is connected to her outward appearance; she has a 'dark beard', muddying her femininity.[81] Similarly, in *Anna Melvil* (1792), a stranger comments that '"[a]fter the eye has been shocked with the present race of masculine females, how much the more one is struck with the lovely contrast"'.[82] *Anna Melvil* observes that conventionally feminine women are far more attractive to a man, reiterating the Fordycean adage that one role of women is to physically appeal to men.[83] Such descriptions reduce women to aestheticized objects in a patriarchal society.

Some novels do not condemn masculine women, suggesting instead that there can be a degree of attractiveness in a certain amount of female masculinity. *The Foresters* (1796) praises Marienna as 'beautiful' but in a 'masculine dress, which preserved enough of the feminine to render it extremely soft and becoming'.[84] Similarly, *Ellinor* (1798) features Harriet Hawthorne who combines femaleness with masculine tendencies. Her androgyny is presented as an amalgamation of the best characteristics of both sexes and thus her female acquaintances 'concealed the envy they felt as this new rival of their charms, under a pretended disgust at her unfeminized manners, and masculine pursuits'.[85] These women feel threatened by this new, anomalous, androgynous figure. Harriet Hawthorne suggests that a less restrictive model of femaleness does not have to excise feminine attraction; it may enhance it. Whether women or society felt threatened by masculine women, the disparate but prevalent 'masculine' woman characters in contemporary writings encapsulate Romantic society's interest in and concern about shifting concepts of gender.

[80] Anne Hughes, *Caroline; or, the Diversities of Fortune* (Dublin: M. Graisberry, 1787), Vol. 2, p. 34. *ECCO.*
[81] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 59.
[82] Anon., *Anna Melvil* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1792), Vol. 1, p. 135. *ECCO.*
[83] Fordyce, *Sermons*, p. 105.
[84] Elizabeth Gunning, *The Foresters.* 2nd edn. (Dublin: William Porter, 1796), Vol. 1, p. 135. *ECCO*.
[85] Hanway, *Ellinor; or, the World As It Is*, Vol. 2, p. 123.

Wollstonecraft's manifesto and Bennett's novels intersect over their shared concern for the female sex and femininity, articulated through their mutual focus on one embodiment of the masculine woman: the female historian. Miss Franklin embodies the figure and the attacks which Wollstonecraft and Graham experienced in real life. Wollstonecraft appropriated 'masculine', perceived as a sex-specific term, and deliberately applied it to individuals of the opposite sex as an accolade, challenging conventional usage of the term. In contrast to Wollstonecraft, Bennett used 'masculine' as a pejorative. *Juvenile Indiscretions* reflects the era's concern about female behaviour that was unconventional and attaches it to the figure of the female author. Bennett's novel demonstrates a perception that femaleness, femininity, and writing a history are incompatible and unnatural.

Yet, Bennett's representations of female writer-characters are trickier and messier than a simple declamation against masculine women. Bennett crafted her female historian as a character in a novel, a form which relies on fictitiousness and shock factor to entertain. Indeed, the narrator sardonically remarks that 'she at least *entertained* the company' by her advances on Dellmore.[86] Thus, the presentation of Miss Franklin can be read as a social warning anticipatory of disruptive shifting gender dynamics in the Romantic period and as an acknowledgement that contemporary society found such figures intriguing. Although Miss Franklin is an unconventional and flawed female character, her subtle paralleling of the real-life female historian, Catherine Macaulay Graham, shows that such women are actualities and not just figments of the imagination. Therefore, while adhering to the conservative definitions of the female sex and femininity in her novel, Bennett's novel directs attention to such women nonetheless, even while criticising this figure.

[86] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, p. 177.

3.5 Eugenia Tyrold and the Female Philosopher

Eugenia Tyrold, in Frances Burney's *Camilla; or A Picture of Youth* (1796), offers a more idealistic characterisation of the female writer. Eugenia, like Miss Franklin, embodies an alternate manifestation of femininity, symbolised through her Classical knowledge and her disfigurement. These influence why she writes and what she writes about. Eugenia's writing is a means of female testimony and emancipation, but it also results in her adherence to gender conventional roles. Thus, Burney's novel provides a female writer whose trajectory is not sacrificed for comical purposes but whose writing concludes in convention. It is a careful and multidimensional presentation of a female writer whose writing challenges the patriarchal society she inhabits at the same time as her actions conform to patriarchal systems such as marriage.

Eugenia Tyrold is the younger sister of Camilla. By the age of eight, Eugenia is 'diminutive and deformed' from smallpox and a fall from a seesaw.[87] Sir Hugh Tyrold, the incompetent uncle responsible for both of her afflictions, settles his fortune on her to make amends, declaring '"as to the mere loss of beauty, pretty as it is to look at, I hope it is no such great injury, as she'll have a splendid fortune, which is certainly a better thing"'.[88] Sir Hugh's statement is at variance with Eugenia's experiences in the rest of the novel: society's expectations of women, Eugenia's significant inheritance, her preoccupation with learning, and her disfigurement render her a victim. Recently, the growing field of disability studies has resulted in Eugenia receiving some critical attention. Jason Farr and Claudia Johnson have individually identified a causal relationship between Eugenia's disfigurement, her academic preoccupations, and the fact that she has '"read no novels"', making her vulnerable and leaving her in '"worldly darkness"'.[89] Farr and Johnson interpret Eugenia as a reader of the world around her.

[87] Frances Burney, *Camilla, or, A Picture of Youth*, ed. by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian Bloom (Oxford: OUP, 1972), p. 33.
[88] Ibid., p. 33.
[89] Ibid., p. 315; Ibid., p. 301. See Jason S. Farr, 'Sharp Minds / Twisted Bodies: Intellect, Disability, and Female Education in Frances Burney's "Camilla"', *The Eighteenth Century*, 55:1 (2014), 1-17 (p. 11) and Claudia L.

Eugenia is indeed an astute reader of her society. Yet, no attention has been given to the way in which she makes peace with her disability and her traumatic experiences: writing her memoirs. Thus, this section traces Eugenia as a writer whose memoirs provide her with the agency and authority of which she had previously been robbed by her gender, her disfigurement, her education, and her fortune. Eugenia emerges as a female philosopher, akin to Mary Wollstonecraft and whose memoirs share ideas with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Yet, Eugenia's politically contentious and socially defiant memoirs are the steppingstone between her anger at her patriarchal society and her traumatic experiences and her later fulfilment of traditional female roles as she becomes a wife. While Eugenia's written empowerment is contrived (factoring in Eugenia's physicality and education), Burney's novel nevertheless emphasises that female intellect and radical writing can result in individual adherence to society's conventions.

Andrew McInnes notes that Frances Burney uses and interacts with the figure of the female philosopher in Burney's final novel *The Wanderer* (1814).[90] I propose that Burney engaged with this figure earlier on in her career in *Camilla* (1796); I consider Eugenia to be an earlier incarnation of the female philosopher. Eugenia contends that her memoirs will '"amuse my solitude, and confirm my — I hope, philosophical idea"'.[91] The label, 'philosophical idea', aggrandises the academic weight of Eugenia's observations on beauty. Eugenia's memoirs provide an alternate, increasingly personal vocalisation of Mary Wollstonecraft's strictures on beauty in *A Vindication*. Her memoir is a female testimony of her first-hand experiences of the suffering caused by society's valuation of female beauty.

In *Camilla*, Eugenia's memoirs illuminate the suffering of women who, through no fault of their own, cannot meet society's expectations yet are judged against them nonetheless. This is

Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 152.

[90] Andrew McInnes, *Wollstonecraft's Ghost: The Fate of the Female Philosopher in the Romantic Period* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 20.

[91] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 905.

achieved because of the form her writing takes: a memoir. The generic expectation of memoirs was that they provided 'an account of transactions familiarly written'.[92] They blurred the boundaries of fiction and reality. Memoirs and anecdotes implied that they drew on and transformed real life events into printed works. They made private experiences public knowledge and added a gleam of fictionality. The form became associated with scandal and notoriety, evidenced by Minerva Press titles such as *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792) and *Memoirs Of The Princess Of Zell, Consort To King George The First* (1796).[93] In *Camilla*, the form of the memoir implies that her miseries reflect women's suffering in the Romantic era. Eugenia's memoirs are extrapolated from the confines of the fiction in which they exist, becoming increasingly poignant and explicit in the commentary they provide critiquing patriarchal society's values.

Eugenia's writing style accentuates her trauma generated by her first-hand experiences of society's prejudices. Her memoirs relay these in sensationalised language, aggrandising the emotion and consequently the power behind her text. She tells readers that they 'have the story of one from whom fate has withheld all the delicacy of vanity, all the regale of cruelty—!'.[94] Her sensational passion evokes pity and anger for her plight. She suffers because of society's expectations of women and Eugenia's disfigurement and femaleness are central to her testimony. James Fordyce writes that women have 'an empire which belongs to you […] which is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction and virtuous love'.[95] Yet Eugenia's suffering has been caused unintentionally by her father and her uncle and deliberately by Clermont Lynmere, Alphonso Bellamy, and Mr. Melmond. Her father desired to protect her by keeping her ignorant of her disfigurement; her uncle decided that she may

[92] Johnson, 'memoir, n.s.', in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/memoir_ns> [accessed 30 January 2022]

[93] Kurt Edward Milberger has written about the personal scandal which informed Susannah Gunning's *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*. He argues that the Minerva Press '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'. Kurt Edward Milberger, ''The first impression, you, yourself, will buy': The Gunninghiad, Virginius and Virginia and the Art of Scandal at the Minerva Press', *Romantic Textualities*, 23 (2020), 39-59 (p. 56). DOI:10.18573/romtext.71

[94] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 905; Ibid., p. 905.

[95] Fordyce, *Sermons*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

be educated as her learnedness will attract her a husband. Yet Clermont Lynmere, the man her uncle desires to be her husband, and Melmond rejects her because Eugenia's disfigurement influences their impression of her. Another suitor, Alphonso Bellamy, sought only Eugenia's fortune, kidnapping her, and forcing her into marriage. Through her memoirs, Eugenia asks which of her readers would 'accept [her] income with [her] personal defects?'.[96] This open, direct question suggests Eugenia, and by extension Burney, envisages her memoirs as something to be engaged with and responded to. Eugenia's voice then gains courage and she challenges all men by contending that her 'concern for her deformity' can be 'traced to [their] own bosoms, and springs from [their] own tastes'.[97] Identifying men as 'lords of the creation', Eugenia directly blames men for her personal suffering.[98] Thus, her memoirs challenge society's aesthetic theory and gender conventions.

Eugenia's memoirs contrast those of another female philosopher – Mary Wollstonecraft – in their tone. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* arose out of her personal experiences but she verbalised these as an impersonal, ungendered, polemical tract. Wollstonecraft writes that her 'arguments, Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit – I plead for my sex – not for myself' and her text avoids sensational language.[99] Comparing these texts illuminates the effect of specific style choices. The sensational language renders Eugenia's argument more evocative but no less arduous than Wollstonecraft's more rational style. Eugenia arraigns the 'mighty men!' and lists why she regrets her loss of beauty.[100] It is not out of individual pride but because of the 'value you yourselves set upon external attractions' which has led her to experience 'neglect, indifference, and duplicity'.[101] Placing Eugenia's memoir at the end of *Camilla* directs the reader to concentrate on Eugenia's concluding action at the novel's denouement; it draws specific attention to one of her final acts, writing, thereby emphasising what she has to say.

[96] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 905.
[97] Ibid., p. 905.
[98] Ibid., p. 905.
[99] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 65.
[100] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 905.
[101] Ibid., p. 905.

Writing provides Eugenia with a platform that she is prohibited from elsewhere in the novel. Eugenia is often overlooked for her disability – '[t]hat Eugenia rose too was not perceived' – but her memoirs provide her with a new way of having a voice and gaining attention.[102] She can finally express herself. In this respect, Eugenia's memoir is similar to the letters written by Wollstonecraft's heroine, Maria, in her posthumously published novel, *The Wrongs of Woman; or Maria* (1798). *The Wrongs of Woman* is a narrative exposing the subjugation and silencing of women by men. Its entwining of multiple female narratives illustrates that female suffering is widespread and manifests as physical and mental anguish and is irrespective of age, class, or status. Torn from her daughter while breastfeeding her and immured in an asylum by her tyrannical husband, Maria writes letters to her daughter so that they 'might perhaps instruct her daughter, and shield her from the misery, the tyranny, her mother knew not how to avoid'.[103] Maria's letters to her daughter are a female testimony. She writes when she is prohibited from other forms of expression and she writes to fulfil her motherly role. While writing enables Maria to fulfil a socially conventional and seminal female role, Eugenia writes to express her criticism of her society. These novels reveal that writing affords women a platform and a voice, but the purposes and effects of these writings were independent to each female character.

Alongside this, Burney's novel illuminates the torment writing can cause a woman. Mrs. Mitten sees a love poem about Melmond fall from Eugenia's pocket and, '[o]verjoyed by the possession of the important secret', she shows it to Mrs. Berlinton who then shows them to Mrs. Ulst, rendering Eugenia's 'juvenile effusion of tenderness betrayed'.[104] The 'agony' Eugenia feels at this undesired intrusion means that she 'protested she would inhabit only her own apartment for the rest of her life'.[105] The three women's responses to Eugenia's poem reinforce the personal nature of

[102] Ibid., p. 656.
[103] Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* in *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. by Michelle Faubert (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012), p. 167; Ibid., p. 169; Ibid., p. 169.
[104] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 675; Ibid., p. 675.
[105] Ibid., p. 677; Ibid., p. 677.

writing and also the criticism to which it exposes the writer. Burney's novel shows that 'women need not seek publication to be subject to public censure', a conclusion drawn by Henderson of Rowson's female writer-characters.[106] The treatment of Eugenia's love poem captures the scrutiny to which published and unpublished writers are subjected. Writing becomes an object, a form of entertainment for external readers, and this enables readers to articulate judgements of the texts. Yet, Burney's novel does not provide a fictionalised reader's response to the memoirs. Only Camilla tries 'to dissuade her from reflexions so afflictive'.[107] This omission means that a reader can respond independently to Eugenia's proto-feminist observations on Romantic aesthetic theory, the value men place on 'external attractions', for example. The narrative's ambiguous response to Eugenia's memoirs suggests a muted support for them. It highlights that women writers may be subject to public censure, but that this torment is perhaps worth it as writing is therapeutic as well as agonising. Eugenia's memoirs 'aided her, she said, in her task of acquiring composure for the regulation of her future life'.[108] She determines to direct her own actions rather than being controlled by men. Once Camilla is married, Eugenia 'continued in voluntary seclusion, happily reaping the fruits of her education and her virtues, resources and reflexions for retirement, that robbed it of weariness'.[109] Readers infer that she is continuing to write her memoirs and it is by this process that she makes peace with her society and then, somewhat ironically, accepts Melmond's attentions. Their engagement and subsequent marriage are hinted at the novel's denouement: a conventional conclusion for a female character. Thus, writing, or self-expression, is a formative aspect of a woman's life and writing can result in convention. Eugenia embodies Wollstonecraft's maxim; writing means that 'freedom [has] strengthen[ed] her reason till she comprehend her duty' and she co-operates by becoming a wife.[110]

[106] Henderson, 'Windows and Writing: Susanna Rowson and the Scene of Female Authorship', p. 157.
[107] Burney, *Camilla*, p. 905.
[108] Ibid., p. 906; Ibid., p. 906.
[109] Ibid., p. 912.
[110] Wollstonecraft, 'Dedication', in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. v.

Burney's novel concludes with a portrait of a female writer which depicts a potential future harmony between a female expression and conventionality.

Thus, *Camilla* offers a contrived endorsement of female philosophical writing. In difficult circumstances, Eugenia demonstrates that writing enables female testimony and personal development. She finds vindication by expressing herself through her memoir. It is her weapon addressed to the world, calling her patriarchal society to account for the importance they place on female beauty. Eugenia is a vignette of a female writer-character who uses writing to articulate political, progressive ideologies based on personal experiences. That the close of *Camilla* shows Eugenia courted by the man she loves emphasises that female writing results in conventional happiness. Burney's novel illustrates that writing does not need to come at the sacrifice of femininity or convention.

Female writer-characters in Burney's and Bennett's novels provide contrasting reflections on the status and concept of the female author. These speak to the multiplicity of preconceptions about the female author among Romantic-era novel readers. Eugenia writes to challenge a patriarchal society. She then fulfils a conventional female role. By contrast, Bennett's writer-characters have trickier relationships with writing; her characters compound superficial, worldly, and ardent desires to be writers, but none succeed in publishing. Miss Franklin seeks to establish a legacy for herself by writing a history and Mrs. Woudbe desires to be as notorious as the most famous gothic novelist of the period. Bennett's characterisations respond to and highlight a nexus of societal prejudices about female education, gender, and writing form. They are rife with complexity and intrigue: the ideal characters for a popular novel. Bennett caricatures real-life women writers. Her narratives paradoxically mock women writers while drawing attention to the readerly demand for such gothic novels and such sensational characters. As such, Bennett's perspicacious portrayals of the popular woman writer sustain the denigrating perception of the woman writer as they confirm the Romantic reading public's

demand for the products by such women writers, ascribing a commercial value to such people and their works.

Each female writer-character analysed in this chapter is a product of and a reflection upon the wider experiences and manifestations of women writers, compromised and constrained as they were by society's expectations of women and of authorship. I read the interpolation of Bennett's failed female authors against their real-life counterparts – Radcliffe and Graham – as a means of emphasising what these women prevailed against to publish in the literary marketplace, even if they experienced negative receptions. These portraits of the female author are replete with equivocation and tension, reflecting the uncertainty over this figure and the conflicted position of the female author. This equivocating hybrid approach is the underlying connection between all the novels studied in this chapter. Looking at fictionalised female writers provides one approach to understanding the perceptions and reception of the female author. These complex characters illuminate the compromised, difficult position in which women writers found themselves and they voice some of the criticisms directed back at women writers. Some women writers were caught between normative models and conventional expectations of female authorship and between using writing as a means of self-expression and validation.

Chapter Four – Reader-Characters and the Influence of Novels

Just as the female writer was scrutinised and characterised, the female reader was examined and fictionalised. Society was concerned about the influence of novels, particularly on young and on female readers. Mary Wollstonecraft, in the *Analytical Review*, expressed the widely held view that novels mislead readers 'by confounding truth and fiction'.[1] *Arundel* will 'injure young minds', while *Historic Tales* will 'mislead young people'.[2] A consequence of this, Wollstonecraft argues, is that novels 'plunge them [readers] (by co-operating with their amusements) into that continual dissipation of thought which renders all serious employments irksome'.[3] Concentrating on female readers, Anna Barbauld wrote that 'novels' will not prepare 'a young lady for the neglect and tedium of life which she is perhaps doomed to encounter'.[4] Critics were concerned that novels made real life unpalatable and that novels would cause a deterioration in society and manners. Reflecting society's interest, many novels characterise the reader and, therefore, engage in discussion about the nature and influence of novels.

This chapter concentrates on reader-characters in novels published by the Minerva Press. It takes Joe Bray's observation that 'novels from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century invite a more complex view of women's reading' as its starting point.[5] It examines what reader-characters read and the consequences of reading. It traces the extent to which these novels capitulate to the contemporary notions that 'pernicious and frivolous novels are daily published [and these] only serve to heat and corrupt the minds of young women', that novels, in general, are 'trash', and that the reader was a 'novel-reading Miss'.[6] I argue that these writers' novels nuance their era's broad assumptions about novel reading and the novel reader. While reading novels is shown to incite strong

[1] M., 'Volume VII. *May 1790*. ARTICLE LVIII, *Historic Tales: a Novel*', in *MWCW*, p. 253.
[2] W., 'Volume III. *January 1789*. ARTICLE XVIII, *Arundel.* By the author of the Observer', in *MWCW*, p. 66; M., 'Volume VII. *May 1790*. ARTICLE LVIII, *Historic Tales: a Novel*', in *MWCW*, p. 253.
[3] T., 'Volume VII. *October 1790.* Article XLIII. *Euphemia*. By Charlotte Lennox', in *MWCW*, p. 308.
[4] Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress Of Novel-Writing', Vol. 1, para. 42.
[5] Joe Bray, *The Female Reader in the English Novel* (New York; London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.
[6] T., 'Volume VII. *October 1790.* Article XLIII. *Euphemia*. By Charlotte Lennox', in *MWCW*, p. 308; Ibid., para. 45; More, *Strictures*, p. 185.

passions and to mislead some reader-characters, other reader-characters develop emotionally and mentally as a result of their reading. Additionally, the novels illustrate a gender-balanced approach to novel reading, portraying instances where male readers are as equally as susceptible to the influence of novels as female readers. This chapter attends to the minor narratives of reading found within Minerva novels. While the novels predominantly portray reader-characters who uphold society's concerns about the influence of novels, they also contain minor narratives which rebut them. This, I argue, signals a refusal on the part of the writers to accept wholesale society's critical dismissals of the novel.

Indeed, individuals who criticised the novel in the Romantic period tempered their negative judgements and acknowledged that novel reading could be purposeful. Barbauld partially excuses reading by acknowledging it to be a form of escapism from the tedious life to which a middle-class woman is 'doomed'.[7] Wollstonecraft saw a usefulness in writing and reading novels, writing two herself: *Mary, a Fiction* (1788) and the unfinished, posthumously-published *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798). For Wollstonecraft, the novel could be a means of improving women's futures. In the preface to *The Wrongs of Woman*, she wrote that 'history ought to be considered, as of woman, than of an individual'.[8] She considered women's history through the form of the popular novel, hoping this would educate 'common readers', including women.[9] Her novel is, therefore, aligned in content with other polemical works of fiction that tackled issues of contemporary importance yet aligned in style and form with the popular novel. While the novels studied herein are not as overtly polemical or political as Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman*, serious points about literary value and influence are posited. I read the Minerva novels' multiple different narratives of the female reader as material which negotiates and proposes alternate means of approaching and valuing the genre.

[7] Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress Of Novel-Writing', para. 42.
[8] Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Author's Preface' in *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* in *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. by Michelle Faubert (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012), p. 157.
[9] Ibid., p. 159.

To close, this chapter turns to the diaries of Anna Larpent from the 1790s and traces how she approached reading novels, how novel reading fitted into her life, and her responses to what she read. Anna Larpent assisted her husband, John Larpent, in reviewing plays performed in England, writing the reviews of plays performed in Italian herself as she was fluent in Italian. In addition to being a theatre enthusiast, Larpent was an avid novel reader. She read many Minerva and non-Minerva novels in the 1790s and she recorded her views on these in her journals. The section observes that reading provided a form of escapism for her and that Larpent's diaries evidence a developing professional and autonomous approach to articulating her views on the novels she read. Finally, and sustaining the general thread from the rest of the chapter, Larpent's entries about Minerva Press novels evidence that readers react differently to different novels. As such, Larpent's novels and the presentations of the reader in the Minerva novels complement one another; they do not brand novels wholesale as injurious to readers or as pernicious and frivolous.

4.1 The Quixotic Reader in Minerva Press Novels

The quixotic reader-character was a popular and complex figure in eighteenth-century novels. As the opening of this chapter covered, the novel reader was cast as young, female, and easily influenced by Wollstonecraft, Barbauld, and More. Richard Cumberland joined this discourse, declaring that '[y]oung minds are so apt to be tinctured by that they read'.[10] Cumberland narrows the scope of his criticism, professing that '[g]irls will be tempted to form themselves upon any character, whether true or fictitious, which forcibly strike their imaginations, and nothing can be more pointedly addressed to the passions than many of these novel heroines'.[11] These characters, Cumberland states, are 'very unfit model[s] for imitation'. Recently, scholars have pushed back against this typecasting. Joe Bray recognises that the 'young female reader was frequently portrayed as passive, vulnerable and

[10] Richard Cumberland, 'REMARKS upon NOVELS, and particularly of RICHARDSON's CLARISSA', *The European Magazine and London Review* 10 (1786): 25-27 (p. 25). *British Periodicals.*
[11] Ibid., p. 25

impressionistic' but he argues that the female reader was 'active and creative' and that female characters are shown to be able to negotiate society by drawing on the novels they have read.[12] John Brewer observes that the quixote did not have to be female.[13] Scholarly interpretations of the female reader character are heterogeneous, implicitly supporting this chapter's argument about the individuality of reading and novels' influences. The novels investigated in this chapter balance conservative narratives about the dangers of reading and quixotism with narratives revealing the benefits of novels. The conservative narratives are nuanced in themselves. The two female quixotes analysed, Lavinia Orthodox and Ellen Woodville, speak both to the eighteenth-century's criticism for 'passive' readers and they refine Bray's more celebratory identification of 'active' readers. Lavinia and Ellen are reimagined quixotes because it is their agency, not their passivity, after reading novels which results in their demises. The end of the section turns to male readers, providing a more gender-balanced angle on the quixotic reader and indicating that male and female readers are equally impressionable. Thus, the quixote is a complex figure who features in conservative and progressive narratives about novel reading; an equivocal stance which invites close examination. These novels evidence the subjectivity and individuality inherent in reader responses and the influence of books. They underscore that reading is a personal and personalised experience, enabling books to be at once constructive and dangerous to a reader.

The reader-character Miss Lavinia Orthodox in Bennett's *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1787) exemplifies the Romantic period's concern that novels corrupt readers emotionally and sexually. Lavinia Orthodox's sensuality is awakened by the novels she reads. She is:

> deeply read in sentimental novels; she had read till she melted in tenderness; her heart panted for temptation; her eyes, from the time Henry left Ether [sic], had vainly roved in search of the dear engaging youth, who was to expire at her feet; those delightful stories had rendered her an adept in the theory of the soft passion.

[12] Bray, *The Female Reader,* p. 1.

[13] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 160.

> Mr. Filmer, the exciseman, began, Dellmore increased, but it was an honour reserved for Lieutenant Downes to compleat [sic] her practical knowledge.[14]

This passage emphasises that novels influenced Lavinia's behaviour and emotions significantly. Specifically, novels awakened a licentiousness in her. Reading makes Lavinia desire 'practical knowledge', physical sexual affairs, and she finds a willing accomplice in Lieutenant Downes as he had 'not the smallest compunction about ruining an innocent girl'.[15] Lavinia loses her virginity and ends up as a mistress. Moreover, giving her the surname of 'Orthodox' portrays Lavinia's trajectory to be the normal response to novels. Lavinia epitomises the dangerous influence of novels.

However, Bennett characterises Lavinia as a passive reader who becomes an active reader because of reading, meaning that female readers' agency is a moot point in this presentation of the quixote. Reading ignites a dangerous agency in Lavinia as it is she who solicits male attention. It is her eyes which 'roved' over men. Lavinia's agency is emphasised further by the comparison drawn between her and Widow Wadman in *Tristram Shandy* (1765): '[t]he eye of Lavinia caught him: it was an eye, a perfect Widow Wadman's eye'.[16] In *Tristram Shandy*, Widow Wadman pursued Uncle Toby, flirting with him by pretending she had a speck of dust in her eye. Uncle Toby falls in love with her but Widow Wadman refuses his offer of marriage due to his impotence. Lavinia also makes eyes at the lieutenant but, in contrast to *Tristram Shandy's* narrative, Lavinia and the lieutenant's relationship is consummated and he then abandons her. The narrative returns to Lavinia throughout the novel and her consistent objective is to attract a husband. She is a mistress and has a fair number of 'male visitors', as the narrator terms it.[17] Her trajectory is reminiscent of Fordyce's view that 'she who can bear to peruse them [novels] must in her soul be a prostitute'.[18] Yet Bennett's narrative draws a more complex view of the female reader. While reading novels catalysed Lavinia's salaciousness, Lavinia

[14] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 1, pp. 153-154.
[15] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 153.
[16] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 207.
[17] Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 95.
[18] Fordyce, *Sermons*, Vol. 1, p. 148.

acted on these passions. Her agency caused her ruin; a characterisation which adheres considerably to Cumberland's conservative warning that young women readers will 'form themselves' on fictional characters. Bennett's novel plays to the era's expectations and is complicit in perpetuating a denigratory impression of the novel.

Bennett designed Lavinia's trajectory to be extreme. Lavinia subverts society's image of the idealised female who was supposed to display, but not act on, 'soft attraction and virtuous love' by seeking pre-marital affairs.[19] Her character capitulates to society's beliefs about the effects of novel reading, but only to a certain extent. *Juvenile Indiscretions* adjusts the image of the female reader by portraying an active female reader rather than a passive one. Lavinia indicates that the danger of novels is in the agency they incite rather in the female reader's passivity. This is not to say that the female reader is not impressionable, but she is impressionable in a specific way. It is because she was a female who thought, who connived, who seduced, who acted, that implies reading novels was dangerous. As such, *Juvenile Indiscretions* offers an even more conservative narrative; it provides its own criticism of the female reader by focusing on female agency. It conveys the grave dangers of readers who transmute fiction into their reality and, moreover, condemns women who demonstrate such agency.

While *Juvenile Indiscretions* contains an unequivocally negative presentation of the quixotic reader, Eliza Parsons' *Ellen and Julia* (1793) provides a more ambiguous presentation of the influence of novels and of the quixote's fate. The sisters, Ellen and Julia Woodville, each embody dramatically polarised responses to reading. Ellen is impressionable, while Julia is impervious. Parsons draws an equivocal relationship between reading, youth, femininity, and susceptibility by providing two trajectories for the fictional female reader. This balanced presentation can be read as a reaction against literary society's generalised dismissal of the novel; Parsons highlights the individuality of reader responses to novels.

[19] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 10.

Ellen and Julia is a coming-of-age story. Ellen and Julia Woodville encounter Mary Danvers while on a walk and they romanticise her as 'the lady in the rock'.[20] Mary Danvers hands them a bundle of letters and then dies. The sisters read her letters, which comprise a warning about improper female behaviour. The novel then follows the sisters as they enter society; like Lavinia, Ellen is eighteen, sentimental, and impulsive. She absconds to France with Lord A- who initially refuses to marry her. Julia is one year younger and is too ashamed of her sister's behaviour to consider courtship herself. The novel closes with Ellen's marriage to the rakish Lord A-. Julia acknowledges that she can now court as Ellen's infamy has abated since Ellen's marriage partially absolved her previous actions.

Each sister's behaviour is firmly associated with what they read, signifying that their different approaches to reading are crucial to their different trajectories. Ellen's behaviour and expectations of love and marriage are influenced by novels. The narrator forebodingly remarks that this was a

> fatal indulgence, as it proved to one of them, whose mind naturally proud and romantic, too eagerly adopted the sentiments of the different heroines, and conceived the highest disgust at her own situation, which secluded her from such delightful adventures as the world afforded to young women, handsome like herself.[21]

Ellen imposes scenes from fiction onto her own life. She embodies, to an extent, Barbauld's observation that female readers turn to fiction to add interest to their own dull lives. Ellen is also comparable to Mary Hays' Emma Courtney. Emma reads ten to fourteen novels a week and 'acted over what [she] had read'.[22] Ellen and Emma use fiction to inform their own lives and the narratives connect their consequent emotional anguishes to their reading. Julia is Ellen's antithesis when it comes to reading and behaviour because 'she selected such books only as could improve, and admired no character, but such as placed virtue in its most amiable light, and was equally free from the

[20] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia*, Vol. 1, p. 57.
[21] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 43.
[22] Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 15.

absurdities of romance, or the pernicious follies delineated in modern Novels'.[23] The books selected by each sister represent the differences in their characters. Julia does not read novels or romances, but she is aware of their contents: 'absurdities' and 'follies'. Julia's view of novels aligns with that of the narrator, who declares novels and romances to be '[d]angerous study for young minds without proper selection!'[24] Julia is an astute and knowing reader, hence her vastly different selection of reading material and different trajectory to her sister, Ellen.

By focusing on the significance of names, *Ellen and Julia* directs attention to reader autonomy and the extent which an individual's actions are predetermined or caused by free will. Ellen is of the opinion that her life's trajectory is both set and caused by her own '"horrid"' name; '"[t]here is nothing I think so provoking as my own horrid name; because I was the eldest I must be called Ellen forsooth, […]. O how I envy you, for being christened Julia"'.[25] Ellen aspires to be like '"Cassandra, Artemisia, or the Charlottes, Louisas, and Matildas"'.[26] She believes that a more romantic name will lead to a more romantic life. Ellen is convinced that Mary Danvers will have 'some charming romantic name' because she is a mysterious lady in a rock, declaring that otherwise 'I would not give myself the trouble to hear her story'.[27] Mary Danvers' trajectory is sentimental, gothic, and emotive and thus, Ellen believes, deserves a sufficiently dramatic name. That Mary is a comparatively simpler name compared to the sentimental names which Ellen lists underscores that a name does not unequivocally result in a specific trajectory and that Mary is rather foolish for making this assumption.

Ellen and Julia complicates the relationship between names and their bearing on one's future further. Rather than defining herself independently, Ellen defines herself in relation to the heroines of whom she has read. *Ellen and Julia* implies that this can happen to any reader of novels. Ellen speaks of '"Charlottes, Louisas, and Matildas"' and these names echo the names of eponymous heroines of

[23] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia*, Vol. 1, p. 45.
[24] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 44.
[25] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 56-57.
[26] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 56.
[27] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 57.

novels published between 1775 and 1792.[28] Similarly, Rosella in Mary Charlton's *Rosella* (1799) recalls 'the Ethelindas, the Jemimas, the Fredericas, and the Georgianas'.[29] This list of names also contains those of heroines in contemporary novels.[30] Due to the explicit metafiction within *Ellen and Julia* and *Rosella* – the female characters in both novels self-consciously refer to themselves as a 'heroine' – I read each of these lists referring to heroines in real, printed eighteenth-century novels.[31] The distinction between fiction and reality is blurred by heroines in Minerva novels mentioning the heroines of other eighteenth-century novels. These sentimental names connote a certain set of expectations; they will have dramatic and emotional narratives. The double layer of fiction in *Ellen and Julia* and *Rosella* collapses the boundaries between fiction and reality and between actuality and perception. It reduces the distance between the real reader and the fictional quixotic heroine, Ellen, and highlights that a real reader may be similarly influenced by the novels she reads.

Ellen's belief that a specific name leads to a specific life trajectory is realised through her jealousy of her sister's name, Julia, but the narrative reveals Ellen's theory to be flawed. Julia's name alludes to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's titular heroine in *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Rousseau's novel follows Julie as she manages her love for St Preux alongside conducting herself according to her father's wishes. She marries Wolmar at her father's request but her heart remains St. Preux's. Julie conducts herself with propriety and self-restraint as she dedicates her life to the education of her children. She performs the ultimate act of motherly love by sacrificing herself for her child, dying after saving one of her sons from drowning. Parsons' Julia also demonstrates severe self-restraint as she

[28] Mrs. Farrell, *Charlotte, or a sequel to the Sorrows of Werter* (Bath: Printed and sold for the author, 1792). *ECCO*; Elizabeth Helme, *Louisa; or the Cottage on the Moor* (London: G. Kearsley, 1787). *ECCO*; Thomas Francklin, *Matilda* (London: T. Cadell, 1775). *ECCO.*

[29] Mary Charlton, *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (London: Minerva-Press, for William Lane, 1799), Vol. 1, p. 125. Boston, Houghton Library.

[30] Charlotte Smith, *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake* (London: T Cadell, 1789). *ECCO*; [Anne Hughes], *Jemima* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1795). *ECCO*; Anon., *Frederica: or the Memoirs of a Young Lady* (Dublin: P. Wogan, 1792). *ECCO*. There are two novels entitled '*Georgina*' but not 'Georgiana'. They are: Georgina Bouverie, *Georgina: or Memoirs of the Belmore Family* (London: Printed for the Author; and sold by R. Baldwin, 1787). *ECCO* and Ann Howell, *Georgina* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1795). *ECCO*.

[31] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia*, Vol. 1, p. 190 and Charlton, *Rosella*, Vol. 1, p. 75.

shuns any form of courtship until the very end of the novel. Ellen's jealousy of her sister's name becomes ironic as it is clear that Ellen has not fully understood Rousseau's novel. Rousseau's text portrays the model of female perfection to be a selfless and self-restrained woman. Ellen, by contrast, sees that her sister Julia has the name of a heroine and is jealous, given the significance she attaches to a name and the life she believes will consequently follow. Ellen believes that to have the name of the heroine means one has a life of a heroine. However, the astute reader realises this assumed causal relationship is complex and flawed: a name does not necessarily result in a specific trajectory.

Ellen becomes a heroine to spite her 'horrid' name, revealing her agency has equal bearing as her name. Acting in ways comparable to Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) Ellen acts deliberately to lead the life of a heroine. She is determined to play the part of the heroine: she agrees to meet Lord A- in the grounds of the house every night and is therefore 'now, in her own opinion, the heroine of a novel - a man of rank and fortune was her lover, her mother was inimical to her wishes, she had a pert sentimental Miss of a sister, who read her lectures, she was engaged in a delightful intimacy with Lord A-'.[32] Ellen is the author of her own story as she poses as her own heroine, bestowing a fleeting agency upon herself as she assumes this role. Thus, Parsons' novel demonstrates that a character's fate is not predetermined by their name, but that a name may be an impetus for their actions. Two Julias can have completely different trajectories, but it is one's perception of a name and consequent actions which are more significant.

Alongside this conservative narrative, Parsons' novel reveals an irony inherent in quixotism. Ellen is abandoned by her lover and is shocked as '[s]he could not recall anything like this scene in any of her favorite [sic] novels'.[33] The irony is that novels are replete with similar scenes of abandonment by lovers. Wollstonecraft's Maria is abandoned by Darnford (suggested by Wollstonecraft's fragmentary notes); Delamere leaves Emmeline in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788); Montraville abandons the pregnant Charlotte in Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte, a Tale of Truth* (1791). Parsons

[32] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 190.
[33] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 221.

emphasises and satirises Ellen's lack of judgement through the naive tone of the free indirect discourse, using the third-person narrator to articulate the rational perspective criticising her quixotism. *Ellen and Julia* explores the onomastics of a heroine's name; it upholds the view that an individual can have shared characteristics with a character whose name they share, demonstrated through Julia and Rousseau's Julie, but that a name is of secondary importance to individual will. Ellen's reaction to her unromantic name made her behave in an artificial way and an Ellen, a Mary, or a Julia can have a sentimental trajectory of a heroine.

The significance of a name is a theme explored in other Minerva and non-Minerva novels. Equating a sentimental name with a romantic life is a truism evident in Charlton's *Rosella* (1799) where the quixote Selina is not called Selina at all. Her name is 'Sarah Swinney (for alas! Selina was merely an embellishment)'.[34] Sarah alters her name, her identity, and consequently decides to enact the part of a heroine. Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) also touches upon the significance of names. Clarence Hervey changes Rachel's name to Virginia when she comes to live under his protection, taking the name of Virginia from Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788). Virginia is aware that her identity is predicated on a work of fiction: '…St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*. She knew, that her own name had been taken from this romance; Mr. Hervey had her picture painted in this character'.[35] Hervey imposes a specific identity onto Virginia through this name change. He tries to mould Rachel into a Virginia, using the name to evoke the innocence and love found in *Paul and Virginia* (1788) for Hervey's own desired relationship with Rachel/Virginia. However, giving a woman or a character a sentimental name does not result in the heroinism Hervey expects. He does not marry Virginia, in spite of his attempted manipulations of her identity.

Giving a heroine a plainer name could be a stand against the sentimentality of heroines' names and the reader's expectations that they would lead emotional and exciting lives. In the preface to *Mary, a Fiction* (1788), Wollstonecraft wrote that '[i]n delineating the Heroine of this Fiction, the

[34] Charlton, *Rosella,* Vol. 1, pp. 99-100.
[35] Edgeworth, *Belinda,* Vol. 3, p. 132.

Author attempts to develop a character different from those generally portrayed. This woman is neither a Clarissa, a Lady G---, nor a Sophie. – It would be vain to mention the various modifications of these models'.[36] By calling her heroine 'Mary', Wollstonecraft aims to evade the sentimentalist discourses and expectations associated with such names and their models. The plainer name is chosen to distance her heroine from the extreme fancifulness of these heroines' stories. In so doing, Wollstonecraft underscores that her work has a serious purpose, contrary to the fanciful tale of contemporary novels. This reading is further supported by the fact that the name of Wollstonecraft's first heroine was autobiographical. The irony remains that Mary is still a heroine of a novel, but her name is used to disassociate her from the sensibilities expected of and attached to a Clarissa or a Sophie. In *Ellen and Julia*, the sisters' mother, Mrs. Woodville, reprimands Ellen over her fixation on names; '"I cannot bear to hear you talk so absurdly, some of the first rank in this kingdom are Marys, Bettys, Susans, Dorothys. […] [T]hose books are the works of fancy, that the names, incidents, and uncommon adventures, have no existence but in the writer's brain"'.[37] Mrs. Woodville cites the same name as that which entitles Wollstonecraft's novel and she suggests that it is better to have a plain name than any other. *Ellen and Julia* reveals that a female character of any name can be a quixote; it is individual choice that results in the path one takes. In a way, Parsons' narrative therefore champions women's ability to determine their own futures, but aligns this also with a warning about what choices one makes.

By portraying three novel readers, *Ellen and Julia* complicates the equivalence between having a romantic name and leading a romantic life and suggests a female novel reader can make good choices. *Ellen and Julia* provides a third manifestation of the female reader through Mrs. Woodville. Mrs. Woodville is neither the ill-fated quixote nor the pious reader who shuns novels; she is a rather progressive blend. As a young woman, Mrs. Woodville had read 'many old Romances, as well as a few

[36] Wollstonecraft, 'Advertisement', in *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, p. 75.
[37] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia*, Vol. 1, pp. 69-70.

modern Novels, equally romantic and improbable; she delighted much in this kind of reading'.[38] Yet, she is not ruined, like Lavinia, or misled, like her own daughter Ellen. Parsons' narrator reveals that 'when she grew older her good sense taught her to distinguish properly between such trifling productions and the most useful knowledge gained from the Belles Lettres, yet still as an amusement for an idle hour she frequently resorted to those books for entertainment'.[39] Mrs. Woodville has the best of both worlds; she is the ideal female reader. She indulged as a young reader but this did not cause her ruin. She is a wife and a mother and raises two daughters who do eventually mature to assume their conventional roles in society. Mrs. Woodville articulates a model style of reading novels; to indulge in them and enjoy them, but not to take these books to heart. The perspective Mrs. Woodville's character provides into novel reading can be easily missed. It is mentioned briefly in passing and her character does not feature at length in the narrative. Parsons mediates the presence of the ideal female reader. Mrs. Woodville is a minor character, while Ellen is the female protagonist. The novel concentrates on Ellen and how her actions result in her ruin.

Overall, Parsons' presentation of reading is equivocal; the novel is a cautionary tale, but it shows that being a quixote does not cause irreparable damage due to the three trajectories shown for the female reader. Ellen closes the novel married to the man that she desired, a conventional ending, yet the newlyweds do not return to England for three years due to their shame and they are only as 'happy as persons conscious of their errors could be'.[40] Additionally, 'her only satisfaction was that she had no children, who could plead bad example for their faults'.[41] Motherhood is presented as the price she must pay for her quixotism. However, the conservative narrative present in Ellen's fate is mediated by that of Julia and Mrs. Woodville. Parsons' novel therefore refuses a wholesale dismissal of reading novels by presenting narratives of readers who are not endangered by what they read, but the endorsement of reading communicated through Mrs. Woodville is shrouded by the

[38] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 43.
[39] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 44.
[40] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 297.
[41] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 297-8.

larger narrative of her quixotic daughter Ellen. Parsons avoids highlighting the progressive element in her narrative, suggestive that Ellen's conventional quixotism would make for a "better" novel.

Lavinia and Ellen sought to map fictional escapades onto their own lives, and consequently each led a limited and restricted life. Other heroines in the Minerva Press corpus endure similar trajectories. Augusta Matilda in Eliza Parson's *Voluntary Exile* (1795) reads novels and then elopes. Anna Maria Bennett's Catherine Meredith in *Ellen* (1794) leads a limited life because she spends all her time reading and trying to align real people with the fictional characters of whom she has read. Thus, some female quixotic characters in Minerva Press novels perpetuate novels' negative reputation. Characters are misled emotionally and sexually due to the material they read and their desire to model their own lives on it. Parsons' and Bennett's novels demonstrate the problems inherent in conducting one's life as a mimesis of fiction. Yet, Parsons equivocates upon whether reading causes permanent, irrecoverable injuries. Ellen is a wife (although childless) by the end of *Ellen and Julia*. Mrs. Woodville was and still is a reader of novels, but she is now of a discerning taste as an adult. Additionally, the exploration of the significance of names in *Ellen and Julia* and other contemporary novels demonstrates that anyone can read novels and style themselves a heroine, but it is what one does with reading that matters just as much as what one reads. Thus, there is a tension between the significances individuals bestow on names in novels published in at the end of the eighteenth century, meaning that the character and fate of the novel reader is an open debate.

The Minerva novels studied thus far depict female quixotic readers, yet some books also portray male readers. John Brewer has commented that the quixotic female reader was the 'epitome of the misguided reading public' but also 'a fiction. To judge from all we know about eighteenth-century readers – diaries, membership lists from circulating libraries and so on – the flighty novel-reader was just as likely to be male as female'.[42] While the real reader was just as likely to be male as female, this is not reflected in contemporary novels or reviews. To close this section, I briefly turn to

[42] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 160.

two male readers in novels published by the Minerva Press and compare their presentation with that of the female reader. Male readers make brief appearances; it is because of this fleeting presence that they contribute information about how the novel and reader were perceived and represented in the late-eighteenth century.

There are few examples of the 'flighty' male reader in novels on the Minerva Press 1798 Prospectus. In Agnes Musgrave's *Edmund of the Forest* (1797), the titular protagonist falls in love with his cousin, Isabel. Edmund runs away from his home and is enlisted by the Lancastrian side in the War of the Roses. He is forced to flee on numerous occasions, conceal his true identity, and travel the length of England and Scotland due to the Yorkists' victory. During his time away he recalls his love for Isabel. This is so overpowering that:

> to avoid reflexions which pained him so deeply, he took up a book, which Sir James had left for his amusement, and endeavoured to fix his attention; as he proceeded to read, he felt most deeply interested in the wonderful tale, which was calculated to fill the mind with romantic and gloomy ideas.[43]

Edmund is not a flighty reader. Rather, he turns to reading to settle his mind in a moment of emotional anguish. Edmund's characterisation connects reading novels with emotional comfort. By contrast, reading evokes severe, nearly fatal emotions in Henry Dellmore in *Juvenile Indiscretions*. Dellmore is desperate to return to his love, Clara, and make amends for his wayward, Tom Jones-like behaviour. Dellmore is on a ship and the captain, seeing his distress, somewhat unwisely hands him a book about unrequited love: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). Reading it causes Dellmore to attempt suicide; Dellmore, 'with Werter [sic] in his bosom, […] plunged into the sea'.[44] Dellmore is rescued by the Chaplain. The *Sorrows of Werther* is shown to act as an emotional guide in other novels of the period. Mary Shelley's Creature in *Frankenstein* feels his isolation and

[43] Agnes Musgrave, *Edmund of the Forest* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1797), Vol. 2, p. 96. *ECCO.*

[44] Bennett, *Juvenile Indiscretions*, Vol. 4, p. 194.

difference to the rest of the human race acutely after reading *Sorrows*; 'I learned from Werter's [sic] imaginations despondency and gloom'.[45] Luckily, the Creature's despair is mediated by reading *Plutarch's Lives* but it is then increased again by reading Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The Creature consequently feels 'Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition'.[46] Shelley's and Bennett's novels illustrate the profound effect reading can have. Bennett's novel defines this in relation to a male reader, rather than a Creature, and thus her novel offers a glimpse of a gender-balanced vision of reading. Certainly, with Lavinia and with Dellmore, the effect of reading is both negative and acute. However, the fact that both a male reader and a female reader are susceptible to the influences of a novel deflects criticism solely of the female reader, but the injurious effect of reading remains evident. These male readers are not flighty quixotes, but they are rare. Some novels feature male reader characters – Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, Clarence Hervey in *Belinda*, Henry Darnford in *The Wrongs of Woman* – but the significance of their reading is defined in terms of the effect it had on female characters; Clarence Hervey re-christened Rachel as Virginia and Henry Darnford strengthened his relationship with Maria through sharing books to read. Edmunds's and Dellmore's brief interactions with novels suggest that reading is portrayed predominantly as a female activity, but the Minerva novels maintain that this activity wields a range of influences.

While Brewer's 'flighty' male reader is predominantly absent from Minerva Press publications, the Minerva novels provide a counterpoint to the review periodicals and literary critics of the day who solely focused on the effect of reading on female readers. They challenge the era's belief that women were more susceptible to the influences of fiction than men. They suggest that reader agency is paramount and not the sex of the reader. Of the male quixote in Mrs. F. C. Patrick's novel, *More Ghosts!* (1798), Mercy Cannon argues that Tom's 'gothic-fuelled suspicions lead him into hapless, comic misadventures'.[47] Cannon proposes that '[b]y reversing gender roles, Patrick mocks not only the

[45] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 128.
[46] Ibid., p. 129.
[47] Mercy Cannon, 'On the Edges of Gothic Parody: The Neglected Work of Mrs F.C. Patrick and Sarah Green', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 32:4, (2020), 579-598 (p. 579) <https://muse-jhu-edu.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/article/758903> [accessed 30 January 2022]

established relationship between women and romance but also the pervasive association of women's reading with sexual vulnerability'.[48] However, considering Tom alongside Henry, Edmund, Lavinia, Ellen, and Augusta underscores the wide range of influences reading may have on men and women. Minerva Press novels both adhere to and subvert widespread notions about novel reading; they portray the dangers of quixotism, but they underscore that it is agency and action of female and male readers which are the most damaging. In a way, the passive female or male reader of novels is a better model reader; Mrs. Woodville read novels but does not react to them. Her propriety lies in their passivity.

Minerva novels depict conflicting and diverse representations of the quixotic reader, yet they do not liberate the novel from its reputation as injurious and misleading. Parsons', Bennett's, and Musgrave's novels offer an alternative view to Jodi Wyett's conclusion that there was a 'burden that women writers in particular felt to absolve such reading from charges that it precluded any serious reflection'.[49] These Minerva novels indicate that men and women may be influenced equally by the novel and that differing responses to the popular and sentimental novel are possible. *Ellen and Julia* encapsulates this most succinctly. Parsons' triadic positioning of the sisters and their mother illustrates that there is never a single reader nor a singular response to reading. Indeed, Hannah Doherty Hudson argues that novels are a 'reminder that individuals are always fundamentally alone in their emotional experience'.[50] Abigail Williams draws a similar conclusion: 'novels themselves told stories that emphasised individuality'.[51] These Minerva novels never doubt the influence reading has over one's emotions and behaviour; fictional readers come close to destruction and death, but they are redeemed to an extent and all have different trajectories. These novels cannot be read at face-value.

[48] Ibid., p. 586.
[49] Jodi Wyett, 'Female Quixotism Refashioned: "Northanger Abbey", the Engaged Reader, and the Woman Writer', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56:2 (2015), 261-276 (p. 273).
[50] Hannah Doherty Hudson, ''Sentiment and the Gothic: Failures of Emotion in the Novels of Mrs Radcliffe and the Minerva Press', in *The Sentimental Novel in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Albert J. Rivero (Cambridge: CUP, 2019), pp. 155-172 (p. 169).
[51] Williams, *The Social Life of Books*, p. 250.

Their subtexts and minor characters suggest counter-narratives which destabilise Cumberland's, More's, and Wollstonecraft's homogenising views of the injurious nature of novels.

4.2 Weaponised Books and Defending Oneself

The previous section discussed the influence of books on readers. This section turns to instances where a reader knowingly uses the influence of a book on another reader. These exceptions do not comprise of unequivocal defence of novels, but they complicate the criticism directed at the novel by reimaging the influence a novel can have and by concentrating on who selects what to read and why. This section focuses on Eliza Parsons' *Lucy* (1794) where one of the male characters, O'Farrel, uses books in his attempt to seduce the eponymous heroine. Parsons' narrative engages with the notion that books are influential but focuses on the responsibility of selecting reading material. The narrative channels attention to a male reader's malicious use of books.

Lucy engages critically with the method of reading. It provides a different perspective to scholars' consensus that shared reading practices were encouraged in the eighteenth century because they prevented readers from imbibing misleading morals.[52] In *Lucy*, the heroine's wider reading, undertaken privately, protects her from O'Farrel's advances. As such, the novel illustrates the importance of reading in private and for personal reasons, and the right to have an individual reader response is made clear.

In *Lucy*, the action proceeds from the assumption that books, not just novels, can mislead readers. Lucy is an orphan who lives alone after the deaths of her guardians, Nelly and Dermont. She gets caught in a storm and is taken to Castle Foyle with a high fever where she meets the occupants, Mr. O'Farrel and his mother. O'Farrel wishes to seduce Lucy. He begins to take 'little liberties' with Lucy as she recovers.[53] These are kisses, but the vagueness of the metaphoric language allows the

[52] Abigail Williams observes that 'it is partly because of the contemporary perception that novel reading was a dangerous solitary activity, especially amongst young women, that communal reading was encouraged in families and domestic environments', in *The Social Life of Books* (2017), p. 206.
[53] Eliza Parsons, *Lucy* (London: William Lane, at the Minerva Press, 1794), Vol. 1, p. 205. *ECCO*.

reader to imagine more serious liberties. His dishonourable intentions are clear and the narrator presents him as a conniving and malicious man. This is represented by his relationship with books. Lucy shuns his advances and consequently O'Farrel resolves 'to sap the foundation of her virtue by books […]. In pursuance of this plan he selected a few books that might aid his design, and was more tender and attentive to her than ever'.[54] O'Farrel embodies a nuanced version contemporary Romantic society's view that books, not only novels, were emotionally misleading and, knowing this, he wants to use this influence to seduce Lucy. O'Farrel is a discerning male reader who, in his capacity as such, presents a more severe threat to Lucy; he judges which books may assist his base designs.

By focusing on the selection of books, Parsons' novel addresses society's concern about one's reading choices. Critics understood the importance of selecting which books to read; Wollstonecraft argued that '[r]eading is the most rational employment […]. Judicious books enlarge the mind and improve the heart'.[55] Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* embodies Wollstonecraft's view; he refused to read the text from a circulating library and chose Fordyce's *Sermons* instead due to the 'benefit' this particular book will have on his female audience.[56] Richard Cumberland highlighted the responsibility that came with selecting books to read, writing that 'it is the duty of every person, who has the charge of education, to make a proper choice of books'.[57] Cumberland placed the responsibility of selecting books to read onto the educator or mentor, not onto the intended reader. Mr Collins took this role very seriously in *Pride and Prejudice*. In marked contrast, O'Farrel in *Lucy* uses books deliberately to 'sap' Lucy's 'virtue'. *Lucy* allows readers a glimpse into an occasion when a person abuses the responsibility of selecting reading materials. Thus, the narrative of *Lucy* implicitly calls for an element of reader independence and autonomy in the selection of which books to read. Otherwise, a naïve

[54] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 239-240.

[55] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more Important Duties of Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), p. 49. *ECCO*.

[56] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 2014), p. 74.

[57] Richard Cumberland, 'REMARKS upon NOVELS, and particularly of RICHARDSON's CLARISSA', *The European Magazine and London Review*, 10 (1786), 25-27 (p. 25). *British Periodicals.*

reader is at the mercy of whomever suggests the reading material. It is merely swapping one form of influence and impressionability for another.

I would like to draw attention to the terminology used by the writers when discussing the influence of reading. Parsons, Wollstonecraft, and Cumberland each used the vaguer term of 'books' in their criticisms, notwithstanding that Wollstonecraft did also discuss the influence of novels specifically. Wollstonecraft and Cumberland do not preclude novels from being 'judicious' or part of one's 'education'. The character O'Farrel used 'books', not specifically novels, to try and mislead Lucy. The vagueness of the language reveals that it was not just novels which ought to have a reputation for injuring their readers; most texts could mislead readers if used unwisely. Conversely, novels could also educate individuals. Broadening this term deflects attention away from the novel and distances the association of novels with being bad influences.

John Willoughby in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) provides a more well-known example of the rakish male character misleading a woman romantically through books. Willoughby strengthens his affinity with Marianne by telling her he liked the same texts as her and that he shares her opinions. Marianne discovers that 'their taste was strikingly alike' as the 'same books, the same passages were idolized by each'.[58] Their opinions match too well to be coincidence. This leads scholars such as Elspeth Knights to write that '[t]o discuss books is to become intimate, an aspect of courtship or social intercourse which […] misleads Marianne'.[59] It is important to note, as Knights later does, that Austen represents that books can also provide genuine foundations for relationships, as in the case of Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*. Similarly, in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) Rushbrook and Matilda establish their relationship on reading and books. Yet *Sense and Sensibility* reveals the negative potential of books. Books enable Willoughby to mislead Marianne. The narrator quips sardonically that 'any young man of five and twenty must have been

[58] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. by Edward Copeland (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 56; Ibid., p. 56.
[59] Elspeth Knights, ''The Library, of course, afforded everything': Jane Austen's Representation of Woman Readers', *English: The Journal of the English Association*, 50 (2001), 19-38 (p. 20).

insensible indeed, not to become an immediate convert to the excellence of such works, however disregarded before'.[60] Willoughby is astute enough to engage in a performance calculated to please Marianne. The Dashwoods are unaware of the superficiality of his performance. Despite Elinor's usually careful nature and Marianne's wide reading of Cowper and Scott, neither sister can recognise a rake when they meet one. Willoughby ultimately abandons Marianne. Austen's novel affirms the potential of books to mislead impressionable female readers and that some raffish male characters have a proclivity to use books for their own dishonourable purposes.

Yet the Minerva Press character Lucy, unlike Marianne, is wise to O'Farrel's intentions. She is perceptive due to her own independent wide reading:

> Lucy, whose mind had long been dissatisfied at the state of obligation she lived in, whose ideas grew more expanded, and who had understanding enough to discriminate in what she read, so as to improve without being affected by improper images or delusive sophistry.[61]

Lucy, like Parsons' Julia, is immune to the scenes of impropriety contained in novels. She is a discerning reader of books, but she is also a discerning reader of people. She is therefore wiser than O'Farrel in judging people's characters. Lucy turns to books to enrich her mind. She understands why O'Farrel gave her books containing 'improper images'. Furthermore, the novel illustrates that Lucy learns from what she has read. One night at the castle, she sees a letter from a female servant who is complicit in O'Farrel's designs. The narrator observes that '[n]ot one of her books had afforded any information or knowledge of women so dreadfully profligate as to ensnare their own sex, and assist the base designs of men against honour and innocence'.[62] Lucy turns to what she has read to try and contextualise the actions of this female servant who is complicit in O'Farrel's advances. Lucy has never seen such a woman in her fictions, and this results in her increased determination to escape. It is Lucy's

[60] Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 56.
[61] Parsons, *Lucy*, Vol. 1, pp. 240-241.
[62] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 243.

independent reading which is the most useful to her in moments of crisis; O'Farrel's advances fail because Lucy's autonomous disposition, cultivated by reading alone, overrides the shared reading O'Farrel encourages. As such, Lucy embodies Wollstonecraft's maxim that the 'highest branch of solitary amusement is reading'.[63] It is by reading alone that Lucy manages to discern and evade O'Farrel's immoral intentions. It shows that Lucy's prior reading was judiciously selected – to borrow Wollstonecraft's words – rather than immaterial entertainment. Lucy's reading provides her with mental perceptiveness and literal physical freedom. The presentation of a discerning female reader within a work of fiction counters the prevailing reputation of the female reader as naïve and impressionable. Lucy cultivates knowledge through reading. *Lucy* demonstrates that the selection of what to read ought to lie with the reader as, in this case, it was the enforced reading which posed a threat to Lucy's character.

Lucy is comparable to Mary Hays' Emma Courtney; they are both astute readers, but in different ways. While Lucy maintains her independent reading and exercises her independent judgement, Emma Courtney constructs herself as an impressionable female reader to maintain contact with the man she loves, Augustus Harley. When Harley breaks contact with her, Emma asks him if he will 'no more point out to me the books I should read, and aid me in forming a just judgment of the principles they contain'.[64] She positions him as her guard protecting her from imbibing any immorality from reading. Elizabeth Neiman reads Emma as a 'mediating subjectivity' between readers and the novel's plot.[65] is a discerning reader of the reputation of reading who chooses to project herself as the conventional, impressionable female reader society expects. Emma does this for her son reasons: to attempt to maintain her connection to Augustus Harley. This reveals her to be shrewd and calculating as she knowingly uses the era's view that reading was injurious to spur Harley into replying to her letters. However, while Emma performs the role of the impressionable reader deliberately, she

[63] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1788), pp. 106-107. *ECCO.*
[64] Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 97.
[65] Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, p. 81.

is also the romantic quixotic reader desperately pursuing the man she loves. She is a hybrid character illustrating the complex uses and effects of reading. Parsons' Lucy evades the malicious designs of O'Farrel and protects her virtue through reading. Both characters use insights gained from reading, but to contrary purposes, resulting in complex and somewhat contrived narratives about the influence of books.

These first two sections have explored the influence of books, the selection of books, and how books are read. Complex and equivocal presentations of the reader, and of the influence of reading, permeate novels of the 1790s. These presentations indicate that reading was a conspicuously fashionable topic for 1790s popular novels and, moreover, that the reputation of reading was widely debated but that a general consensus about the influence of books did not exist within the novels. Books are presented to be influential though not always injuriously so. Male and female readers are shown to be influenced, yet society's specific concern for the female reader and specifically for the novel seems predominant. Additionally, the Minerva novels indicate that why and how one reads is as important as what one reads. Reading autonomously can be advantageous. The next section develops the focus on why and how one read by focusing on the journals of a real eighteenth century reader.

4.3 Anna Larpent's Critical Reading of Minerva Press Novels

Thus far, this chapter has investigated fictional readers in Minerva and non-Minerva novels. It demonstrates that Minerva novels contain many conservative narratives warning of the ill effects of reading. It has also argued that Minerva novels deflected the common criticisms directed at the novel by showing that quixotic heroines were redeemable, that shared reading did not counteract the potential pernicious influence of reading, and that readers became readers of people and society by reading books. This chapter concludes by turning to a real reader of Minerva Press novels, Anna Larpent, and the first and second volumes of her diaries, spanning 1790 until 1798. Previous studies of Larpent's diaries concentrate on the information they provide about how she constructs herself as

a reader through them. Claire Colombo has viewed Larpent's diarising as a means of public performance, arguing that her diaries demonstrate 'an awareness of an audience for whom both her text and her self must be fashioned'.[66] Colombo attaches the word 'censorship' to Larpent's self-awareness but concludes that there are 'subversive subtexts' present in the journals.[67] John Brewer posits that this self-censorship was because Larpent was aware of society's perception of the 'frivolous female reader', which he believes Larpent wished to avoid by being a 'bold and stringent critic'.[68] Scholars use Larpent's journals as evidence that she was an active and critical reader, who read novels both for pleasure and for moral and emotional 'edification'.[69] In this section, I focus on Larpent's reading of Minerva novels, an area not previously explored, and highlight the individuality present in her responses to these novels. This section uses Larpent's diaries, in which she records which Minerva novels she read, when she read them, and her summaries and opinions of them, to shed light on the functional and educational role novels played in her life. Larpent's considered summaries of Minerva novels and her independent judgements of them suggest an approach to reading which centres the individuality of the reader's response rather than societal prejudices.

Anna Margaretta Larpent (1758-1832), née Porter, married John Larpent in 1782 and had two sons with him. She attended to their sons' schooling and welfare, and to that of her stepson, Francis. Larpent's diaries attest that she took her roles as wife and mother very seriously. On Thursday 15 August 1793, she records that she 'spent all the morning instructing the Boys as usual'.[70] These studies

[66] Claire Miller Colombo, '"This Pen of Mine Will Say Too Much": Public Performance in the Journals of Anna Larpent', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 38:3-4, (1996), 285-301 (p. 286) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40755104> [accessed 30 January 2022]

[67] Ibid., p. 286; Ibid., p. 298.

[68] John Brewer, 'Reconstructing the reader: prescriptions, texts and strategies in Anna Larpent's reading', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 226-245 (p. 238); Ibid., p. 228.

[69] Brewer and Abigail Williams use the term 'edification'. See Brewer, 'Reconstructing the reader', p. 235 and Williams, *The Social Life of Books*, p. 225.

[70] Anna Larpent, August 15 1793. Vol. 1: 1790-1795. The Huntingdon Library, HM31201. Available at: http://www.eighteenthcenturydrama.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/Documents/Images/HL_LD_mssHM31201v1/268#Sections [accessed: 24 August 2020]. All future references are given in the form: Larpent, date. Volume: years.

would cover History, French, Latin, and the natural sciences.[71] Larpent is of scholarly interest because she wrote a diary on a nearly daily basis for forty-eight years. Her diary spans seventeen volumes, in which she recorded her actions and thoughts. On any day she missed, she dedicated time on a following day to catch up and complete her record, sometimes by combining the records of two days in one entry, as she does on the 17th and 18th March 1797. Larpent was interested in the theatre, in reading, and, as evident from her diaries, in writing her own reviews of the works she read. These methodical and meticulous entries reveal the role reading novels played in her life. Larpent used her diaries for writing about 'interesting subjects' which were 'worthy of methodising & remembering'.[72] Given the many Minerva novels she recorded in her diaries and the fact that some of the Minerva novels had multiple pages devoted to them, rather than one-line summaries, she clearly saw value in them; they were worthy and interesting. Their value is not necessarily solely a literary value; the novels may be enjoyable to read and distracting in content. The value also lies in the reading practices and critical thinking skills they facilitate.

Larpent's extensive engagement with Minerva novels between 1792 and 1798 prompts consideration about whether they held a specific appeal to her. Between July 31st 1792 and October 20th 1798, Larpent read at least 22 Minerva novels. She may have engaged with more than this throughout these six years, perhaps perusing title pages or prefaces while on trips to libraries, but twenty-two Minerva titles appear in her earliest two journals and have entries where she states she 'read' them. She read eight of these twenty-two in 1796 and six in 1797. Her engagement with the Minerva Press was at its height in these two years, coinciding with the zenith era of the Press' output. In 1796, the Minerva Press published 24 new titles and it published 22 new titles in 1797. The Press published 29 new titles in 1798. Anna Larpent read 30 percent of Minerva Press titles in the same year they were published in 1796 and 1797. Of the 22 Minerva novels she read, Larpent read ten of these

[71] Lisa Forman Cody, 'Larpent [née Porter], Anna Margaretta (1758–1832), diarist', in *ODNB* (2008) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65588> [accessed 15 January 2018]

[72] Larpent, April 1 1796. Vol. 2: 1796-1798; Ibid.

titles in the same year they were first published and six in the year after they were published. She read the remaining six more than one year after they were published.

These figures do not say that Larpent had a specific predilection to read Minerva novels above other novels in the year they were published. Rather, it is indicative that she liked reading newly released novels. Her journals attest that she kept abreast of the latest publications as she read the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *The British Critic* to keep herself informed. The first Minerva novel she read was *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792) by Susannah Gunning. This five-volume novel is a retelling of a real-life public scandal concerning the marriage between Elizabeth Gunning and George Spencer-Churchill. It gained significant public attention and was labelled 'the Gunninghiad' by Horace Walpole, as Kurt Milberger writes.[73] *Anecdotes* was reprinted twice more in 1792 and was clearly in demand. This book was the first Minerva novel Larpent read, but the Minerva Press was a publishing house which she returned to again and again. She liked to keep up to date with her reading but was not prejudiced about the publishing house's reputation. Her journals show that she does not brand them as Minerva publications once; the word 'Minerva' is missing from the first two volumes of her diary. Thus, unlike the reviewers, she does not endorse tarring all of these publications with the same brush and using a collective epithet to refer to them. Rather, she affords each novel attention in its own right, separate to any reputation of its publishing house. She retains and uses her right to her own critical judgement.

Reading novels enabled Larpent to develop quasi-professional reviewing skills; writing private reviews enabled her to practice articulating these. The journals demonstrate how her journaling practice advanced over time. As volume one and volume two continue, symbols such as a pointing finger being to mark the entries where she writes a summary of a novel. It is as if she is pointing a reader, herself or another, to where her journal demonstrates an extra layer of insight and a lengthier commentary. The symbol makes these entries increasingly noticeable. Additionally, the summaries

[73] Milberger, '"The first impression, you, yourself, will buy": The Gunninghiad, Virginius and Virginia and the Art of Scandal at the Minerva Press', para. 1.

become lengthier throughout her journals, indicating that she has more thoughts and more developed thoughts about the novels. Larpent wrote her journal to entertain herself but also to be 'useful' to her, and her marginalia attests where she or another reader may find the most useful entries.[74] The increased length and the hand symbol are present in her entries on Minerva novels and non-Minerva novels. Therefore, Larpent viewed Minerva novels as equally stimulating and equally worthy of comment as contemporary non-Minerva novels and more political novels. She did not discriminate between Minerva and non-Minerva texts and her reviews of Minerva novels show reading these was 'useful' to her. Notwithstanding this, Larpent was a discriminating reader. While she took care to record each novel she read, she discerned which ones merited finishing, which ones warranted longer entries, and which she would not finish. She put down works which displeased her: 'began another novel the Abbey of Clugny. sad stuff & left it. Took up Orlando'.[75] Similarly, not all novels merited the hand symbol next to them. She dedicated longer entries to specific works, whether that be for their content, their style, or even criticism of those.

Her journals demonstrate that Larpent enjoyed novels from which emotional guidance could be gained. Of Mary Pilkington's *Rosina*, she wrote that it was 'not ill written – without any bad tendency, & with some good – as it shows the errors that may proceed "from allowing Romance tho' on good principles "to direct us."'[76] Similarly, she praised Frances Jacson's *Plain Sense* for its moral content: 'I think no person can read this novel without advantage, so admirably is the mind of the heroine supported by rectitude – at least intended rectitude'.[77] Larpent indicated and recorded the novels which she thought contained implausible scenes. *Eloise de Montblanc* (1796) is a 'silly ill written novel', *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) contains 'improbable' events, and *Memoirs of a Modern Miss* (date unknown) is deemed to be 'improbable, absurd stuff'.[78] Yet even when she criticises a work, she

[74] Larpent, April 1 1796. Vol. 2: 1796-1798.
[75] Larpent, September 24 1796. Vol 2: 1796-1798.
[76] Larpent, September 5 1793. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.
[77] Larpent, September 23 1796. Vol 2: 1796-1798.
[78] Larpent, March 17 18 1797. Vol 2: 1796-1798; Larpent, December 26 1796. Vol 2: 1798-1798; Larpent, October 4 1795. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.

does not condemn it wholly. *Memoirs of a Modern Miss* 'raised a sort of laugh & change of ideas' in spite of, or because of, its ridiculousness.[79]

Larpent never comments about whether a Minerva book will have a bad effect on a reader's disposition or character. She does not endorse the idea that reading a novel will send a reader down a life trajectory of licentiousness or immorality but she avers that some scenes will neither entertain nor comfort readers. Of Regina Maria Roche's gothic horror *Clermont* (1798), she writes that '[t]he sentiments are good, intention as good – the Effect bad – scenes of bloodshed, murder, violence, gloom, horror, uncontrasted, & undiversified – can neither mend the heart not delight the imagination. The Events are very improbable – […] I read because like a riddle I wished to find out the denouement. I shut the book & was glad there was no more of it'.[80] Here, Larpent is critical of the violent scenes she encountered in this novel. Her criticism is that this novel is 'uncontrasted' and imbalanced; the gory scenes are not mediated by scenes of virtue or logic. Larpent eschews mention of this novel's influence, indicating that Larpent did not capitulate to the widespread societal notion that novels mislead readers. She understood fiction to be exactly that; fiction: imaginative representations of events. She indulged in satisfying her curiosity by reading to the end of *Clermont* but still provided a critically discerning review of it.

Along with finding for emotional guidance and instruction, Larpent shows that reading some Minerva novels had a therapeutic function. Larpent was unwell at the start of May 1793 and took herself off to bed to read Bennett's *Juvenile Indiscretions*.[81] Reading the novel is certainly not curative, but it provides a distraction from her malady and offers some form of mental relief. Brittany Pladek contends that people in the Romantic period viewed literature as therapeutic, specifically as palliative.[82] Indeed, an entry pertaining to another Minerva novel, *Ellen* (1794) by Anna Maria Bennett,

[79] Larpent, October 4 1795. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.
[80] Larpent, May 24 1798. Vol 2: 1796-1798.
[81] Larpent, May 2 1793. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.
[82] Brittany Pladek, *The Poetics of Palliation: Romantic Literary Therapy, 1790–1850* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 20-24.

suggests that reading this novel had a calming effect on Larpent as 'it certainly passed off the weary hours during this state of anxiety'.[83] Larpent's sister, Clara, was severely ill at this time. They had a very close relationship as, after their mother's death in 1766, Anna had acted like a mother to her younger and only surviving sister.[84] Additionally, Clara lived with Anna and Anna's husband from 1786 until her own marriage in 1798. Anna's diaries attest that Clara's illness caused her a great deal of emotional turmoil, resulting in fits of hysteria. Anna used reading as a distraction 'now & then' in the moments when she was not caring for Clara.[85] Reading a novel did not cure Anna's anxiety, but it did help to smooth time's passing and distract her from obsessing too much over her sister's ailment. Larpent's reading of *Ellen* was restorative and therapeutic while her reading of *Memoirs of a Modern Miss* incited a laugh and a smile in a life that she otherwise believes to be full of trifles and regrets. Larpent clearly read for enjoyment at times. Isabella Kelly's *The Ruins of Avondale Priory* (1796) may have had 'poor writing – many Events – little nature' but it was 'a story of unexpected incidents which tho' flimsy carrie one on'.[86] Reading this novel entertained her, showing that reading had a multifaceted role and effect in her life. Novels energised her daily life.

Along with providing food for the imagination and emotional comfort, some novels provided intellectual stimulation. Larpent read Agnes Musgrave's *Cicely, or the Rose of Raby* (1795) and recalls that '[t]his book led me into a train of thoughts on those times of research. I found in the peeraged in history the following parts callous of some of the personages - I red [sic] <wrote> them down from dinner 'till tea Tuesday I amused myself in finding out all I could concerning Cicely & <her family as named in the novel.>'[87] The following three pages contain Larpent's findings from her research. A work of fiction, albeit one which was framed as a historical text, stimulated Larpent's intellectual curiosity and her research occupied her attention greatly. Larpent is aware that *Cicely* is a 'historic novel' which

[83] Larpent, July 4 1794. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.
[84] Cody, 'Larpent [née Porter], Anna Margaretta (1758–1832), diarist', *ODNB*.
[85] Larpent, July 4 1794. Vol. 1: 1790-1795.
[86] Larpent, November 14 1797. Vol. 2: 1796-1798.
[87] Larpent, November 15 1796. Vol. 2: 1796-1798.

'contains ~~tho~~ a number of fanciful adventures' and she criticises herself that 'perhaps it is wrong to fill up by imagination the outlines of personages given to us in history – as it gives false ideas of character – yet, as we in fact know little of them – their having existed gives an interest in the tale'. [88] Using history for fiction increases the usefulness and purpose of reading this novel for Larpent. *Cicely* gave rise to her pursuing a line of research to indulge in and satisfy her own intellectual curiosity.

Larpent's journals also reveal that she had a reputation as an experienced and knowledgeable individual regarding popular taste and fiction. Eliza Parsons, a prolific Minerva Press author, visited Larpent 'for advice concerning her works, her children &c.' in the year she published her first work, 1790.[89] Larpent pities Parsons who was dependent on writing for income, '[s]he writes Alas! for bread', but she cared enough for Parsons to 'helped in getting a Boy [Parsons' son] to Sea very advantageously'.[90] She also makes note of Parsons' 'Genius' in her journal.[91] Parsons then went on to lead a long and prolific, if not financially rewarding, career as a popular novelist. Larpent's journals do not mention a single novel by Parsons. This does not mean that she did not read them, but it suggests that Larpent held some form of a boundary between giving private literary advice to an acquaintance and writing her quasi-professional reviews of others' Additionally, the fact that Larpent recorded Parsons' 'Genius', a hotly debated word to describe a novelist in the late-eighteenth century, suggests a conviction in her expertise. Larpent identifies Parsons' genius, granting her this lauded accolade, yet she keeps it private within her journal. There is a 'right to her own judgement' – as Brewer has identified – evidenced in Larpent's diaries, but this right is also a right to keep her thoughts private or unspecific at times.[92] Certainly, Larpent's journals evidence that she steadfastly considered each novel she read and dedicated time to articulating her own views of them or the novelist. They also show that she did not feel the need to and did not or could not share this judgement.

[88] Ibid; Ibid.
[89] Larpent, February 15 1790. Volume 1: 1790-1795.
[90] Ibid; Ibid.
[91] Ibid; Ibid.
[92] Brewer, 'Reconstructing the reader: prescriptions, texts and strategies in Anna Larpent's reading', p. 245.

Larpent's self-presentation as a reader in her journals is one which counters literary society's proclivity to homogenously dismiss novels as imitative and ill-written. Larpent's entries on the Minerva novels show that they are 'worthy of methodising & remembering'. Moreover, she acknowledged moments of intellectual and emotional insight gained from their contents and from the act of reading them. Unlike the public reviewers who delighted in rather cutthroat comments, Larpent affords Minerva novels a more respectful treatment featuring both commendation and criticism.

This chapter has concentrated on fictional readers in Minerva Press novels and on a real Minerva Press reader. Scholars are divided in their interpretations of the presentation of the female reader in novels. Joe Bray identifies 'active and creative' female readers while Miriam Borham-Paul has recently argued that eighteenth-century novels criticised and warned about the excessive reading of novels.[93] Borham-Paul's view is certainly upheld by Bennett's *Juvenile Indiscretions* and parts of Parsons' *Ellen and Julia.* Yet, both the other Minerva novels I have analysed, and Larpent's journals, provide alternate presentations of reading and of the reader. Their varying presentations of the latter shows that reading books may educate, enrich, and comfort. The diverse effects of reading on female and male reader-characters adjusts late-eighteenth century society's concern about the misleading influence of reading. Minerva novels intervene in the belief that women are more susceptible to the messages and morals portrayed by a work of fiction. By illustrating shrewd female readers alongside shrewd male readers, and impressionable female readers alongside immune female readers, the Minerva Press novels redress the era's predilection to focus on the effect novel reading had on women. The Minerva novels provide a balanced approach, showing female readers to be astute and analytical, not simply impressionable, immature young women. The logic that Minerva writers were writing novels that needed to be saleable causes an uneasy tension to exist between their representations of readers and literary critics' denigrating views of the novel and belittling views of the reader. Popular novelists may

[93] Miriam Borham-Paul, 'Seduction as Instruction: The Female Author as Pygmalion in Long Eighteenth-Century Quixotic Novels', *Journal of English Studies* 15 (2017), 7-30.

not want to malign their own form, but they must cater to expectation. The diverse presentations of the reader largely adhere to expectation. However, the minor narratives of Julia, Mrs. Woodville, and Lucy and the general focus on 'books' rather than just 'novels' suggest a mediated defence of the influence of novels. These elements signal that a wider commentary of the influence of reading ought to be had.

The next chapter approaches representations of the author in a different way. Rather than concentrating on sources which are novels, it looks at letters. These sources uncover the financial precarity and literary prejudice endured by some Minerva authors because of the systematic and economic oppression of writers in the late-eighteenth century literary marketplace. In their desperation to provide for themselves and their families, many turned to the Literary Fund for financial assistance.

Chapter Five – Navigating Philanthropy as Female Novelists: Minerva Press Women Writers' Letters to the Literary Fund

Seeking financial charitable assistance is an action rife with complex emotions. It can be a positive step; asking for help is a significant part of being able to be independent at a later stage. However, seeking financial help is also stigmatised; it can be interpreted as signalling that an individual cannot manage their own financial resources. Studies show that individuals avoid asking for aid and deploy strategies, such as silence, to hide their poverty.[1] Admitting poverty is difficult as it is culturally connected with a feeling of shame, as Elaine Chase and Robert Walker observe.[2] Thus it is often a last resort. Additionally, the causes of poverty are often systemic, engrained in society, and are therefore difficult for an individual to prevail against.

With this in mind, this chapter examines the letters from six Minerva Press female writers to the Literary Fund, a charitable organisation founded in 1790 to 'assist deserving Authors and their Families in distress'.[3] (A selection of these letters is included in Appendix B of this thesis. If a letter is included in the appendices, the footnote will state the precise appendix where it can be found.) By investigating the ways in which these writers presented themselves and their circumstances, this chapter traces how these women navigated cultural expectations of the female sex, of gender and of writing and discussed the economic treatment of writers – all the while building relationships with the Fund's patrons and seeking financial assistance. Asking for charity was complicated further for many reasons, one reason being that the novel was a denigrated form. Additionally, as Batchelor writes, the Fund viewed novelists as one of the lowest tiers of writers and 'gender became increasingly

[1] Elaine Chase and Robert Walker, 'The 'Shame' of Shame: Experiences of People Living in Poverty in Britain', in *Poverty and Shame: Global Experiences*, ed. by Elaine Chase and Grace Bantebya-Kyomuhendo (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 161-175, p. 167.

[2] Ibid., p. 172.

[3] Literary Fund. *An account of the institution of the society for the establishment of a literary fund: constitutions of the society; alterable only at the desire of a general meeting: transactions of the committee in the application of subscriptions: a list of subscribers: cash accompt of the fund: and poems on anniversaries, &c.* (London: Printed, by order of the society, by John Nichols, 1797), p. 4. Loan 96 RLF. British Library.

constitutive of literary authority at the turn of the century'.[4] Further difficulties arose because the literary marketplace was a product of and operated in a patriarchal society, and because there was a prescribed power dynamic expected between a benefactor and a charity applicant.

Female novelists were disadvantaged before they had even approached the Fund. Yet these authors either acknowledged their inferior position because of their sex and writing form, or played to that expectation, and applied to the Fund regardless. Eliza Parsons stated in the first paragraph of her first letter to the Fund that she 'know[s] not how far I may presume from my unhappy situation to claim any assistance, or whether the very small degree of merit I can boast from trifling publications will entitle me to your Considerations'.[5] Mary Julia Young wrote that she was 'trembling, therefore at the difficulty of obtaining your interest as a Novelist'.[6] These authors know that different writing genres merit different reactions; they are highly conscious of their position, their audience, and the need to make their letters cater for that audience's expectations. My readings of these letters proceed from the view that these women are remarkable, resilient, yet also desperate. These women make use of the discourses which were accessible to them: family, suffering, economics, and work. Thus, their letters construct a specific image of the female author of fiction and provide an alternate portrait of the popular female author found in novels and on title pages.

To provide new insight into how the Minerva writers presented both themselves as novelists and the profession of authorship while relationship-building with the patrons of the Fund, this chapter concentrates on the letters of Eliza Parsons, Charlotte Lennox, Isabella Kelly, Mary Julia Young, Mary Pilkington, and Maria Hunter. Their correspondence sheds light on the construction and presentation of the female author of popular fiction in the Romantic period. First, this chapter investigates the rhetorical strategies present in individual letters. My approach complements Jennie Batchelor's

[4] Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 148.

[5] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 17 December 1792. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/1. Appendix B1a.

[6] Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808. Loan 96 RLF 1/216/1. Appendix B2.

readings of letters by other female applicants to the Fund. Batchelor connects the female applicants' letters to the Fund with a rhetoric of writing, work, and social utility, judging that

> Female applicants' protestations of domestic integrity and maternal devotion are less signs of feminine reserve […] than the criteria for an alternative and explicitly feminine construction of authorship intended to rival the Fund's homocentric model of intellectual labour in its claims to productiveness, utility and cultural value.[7]

While Batchelor's work focuses on the concept of motherhood, I look at the role of the daughter and the aged or ill author and trace how their presentations of these simultaneously complement a homocentric model of labour and craft a feminine experience of authorship. I concentrate on their complaints against their publishers and their economic and relationship dynamics with the Fund's patrons, arguing that they publicise their female and feminine roles, but they do so in the name of providing for a family: a role traditionally fulfilled by a male.

I also uncover how certain letters exposed the prejudice extant in the literary marketplace and the unfair market conditions of the book trade. I examine how these women reference the publishers they work with and their pay, arguing that they articulate criticisms of the economic operations of the book trade. I read the letters' construction of authorship as motivated by desperation and resourcefulness, meaning these writers used whatever scenarios and rhetoric, whatever gender position they deemed prudent and was available to them, in order to increase the likelihood that their application would be successful.

My focus on rhetoric is combined with an exploration of the structure and pattern of the whole body of letters from individual writers and reveals larger narratives and relationship dynamics at play. It looks at the dates when letters and follow-up letters were written, the methods of sending these letters, and the financial transactions resulting from them. As this chapter will argue, the

[7] Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 169.

Minerva Press authors were innovative and resourceful in the navigation and management of the relationships these letters forged between themselves and the patrons of the Literary Fund. The crux, therefore, is that these letters demonstrate ways in which authors framed their authorship and their poverty while they probed the boundaries of the assistance the Literary Fund could provide with admirable opportunism, pride, and shrewd courage. A firmness, necessitated by their desperation, and a pride in their authorial industriousness lie underneath these letters and these are spotlighted in this chapter.

The presentations in these letters are influenced by how an author desired herself to be perceived and also influenced by the specific purposes of the presentation; in this case, as a hopeful recipient of charity. Matthew Sangster explains authors' general reticence about their finances by reference to the 'relatively meagre' rewards of authorship, suggesting that '[i]t is far more attractive to sell oneself as an inspired artist than an impoverished one'.[8] In his work on Eliza Parsons, he concludes that she did not have socially-mediated success because Parsons admitted that authorship was a 'last resort, and its manifesting as such both textually and paratextually militated against her achieving the kind of socially-mediated success that might have solved her enduring financial problems'.[9] In the case of these letters, however, when the purpose of a text is to convey the author's poverty and when the objective is not to be successful but to be awarded money, it might not be attractive to be perceived as impoverished and socially isolated, but it would be judicious. The Minerva authors' letters to the Fund are begging letters; they do not concern themselves much with proving authorial success or re-evaluating the popular novel, but rather frame their lives and their work to increase the likelihood of receiving assistance. The lines where applicants present authorship as a last

[8] Sangster, *Living as an Author*, p. 6. Matthew Sangster rightly observes that 'The idea of writing principally for money has a long history of negative connotations. In the eighteenth century, getting paid for writing was seen as ungentlemanly and potentially corrupt or corrupting; later, it was perceived to be a cruder motivator than artistic achievement, which largely replaced notions of taste while replicating many of their underlying assumptions' in *Living as an Author in the Romantic Period*, p. 6.

[9] Ibid., p. 215.

resort are and are not perfunctory; indeed, they must appeal to the Fund's hierarchy of writers but they apply nonetheless so that they can continue to write and provide for their families independently.

Each woman openly elucidates how she uses writing to strive to provide for her children or other dependents. It reveals her individual strength as she faces up to the realities of her situation by discussing them in a letter. If Madeleine Callaghan's and Anthony Howe's point that 'the line between private correspondence and published work is blurred, deliberately or otherwise', by the letter, then these women's letters are public performances which engage with, and to a certain extent redefine, the Romantic figure of the author.[10] These letters are deliberate decisions which demonstrate each woman's agency regarding her self-presentation and the presentation and marketing of authorship. Reading the letters written by female authors reveals that they adhere to the gender hierarchies and literary expectations articulated and enacted by the Literary Fund. These letters militate an intervention in the systemic marginalisation of women and a cultural unappreciation of novelists. I argue that the performativity and rhetoric of the Minerva Press women's letters from the 1790s indicate that the women knowingly channel eighteenth-century society's interest in the personal to politicise their deprivation and gain financial assistance.[11] Moreover, the letters underscore the untenability of reading the Romantic-period author through the lens and expectations connoted by the term 'Romanticism'; Minerva authors are inextricable from financial and social networks. They add new meaning to what it was to be a Romantic period author.

[10] Madeleine Callaghan and Anthony Howe, '*Romanticism and the Letter*: Introduction', in *Romanticism and the Letter*, ed. by Madeleine Callaghan and Anthony Howe (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 1-14 (p. 1).
[11] An array of critics have commented upon the eighteenth-century society's fascination with biography and biographical readings. Please see: Rose, *Authors and Owners*, p. 121; Maurice Biriotti, 'Introduction: authorship, authority, authorisation' in *What is an author?*, ed. by Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 2-5; and Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History*.

5.1 Pay at the Minerva Press

One reason why many authors applied to the Fund was because pay for novel manuscripts was low for most authors. Payment for writing was 'at best modest'.[12] Many authors had to supplement their income with another job. Mary Pilkington worked as a governess and Susanna Rowson joined her husband onstage in Covent Garden while writing her first three novels for the Press in 1791 and 1792. Eliza Parsons was a seamstress in the Royal Household. Alternatively, financial security could come from marriage, described by Joanna Rostek as 'the principal means for women to attain economic security'.[13] The Minerva author Anna Maria Mackenzie was married at least three times and the title pages of her novels reflect these relationships. To be an author of popular novels was financially precarious, and the profession often required supplementary work to avoid debtor's prison.

Before this chapter examines the letters of Eliza Parsons, Charlotte Lennox, Mary Julia Young, Isabella Kelly, and Mary Pilkington, this section situates them and the Minerva Press within the economics of the English fiction trade. There are few discoverable financial transactions of the Minerva Press, but accounts from Minerva authors' letters and biographies, and William Lane's Will, indicate that Lane amassed his own fortune of £17,500 while he controlled payments in a mercenary manner.[14] The capitalist, patriarchal structure of the literary marketplace ensured publishers' profits soared while female and male authors received meagre payments for manuscripts. In turn, it becomes clear that authorship in these letters is understood and defined in economic terms.

There is little concrete information about how much the Minerva Press paid its authors. The Press has no archive, and no ledgers or account books are known to survive. Christina Morin writes that 'existing records of Lane's transactions are few'.[15] Despite this, the scholarly consensus is that the

[12] Sangster, *Living as an Author in the Romantic Period*, p. 20.

[13] Joanna Rostek, *Women's Economic Thought in the Romantic Age: Towards a Transdisciplinary Herstory of Economic Thought* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 12. *ProQuest* Ebook.

[14] 'Will of William Lane of Brighthelmstone, Sussex', 9th May 1814. Public Record Office, The National Archives. PROB 11/1556/126.

[15] Christina Morin, 'Irish Gothic Goes Abroad: Cultural Migration, materiality, and the Minerva Press', in *Traveling Irishness in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal and Christina Morin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 185-204 (p. 193).

Minerva Press did not pay its authors liberally. Edward Copeland concludes that Lane's Minerva Press women writers were 'paid least' compared to other writers for their manuscripts, stating elsewhere that Lane was a publisher who 'paid his authors notoriously little'.[16] Anthony Mandal writes that Minerva women were 'underpaid'.[17] Jan Fergus states that 'the cheap Minerva Press was offering authors perhaps five pounds per volume'.[18] In the 1780s the average length of a novel was two volumes, and the average length extended to two or three volumes in the 1790s. Using Fergus' calculations, this indicates Lane paid authors £10 or £15 per novel, a figure which is lower than the 'approximately thirty pounds' which Dorothy Blakey, author of the first monograph on the Minerva Press, calculated.[19]

Blakey's calculation of thirty pounds derives from a scene in a novel, *Peregrine* (1803), in which an author is paid £30 for a manuscript, and an advertisement of Lane's in *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, a newspaper of which Lane was a sponsor, where Lane proclaims to have 'paid near Two Thousand Pounds for Manuscripts'.[20] Blakey divided this figure by the number of manuscripts she thought the Minerva had published in 1939. This is unreliable as Lane may well have exaggerated how much he offered authors in his promotional materials and because new Minerva novel titles have been discovered since 1939. Thus, it is likely that Lane paid under £30 per novel. He was not the generous publisher his promotional materials implied.

It is difficult to contextualise the average payment scholars believe Lane made within the broader context of payments made by other publishing houses because, as James Raven records, 'the vast majority of agreements have been lost'.[21] From surviving records, Raven has compiled a table

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[16] Edward Copeland, 'Fictions of Employment: Jane Austen and the Woman's Novel', *Studies in Philology* 85:1 (1988), 114-124 (p. 115) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4174293> [accessed 30 January 2022]; Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995 [2004]), p. 5.

[17] Mandal, 'Fiction', p. 30.

[18] Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 13.

[19] Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1770-1820* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1939), p. 74.

[20] Blakey quotes *The Star and Evening Advertiser, 26 June 1792* for this calculation in *The Minerva Press*, p. 74. Full reference for this article is *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, Tuesday 26 June, 1792. Issue 1:299.

[21] Raven, 'Historical Introduction', p. 51.

documenting how much authors were paid for the copyright of their novels by the Robinson, Murray, Hook, Carpenter, Lowndes, Longman and Rees publishing firms between 1770 and 1799.[22] These may provide a skewed account of payments to authors for copyright as these records may have survived for specific reasons, perhaps in cases of literary celebrity, or on occasions where payments were unusually high, or if publishing houses kept good records which have been preserved. Raven documents the well-known examples of novelists who received large sums for their manuscripts: Payne and Cadell paid Frances Burney £250 for the copyright of *Cecilia* in 1782; Ann Radcliffe gained £500 for manuscript of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* from the Robinsons in 1794 and £800 from Cadell and Davies for *The Italian* in 1797. From Raven's table, the mean average payment is approximately £80 but the modal average (most common) payment is £20. £20 payments occurred primarily in the 1770s and 1780s and these were made by either Lowndes or Robinson. Lane paid £40 to Mary Sherwood in 1799 for *Margarita*, indicating that Lane paid below the mean average rate and at the low end of the market rate.[23] If the average novel was three volumes in length, this means that authors at other publishing houses were paid just under £7 per volume. Fergus' calculations reveal that Lane paid about £5 per volume to his authors.

Considering that '[p]ublishers usually paid authors, if at all, in bills post-dated to three, six, or twelve months in the future' and that '[m]ost authors, however, preferred to sell their bills at a discount for immediate cash to a money-market dealer, or to accept a discounted payment from the publisher', as William St. Clair writes, authors probably gained even less than the £7 or £5 given per volume.[24] The letters of Maria Hunter, Eliza Parsons, Maria Hunter, and Isabella Kelly reveal that they were often in such immediate need of money that they sold the copyright to their manuscripts for an increased initial payment, meaning they had to forego any rights they had to future profits of the work

[22] Raven, 'Historical Introduction', Vol. 1, pp. 52-53.
[23] Kelly, *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood*, p. 204.
[24] St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 162.

from reprints or further editions.[25] It would follow that these women would have had cause to use money-market dealers to receive immediate cash.

To gain more insight into Lane's payments, we can turn to writers' biographies or memoirs. Such records may be unreliable due to memory failings or human error, but the composite picture they create indicates that Lane controlled the prices of manuscripts and took advantage of the writers' need for income. This is essential to understand when reading the Minerva Press women writers' letters to the Fund; they felt marginalised, they were underpaid, and they were exploited by the literary marketplace.

James Montgomery, the Scots-born poet, editor of the *Sheffield Iris*, and editor of *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend and Climbing-Boy's Album* (1824) who was twice imprisoned for sedition in the 1790s, had an unsatisfactory and prolonged exchange with Lane over a novel manuscript from 1790 until 1795. Lane offered Montgomery 'twenty pounds' for a manuscript if Montgomery would rewrite it and remove profane language.[26] This, writes Montgomery's biographers, 'was a tempting bait to his ambition and his poverty, and he resolved to accept it'.[27] Montgomery redrafted the novel during his imprisonment in York Castle. He sent the manuscript back to Lane asking for £40 in payment. Lane refused, highlighting the power of the publisher, especially over an author in Montgomery's circumstances.

Lane's influence over his authors was also material and reputational. A letter to the Literary Fund from Isabella Kelly states that Lane did not provide her with copies of her novels once they were printed.[28] Lane controlled the physical property of the manuscript and this restricted Kelly's access to her own works. Lane's power extended to controlling how they presented themselves as authors, on

[25] Maria Hunter to David Williams, 7 July 1795, RLF Loan 96 1/25/3. British Library; Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale, 7 July 1796. RLF Loan 96 1/21/8. Appendix B1b; Isabella Hedgeland to Joseph Snow, 25 October 1832. RLF Loan 96 1/632/12.

[26] John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery: Including Selections from His Correspondence, Remains in Prose and Verse, and Conversations on Various Subjects* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854), Vol. 1, p. 113. Google eBook.

[27] Ibid, p. 114.

[28] Isabella Hedgeland [formerly Kelly] to Joseph Snow, October 25 1832. RLF Loan 96 1/632/12.

occasion. Robert Bage was a Birmingham paper merchant and novelist. He had published four novels anonymously, the fourth anonymously through Lane, by the time he sent Lane the manuscript for his fifth novel, *Man as He Is*, in 1792.[29] Bage wished to remain anonymous but Lane made this come at a cost: Bage lamented that 'I have taken great pains, and sunk money to Lane in the price, not to be known any more, as a novel writer'.[30] Bage was attempting to disassociate himself from being a novelist and wanted to be anonymous on the title page. The fact that he had to pay for his anonymity indicates that Lane expected him to publish under his name and Bage's profits from his manuscript were reduced.

Despite Lane's hard-headed approach and lower-than-average payments, the Press attracted and created prolific novelists who continued to publish with the Press and elsewhere.[31] Indeed, Elizabeth Neiman argues that the Minerva Press was an 'infamously accommodating press' which 'opened doors for relatively obscure female novelists, many of whom were unlikely to have published novels otherwise'.[32] Many authors launched their careers through the Press. However, a consequence of these low payments was the creation and perpetuation of authorial poverty. The low payments gave no independence to professional writers, meaning that some authors had little option but to continue to write for the Press or other publishers to fend off bailiffs. The 'infamously accommodating' Press could be recast as an infamously exploitative one. Matthew Sangster observes that '[p]ublishers did on occasion take advantage of poor writers by offering them very low sums knowing that they had little choice but to accept, but even so this was guaranteed money which could be used to feed children and keep debtors from the door rather than a hazy prospect of future profits'.[33] The letters

[29] These four novels were: *Mount Henneth* (1781), *Barham Downs* (1784), *The Fair Syrian* (1787) and *James Wallace* (1788).

[30] R[obert] B[age] to William Hutton, [non-dated, between August 1792 and 25 September 1792 from the dates of the preceding and subsequent letters]. The Wolfson Centre, Library of Birmingham. MS 3597/7/6.

[31] Neiman, *Minerva's Gothics*, pp. 22-23.

[32] Ibid., p 23; Ibid., p. 1.

[33] Matthew Sangster, 'Living as an Author in the Romantic Period: Remuneration, Recognition and Self-Fashioning', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway University, 2012), p. 61 <https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/files/12414893/Matthew_Sangster_Living_as_an_Author_in_the_Romantic_period_with_amendments_.pdf> [accessed 25 May 2018]

of Eliza Parsons and Isabella Kelly to the Fund show that the threats of starving offspring and debtor's prison were sad realities. Thus, they and other male and female writers at the Minerva Press who were impoverished had little choice but to accept the sums Lane offered for their manuscripts.

These records indicate that Lane controlled costs and prices in an avaricious manner which worked to his benefit and to the disadvantage of those who published through the Minerva. He was a wealthy businessman. By contrast, nine of the 53 named female Minerva Press writers who published with the Minerva in the 1790s did not earn enough to survive and turned to the Fund in that same decade or in the years after. When many of these authors could not hope to gain more money per manuscript due to the inequal power balance of the author-publisher interactions or could not write more manuscripts as their productivity was at a maximum, the Fund offered the chance of grants which would relieve poverty. It is within these letters that self-presentation was of paramount importance and thus was strategized accordingly.

The terms of reference authors used in their letters illuminates how they desired these exchanges to operate. Minerva applicants preferred to think of the Fund as a 'benevolent institution' rather than a charity. Samuel Johnson's dictionary suggests the late-eighteenth century cultural understanding of each word. 'Charity' is the only one of the three which is defined in terms of its recipients: 'relief given to the poor'.[34] 'Philanthropy' is 'love of mankind; good nature' and 'Benevolence' is the 'disposition to do good; kindness; charity; good will'.[35] Of the eighty-six letters transcribed for this thesis, 'charity' appears twice, 'philanthropic' appears once (there are no mentions of 'philanthropy') and 'benevolence' and its cognates, often 'benevolent', appear thirty-five times. Deciding to refer to the Fund's 'benevolence' or as a 'benevolent institution' reveals that these women emphasised the emotional and more personal nature of the applications. It behoved them to

[34] Johnson, 'charity, n.s', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/charity_ns> [accessed 28 May 2021]

[35] Johnson, 'philanthropy, n.s', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/philanthropy_ns> [accessed 28 May 2021]; Johnson, 'benevolence, n.s', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/benevolence_ns> [accessed 28 May 2021].

emphasise the kind dispositions of their recipients, to frame their letters as private exchanges between two people, and, arguably, to build a more personal relationship through these terms of reference. Emphasising the personal exchange between the patron and the beneficiary builds a personal relationship between the two parties and with that comes a level of responsibility and accountability. Thus, identifying the patrons as 'benevolent' – as doing good by others – provides the appropriate foundations for the subsequent strategized presentations of the underpaid and precarious female writer.

5.2 Mothers and Daughters in Mary Pilkington's and Charlotte Lennox's Letters to the Literary Fund, 1792-1810

Jennie Batchelor and Karen Morton have both concentrated on how the Minerva author Eliza Parsons drew on her role as mother to secure financial help. Batchelor contends that 'the professional author as working mother' was emphasised and maternity was used to 'reconcile […] domestic and professional labours'.[36] In slight contrast, Morton declares that '[r]ather than concentrating on her occupation as a writer, she [Parsons] focuses here on her role as a mother', identifying a divide between the two roles.[37] Parsons' letters certainly emphasise her 'deplorable circumstances with Eight children entirely unprovided for!'[38] This section argues that other female writers approached motherhood from the perspectives of daughters, an innovative take upon a popular paradigm which secured sympathy and financial assistance from the Fund. Mary Pilkington was an author at the Press in the 1810s and Charlotte Lennox is attributed as the author of the Minerva novel *Hermione, or the Orphan Sisters* (1791).

[36] Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 27; Ibid., p. 172.
[37] Karen Morton, *A Life Marketed as Fiction: An Analysis of the Works of Eliza Parsons* (Missouri: Valancourt Books, 2011), p. 17.
[38] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 17 December 1792. Loan 96, RLF 1/21/1. Appendix B1a.

The image of poor children is an evocative and pitiable one. The image of an ageing, ailing, dependent mother is equally so. Writing about dependent mothers to the Fund could be productive because of the emotive nature of the figure: the original care-giver has become the cared-for. It is clear that Pilkington was aware of the persuasive potential of invoking her aged mother, writing 'That I have a Mother Sir – upwards of fourscore, who depends upon my Exertions for the necessaries of Existence is a circumstance which **renders my case doubly pitiable**' (my emphasis).[39] Pilkington directs her reader to sympathise with her situation and implies that the Fund patrons ought to pity her increasingly for her mother's situation. She knows that the patrons are 'no stranger to' the fact she cares for her mother.[40] Pilkington wants the patrons to become concerned for, or interested in, her mother's wellbeing, hence she mentions her mother so frequently in letters. Her descriptions of her mother's infirmities are dramatic and designed to evoke pity. Moreover, her assertion that her mother makes her case 'doubly pitiful' acknowledges the emotiveness of the ailing mother and is strikingly explicit, indicative of her desperation for financial assistance.

Pilkington constantly reminds the Fund that she is caring for her mother. She references her mother in her first application and then mentions her another nine times in the thirteen letters sent to the Fund. She is relevant because any money the Fund gives to Pilkington would also assist her mother, broadening the scope and impact of her applications. To support this, Pilkington describes her mother in emotive terms. Her 'poor Mother (who is now near Eighty) still depends on me for Sustenance'.[41] She is 'sinking under the weight of affliction' and her situation is 'truly pitiable'.[42] Poverty overwhelms Pilkington's mother, a scene made more dramatic by the evocative language. Framing the mother as a pitiable person and by including her regularly in applications reveals that Pilkington's letters are motivated by catering for her mother's needs. The mother is a central figure, locating the mother as much as the daughter as the object of charity.

[39] Mary Pilkington to Dr. Anderson. 5 February 1815. RLF Loan 96 1/256/8.
[40] Mary Pilkington to James Anderson. 16 January 1815. RLF Loan 96 1/256/7.
[41] Mary Pilkington to the Secretary of the Literary Fund. 2 June 1810. RLF Loan 96 1/256/1. Appendix B3.
[42] Ibid.; Ibid.; Mary Pilkington to Dr. Symmonds. 22 June 1810. RLF loan 96 1/256/3.

Daughterly duty permeates Pilkington's letters, but this duty has been imposed on her and comes at a cost to her financial stability and to her own physical health. Pilkington outlines that she cared for her mother during her marriage and has done ever since she was widowed; in her first letter she says she expended her 'trifling legacy' in 'support of my Mother & self' and later letters tell how her mother 'depends upon my Exertions for the necessaries of Existence'.[43] Her letters to the Fund present her care for her mother as a compulsory part of being a daughter. She writes that it is 'has been the Will of Heaven, not my *own Improvidence* which has reduced me to the present state of Distress' in 1810.[44] Invoking heaven, and by extension Christianity and God, indicates that her life as a widow and as a daughter has been decided for her. Her duty is to care for her aged mother and this contributes to her poverty and her need for assistance as 'though I could have supported my Self the expences of attending my poor Mother, exceeded the Income derived from Exertion'.[45] Moreover, Pilkington's letters convey the extreme consequences of daughterly duties by writing that she becomes ill herself due to her mother's suffering; 'my poor Aged Mothers Situation will be truly pitiable, & the idea of her Sufferings ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ affect me so deeply that I believe it increases my Complaint'.[46] A later letter explains that the responsibility of providing for her mother 'greatly adds to the anguish' of her feelings.[47] Pilkington's letters illustrate that adhering to social convention by being a daughter has caused her to be a social burden: she has to apply to charity because of her role as a daughter.

Referencing one's parent is strategic when applying for charity. Wollstonecraft observed that '[t]he parent who pays proper attention to helpless infancy has a right to require the same attention when the feebleness of age comes upon him', a maxim which echoes the sixth of the Ten

[43] Mary Pilkington to the Secretary of the Literary Fund. 2 June 1810. RLF Loan 96 1/256/1. Appendix B3; Ibid.; Mary Pilkington to James Anderson. 16 January 1815. RLF Loan 96 1/256/7.
[44] Mary Pilkington to the Secretary of the Literary Fund. 2 June 1810. RLF Loan 96 1/256/1. Appendix B3.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Mary Pilkington to Dr. Symmonds. 22 June 1810. RLF loan 96 1/256/3.
[47] Mary Pilkington to James Anderson. 16 January 1815. RLF Loan 96 1/256/7.

Commandments: "Honour thy mother and father".[48] Pilkington and the patrons at the Fund would have been highly aware of this role. Being a son or a daughter was an experience shared by applicants to the Fund and the patrons at the Fund. Thus, this paradigm has great potential to forge links between and to unite the applicant and patron. References to ailing mothers subliminally encourage the patrons of the Literary Fund to consider how they would like to treat their elderly parents, a view conditioned by the more egotistical concern of how they would want to be treated themselves in their old age. Impoverished authors and wealthy patrons are brought closer together, if not united, over a shared duty towards parents. It is thus a strategic move; Pilkington realises it is reputationally propitious to draw on her role as a daughter in her letters to the Fund.

Mary Pilkington could not alter the fact that she was a daughter with a duty to care for her eighty-year-old mother. Her letters illustrate that her desire to adhere to this social role and the fact that she has fulfilled it in the years previously has frustrated her attempts to be independent. She must resort to applying for charitable assistance. Lamentably, her mother is dependent on her financially, and Pilkington needs more money than she can earn. With no children of her own, Pilkington's letters demonstrate how another female role, that of the daughter, is equally laborious and exacting upon a female writer. To be a woman, not only a mother or a daughter, is to endure barriers to labour.

Charlotte Lennox's case file also approaches matters of daughters and parents, but from the alternate perspective of when one outlives one's children. The Fund is perceived as the correct and appropriate substitute source of help when one has no family. Lady Frances Chambers, writing on Lennox's behalf, uses the death of Lennox's daughter to explain why Lennox ought to be assisted by the Fund; Lennox 'has lost in her daughter the only friend she had a claim upon'.[49] The word 'claim' is ambiguous; it suggests a financial claim, but it also alludes to the care and help a daughter could provide for an aged mother. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft notes that the

[48] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 235.

[49] Lady Frances Chambers to David Williams. 20 January 1802. RLF Loan 96 1/12/8.

duty to care for a parent is 'arbitrarily imposed' more upon daughters than sons.[50] Lennox had a very long life and she outlived her daughter, the person who would have cared for her, financially and otherwise. The care that her daughter would have provided is therefore needed to be sourced elsewhere and the Literary Fund are applied to as a substitute for the support Lennox's daughter was expected to provide. Similarly, the Fund was cast as the proper source of assistance in Pilkington's file. The file contains letter in an unidentified hand which tells that Pilkington and her mother are currently relying on 'the voluntary contributions of a few friends'.[51] Thus, Pilkington and Lennox apply to the Fund, or others apply on their behalf, because to provide assistance is the central role of the Fund. They are asking for assistance through the proper channels, rather than exhausting the goodwill of friends.

The illustrations of Pilkington's dutifulness and both writers' desperation for funds, were received positively by the board members. The Fund granted Pilkington assistance on seven occasions between 1810 and 1825, in varying amounts from 10 guineas to £15, and Lennox was the only writer to whom the Fund granted an annuity, receiving 1 guinea a week until her death in January 1804. These writers were innovative in communicating their situations as effectively as possible; while they could not access the rhetoric of the mother and her duties, their use of the role of the daughter reflects how another role of women in the late-eighteenth century impacted on a woman's ability to work.

5.3 Illness, Old Age, and Authorship in Charlotte Lennox's, Eliza Parsons', and Mary Pilkington's letters, 1792-1810

In the section above, Mary Pilkington described how her mother's illness restricted her own ability to work. For a writer to fall ill was a grave and serious concern. There was no sick pay in the 1790s and

[50] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 237.

[51] List of books by Mary Pilkington (written on her behalf - in a different hand). Signed M. Pilkington. 18 December 1810. Loan 96 RLF 1/256/5.

the welfare state in Britain was first introduced via a series of reforms in the early 1900s. If a person was ill and unable to work, they lost income and, potentially, faced destitution.

The letters from Minerva women writers to the Fund regularly mention ill health, working during and despite periods of illness, and the consequences of being ill. Their ailments span the physical and the mental, ranging from injuries such as broken legs to mental anxieties caused by the chronic threat of debtor's prison. Vivid scenes of physical pain and mental anguish feature in their letters, evidencing that physical and mental ill-health are life-threatening instances for the professional writer and attesting that physical and mental health are inextricably linked and mutual. That so many writers had to apply to the Fund for money due to bouts of ill-health underscores how fundamental good health was to a writer's solvency. This was not specific to Minerva authors or to women authors; Matthew Sangster draws on letters by William Henry Hall and Robert Heron, and the lives of Edmund Henry White and Robert Matthew Annesley, to demonstrate that ill health was a common cause of impecuniousness but also to demonstrate that writing often caused ill health; Heron, White and Annesley did lasting damage to their eyesight from writing in poorly lit conditions.[52] This section traces how Parsons, Kelly, and Pilkington convey that a physical injury, illness, and old age beget authorial inability but also that writing causes illness.

These writers discuss their illnesses and age vividly, at times using quite dramatic language. Suffering can be a 'spectacle' but this does not preclude it from meriting serious study, writes Ann Jessie van Sant.[53] Eliza Parsons was aware of the public interest in her exigencies and she uses this to her advantages initially in a preface and repeatedly in her letters. She publicly associated herself with poverty, suffering, and philanthropy from the moment her works entered the literary marketplace. In the dedication to her debut novel, *The History of Miss Meredith* (1790), she declared her indigence and her indebtedness to the Marchioness of Salisbury for 'the preservation of eight fatherless

[52] Sangster, *Living as an Author*, p. 35 and p. 203.

[53] Ann Jessie van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 56 and p. 59.

children!'.[54] Reviewers of *Miss Meredith* latched onto this image, bestowing more coverage on Parsons' hardships than on the novel itself:

> This volume, besides its own merit, which is by no means inconsiderable, has to plead in its behalf the peculiar distresses of its author, a widow with nine children, reduced from affluence to absolute penury. We are much pleased to see so respectable a list of subscribers, and hope the sale will continue in proportion to the merits of the work, and the wants of the writer.[55]

This review does not mention the prose quality or novel's plot aside from the briefest of comments. Instead, the review is dedicated to the contexts of production and literary philanthropy. It sympathises with Parsons' situation and praises those who assist her, indicating the societal interest in the trials of another and the public praise for philanthropic actions. By repeating Parsons' trials in the review, the reviewer aggrandises her achievement in publishing her work; Parsons deserves praise and pity for overcoming and persevering despite her hardships.

The letters covered in this section present health as fundamental to writing and detail extensively the suffering of the author. This section traces how Parsons' letters also reveal that a physical injury is particularly threatening for a writer from a lower socioeconomic class. Parsons' left leg was incredibly troublesome. It was the subject of three letters to the Literary Fund: her first letter, written in December 1792; her seventh letter, dating from July 1796; and her tenth letter, from June 1803. Parsons broke her leg '[o]n the 2 of the last January'.[56] It caused her great physical discomfort, an inability to concentrate, mental misery and anguish, and a shortfall in her income. That Parsons refers to the same injury over a decade after it first happened demonstrates the longstanding consequences of physical pain on authorial ability and activity.

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[54] Parsons, *The History of Miss Meredith*, Vol. 1, p. ii.

[55] 'ART. 18. *The History of Miss Meredith; a Novel*', *English review*, p. 467. See also: '*The History of Miss Meredith*', *Monthly Review*, p. 90.

[56] Eliza Parsons to Dr. Dale. 17 December 1792. RLF Loan 96 1/21/1. Appendix B1a. A letter from June 1803 indicates that the 'last January' referenced in the December 1792 letter means January 1792.

Parsons writes vividly and accurately as she describes the cause of her broken leg, the scene around her as she lies incapacitated, and the worrisome potential consequences. This is necessary as she needs to ensure that the recipient of her letters fully understood the physical pain her broken left leg caused her and how she cannot be an author because of it.

> On the 2 of the last January by a dreadful fall I had the misfortune to break my left leg, a compound fracture of the worst kind which confined me near six months to my bed without the possibility of getting a shilling expending the little I had saved which was insufficient for my support, and obliged unavoidably to contract debts which now threaten me with impending Evil within a few days. Still confined to my room my leg on a pillow, splinters of Bones Continuing working thro' which keeps me in extreme Tortures, I have been nevertheless obliged to struggle with this and try to write.[57]

Parsons' language is graphic. It pushes her reader to envisage splinters of bones 'working' their way through her skin but also splinters of bones melding back with one another. A reader can picture Parsons lying on her bed, trying to write with sheafs of white paper around her, the colour of which is reflected by the shards of bone visible beneath the skin of her leg. Her incapacity is aggrandised by the authoritative tone gained by the medical language: 'compound fracture'. This vocabulary is reminiscent of a doctor's lexis, suggesting that Parsons is accurately reporting the factual description of her injury but also indicating that she is intelligent enough to understand the complex medical terms. She combines sentimental, graphic language with a scientific, medical rhetoric to convey her deplorable situation but intimate her intellectual capability. She may have perceived that such language would be propitious in her letter, written as it was to a man of medicine, 'Dr. Dale M.D.'.[58]

The power novel writing afforded authors divides critics. Clifford Siskin posits that novel writing, particularly writing sentimental novels, was an enabling and empowering force for women

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

writers, writing that 'specific genres of writing helped to empower professionalism, both by generating the discourse of professional behavior [sic], and, by rewriting the discourse of the hero'.[59] Scholars have noted how Parsons' rhetoric here is comparable with that found in her novels. Karen Morton and Matthew Sangster aver that Parsons' rhetoric casts her as a heroine in her own sentimental tale of poverty, with Morton being the most explicit in the comparison writing that Parsons 'assume[s] a similar role to that of a fictional heroine'.[60] Sangster contends that 'as in many of her other letters, Parsons appropriates – albeit not without some knowing irony – the tropes of her sentimental protagonists of her gothic narratives'.[61] Sangster identifies that Parsons appropriates and applies the language of her novels to her own situation, casting herself as a distressed protagonist. If this holds true, then Parsons' letters blur the distinctions between fact and fiction.

Many of the letters do use sensational language, but there lies a danger in correlating a letter narrating an author's hardship with a novel describing a heroine's trials. Such a correlation subtly hampers interpretations of the letters. These applications, for most, were a last resort and written at moments of dire need. They needed them to be believed by the Fund's patrons. An excessive use of sensational language would undermine their application, or even cause its rejection. Therefore, any reading of this vivid language as akin to that of a sensational novel ought to be tempered by remembering the desperate circumstances of the writer; a Minerva author's hardship should not be conflated with the fictitious hardship of a heroine. Certainly, these women were heroines in the sense that they persevered through numerous difficulties and strove to provide for themselves and their families by writing. However, as such they are a specific type of heroine, one which can be found in Parsons' own novels. In *Lucy* (1794), Miss Campley praises the eponymous heroine; '"[y]ou indeed,

[59] Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 129.

[60] Karen Morton, 'A Life Marketed as Fiction: An analysis of the work of Eliza Parsons', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2005), p. 107 <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/154424174.pdf> [accessed 30 January 2022]; Sangster, 'Living as an Author in the Romantic Period: Remuneration, Recognition and Self-Fashioning', p. 109.

[61] Sangster, *Living as an Author*, p. 208.

are a heroine; you have supported yourself through difficulties with firmness"'.[62] The strength Parsons' letter conjures as she describes her physical pain in evocative and medical language underscores a determination to endure and survive this ordeal, rather than letting it conquer her. Her description ends on the verb, 'write', conveying that her plan for survival is to take action. The gravity of this is lost if one connects Parsons' descriptions in her letters to a generic image of the fictitious sentimental and gothic heroine.

Parsons' broken leg was not the product of her imagination. It could cause her ruin. It was a life-threatening concern as death from an infected wound was a grave possibility. Antibiotics would not be discovered until 1928, medical care was expensive, and there was limited pain relief. Frances Burney's widely known account of her endless screaming during her mastectomy provides grim reading but it does evidence the lack of pain relief available.[63] Not only does Parsons' broken leg cause her 'extreme Tortures', it prevents her from fulfilling part of the role of the professional writer: collecting subscription fees to support the publication of her novel. She writes that she has 'finished another Novel now in the Press, but incapable of soliciting Subscriptions in Person I fear my advantages will be very small'.[64] Her letter projects an image of resourcefulness and an ethos of being independent. It suggests that she would be walking the town gathering subscription fees for her novel instead of lying in her bed writing this begging letter if she could but walk. She worries that she is 'in the most alarming situation from the certainty of being dragged to a prison miserable Cripple as I am'.[65] Her register becomes passive as she considers the public shame and humiliation of being dragged to prison, reflecting the fact that she is being acted upon by pressures beyond her control. She is forced to be a victim as she watches her labour prove insufficient to maintain herself and her family. Moreover, these repeated and later references to an old injury demonstrate that the financial

[62] Parsons, *Lucy*, Vol. 2, p. 103.

[63] Frances Burney to Esther Burney. 22 March 1812. Berg Coll MSS Arblay. British Library <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/letter-from-frances-burney-to-her-sister-esther-about-her-mastectomy> [accessed 11 June 2021].

[64] Eliza Parsons to Dr. Dale. 17 December 1792. RLF Loan 96 1/21/1. Appendix B1a.

[65] Ibid.

and psychological consequences of a physical injury far surpass the time it takes to recover physically. Parsons' understanding of the symbiotic relationship of mental and physical health realises connections between the two which society is still processing in the twenty-first century. Parsons' first application illuminates that authorship required physical health and mental strength. Her petition was successful; she was granted 10 guineas.

Both Eliza Parsons' and Mary Pilkington's letters highlight the impact illness has on mental faculties. Parsons' two later references to her broken left leg illustrate the ongoing mental anguish that a physical injury can cause. In July 1796 she wrote that 'the dreadful accident of a broken leg which had thrown me into infinite distress and was indeed in a great degree the cause of all my subsequent difficulties'.[66] She identifies that the physical pain caused her financial and psychological difficulties: 'the difficulties I labour under are doubly distressing affect my health, and blunt the edge of genius'.[67] Similarly, Pilkington lamented that '[a] succession of Ill-health has for the last two year's not only retarded my Literary Pursuits, but deprived me of that vigour of mind so essentially necessary to an Author'.[68] Physical illness begets authorial inability. In turn, and given that they are novelists, this covertly positions novel writing as requiring mental effort and alertness. Such a representation counters Hannah More's notion of the 'frightful facility of this species of composition' through the correlation between physical illness, mental fatigue, and lack of authorial productivity.[69] Thus, while evoking pity in the reader and seeking financial help, these letters also operate to adjust More's perception that it is easy to write a novel; they demonstrate the mental and physical labour inherent

[66] Eliza Parsons to Dr. Dale. 7 July 1796. RLF Loan 96 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Mary Pilkington to the Secretary of the Literary Fund. 2 June 1810. RLF Loan 96 1/256/1. Appendix B3. Mary Pilkington made a similar point in 1825, writing that 'the Death of the Friend I was so tenderly attached to, & whose sick Bed I never quitted for nearly six years, during which period my Mind was so agitated between Hope & Apprehension, as to be almost incapable of attending to any Literary persuit [sic], independent of a few Communications to the Proprietor of a Period Work. _ This circumstance Sir, united to a state of Health, which inevitably renders the Mind inenergetic [sic], has induced me once more to apply to you, for the purpose of intreating you to recommend me as a proper Object to receive the beneficence of the Literary Institution.' Mary Pilkington to the Literary Fund. 4 January 1825. Loan 96 RLF 1/256/10.

[69] More, *Strictures*, pp. 169-170.

in authorship. Parsons' and Pilkington's presentations paint a fuller picture of the author as one embroiled within domestic duties, personal health, and within economic systems making this profession financially precarious.

To an extent, Parsons and Pilkington control the information they relay through their narratives and how they present their injuries and illnesses as they write their own letters to the Fund. Asking an acquaintance to write for you is an emotive signal. It shows that the author is still exerting some agency over their application as they request another to address the Fund but that they are too ill to write themselves. It also eschews the paradox inherent in writing a letter to the Literary Fund in which you state you are too ill to write a novel. L. West wrote a letter of thanks on behalf of Mary Pilkington in December 1810, averring that she was 'requested by my friend M^{rs} Pilkington, who owing to extreme ill health is prevented from addressing you to offer her most grateful acknowledgements for the benevolent assistance she has lately received through your hands'.[70] This letter indicates that Pilkington was not well enough to hold a pen herself and was dependent on another for communicative purposes, supporting her need for assistance as she cannot be expected to support herself through authorship if she cannot hold a pen.

Charlotte Lennox's case file presents a more extreme version of the privations of old age when another person must control – and perhaps benefit from – the state of your affairs. Lennox's case file contains twelve letters to the Fund written by other people. None state that they write at Lennox's behest, but more because she cannot write herself. One person who wrote on Lennox's behalf appears to be very experienced in applying to the Fund. William Beloe wrote that he would be 'much gratified' if John Nichols at the Fund could 'procure some assistance' for Lennox.[71] One of the receipts states that seventeen pounds and seven shillings, a very large amount, were 'Paid in March 1803 to Mr Beloe ~~and~~ to Mrs. Beloe'.[72] Then, in 1803, Beloe wrote his own letter to James Boscawen; 'I must once more

[70] [L. West?] to the Committee of the Literary Fund, on behalf of Mary Pilkington. December 1810. Loan 96 1/256/6.
[71] William Beloe to John Nichols. 14 January 1802. Loan 96 RLF 1/12/5.
[72] Receipt, signed William Beloe. 17 April 1802. Loan 96 RLF 1/12/9.

entreat your kind intervention in behalf of Mrs Lenox [sic], whose infirmities have prospectively increased & whose circumstances are greatly distressed. Your recommendation of the Committee will I know have its usual effect'.[73] The casual tone of the last line and the reference to 'usual effects' suggests that it was Beloe's standard course of action to apply on Lennox's behalf and Beloe wrote to Boscawen specifically because he knew it would be effective. Beloe and his wife received money on Lennox's behalf, and thus there is the possibility that through keeping Lennox, they kept themselves.

Thus, the presentation of the author is a seminal component in the presentation and reception of the text. An author's aged mother, elderliness, illnesses, and poverty are all shared frames of references with their audiences and are incidents which garner public interest. The physical and mental pain inherent in their applications is experienced and performed by the first-hand accounts. While their private lives and privations become public knowledge and perhaps public spectacle, this does not negate the hardship and desperation of these women as they or their acquaintances petitioned the Fund for money to survive. They balance evocative descriptions of their privation with petitions for financial assistance, catering to the era's interest in private lives but being forced to use their own lives as the subjects of tales of woe and hardship.

5.4 Letters Addressing the Economic Marginalisation of Authors in the 1790s

While some novelists could not survive on the income gained from writing, the book trade could be a lucrative market for some publishers, evidenced by Lane's Will. This section focuses on letters which refer to publishers and the interactions between authors and publishers. It argues that these reveal Lane and other publishers to be perpetuators and perpetrators of authorial poverty. As businessmen, they prioritised profits. The letters of Eliza Parsons, Isabella Kelly, Maria Hunter, and Mary Pilkington name or refer indirectly to Lane or to his successor, Anthony King Newman. Additionally, Hunter's and Pilkington's letters reference business interactions with other publishers, and the letters of Mary Julia

[73] William Beloe to William Boscawen. 14 July 1803. Loan 96 RLF 1/12/10.

Young detail the pressure imposed on her by an unnamed publisher in the 1790s, potentially Lane. Nicola Lloyd writes that Young 'like many other professional female writers—was placed under immense pressure from the publishing entrepreneurs of the day' and her experience 'encapsulates many of the hardships faced by […] women who were financially reliant on their literary output'.[74] Indeed, Young's letters are similar to those of other Minerva writers; the conditions under which professional authors (male and female) worked were intense and laborious and with relatively little reward. Their relative powerlessness in their author-publisher exchanges contradicts views held by those such as Edward Young, Mary Julia Young's godfather, about the primacy of the author for their Genius and originality in the Romantic period.[75] The author as an overworked and exploited individual comes to the fore here, providing – to borrow Jennie Batchelor's phrase – an 'UnRomantic' image of authorship.[76]

Joanna Rostek observes that '[t]he analysis and critique of the patriarchal economy marks radical interventions' in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Mary Robinson and constitutes 'moderate' interventions in texts by Jane Austen, Hester Chapone, Priscilla Wakefield, and Ann Radcliffe.[77] Whether these letters by Minerva authors are moderate or radical, they certainly constitute a critique of the patriarchal economy as they list the various injustices experienced due to publishers. These letters expose publishers' complicity in authorial poverty and highlight how publishers restricted writers' incomes and authors' access to their own books. The fact that these women wrote letters in the first place showed that they petitioned an institutionalised male authority. Their personal narratives of authorial subjugation become criticisms of a social, economic, and political system.

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[74] Nicola Lloyd, 'Mary Julia Young: A Biographical and Bibliographical Study', *Romantic Textualities* 18 (2008 [2013]), para. 2 <http://www.romtext.org.uk/reports/rt18_n04/> [accessed 11 March 2021]; Ibid.

[75] Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). Also see Bennett, *The Author*, p. 52.

[76] Jennie Batchelor uses the phrase 'UnRomantic Authorship' in 'UnRomantic Authorship: The Minerva Press and the Lady's Magazine, 1770–1820', *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840*, 23 (2020). DOI:10.18573/romtext.73.

[77] Rostek, *Women's Economic Thought in the Romantic Age*, p. 3.

Professional writers had to write at speed to earn enough to make a living, underscoring that the pay per novel was not enough to live on. Two authors, Mary Julia Young and Mary Pilkington, tell of the fast pace at which they write their novels and the difficulty of this level of productivity. Young's letter states she 'sent sheet by sheet as I finished them to the press without time even to reperuse [sic] them, such is the fate of those who write for a maintenance'.[78] She suggests that her publisher demanded the rest of her work in quick succession, and her desperation for money meant that she had no option but to work at the pace the publisher exacted of her. In contrast, Pilkington's fast work pace was self-imposed: '[f]inding that my Necessities were very pressing and that M^{r} Norris was not inclined to purchase my Productions, as fast as I can compose them, I was induced to place greater Confidence in a species of Novel which I disposed of to M^{r} Newman'.[79] Pilkington implies that Anthony King Newman, Lane's successor, offered her ready money and this attracted her to use his firm, despite saying that she did not enjoy writing the 'species of Novel'. These letters demonstrate these authors' immediate need for money and that writing novels was at times a means of, or at least presented as a means of, remedying their insolvencies with nearly immediate effect.

Such admissions demonstrate Pilkington's and Young's unintentional complicity in the perception that the novel was a simpler, and therefore easier, form to write. Considering and recognising the fast pace of production prompts one to consider if the very act of writing novels quickly contributed to maintaining the reputation of the novel as a lower form of writing. Being able to write novels quickly justified publishers paying authors less for them. The authors are therefore caught in perpetuating the lack of respect and the low payments for the form which they turned to when trying to stave off debtors and argue their cause.

To gain more money for a manuscript, authors could sell the copyright to the publisher as well. This would increase their initial payment but it would also prevent them from receiving any future profits from reprints. Selling the copyright, as William St. Clair observes, was '[a] common type

[78] Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808. Loan 96 RLF 1/216/1. Appendix B3.
[79] Mary Pilkington to James Anderson. 5 February 1815. Loan 96 RLF 1/256/8.

of contract' as '[u]nder this type of contract, the publisher met all the costs of manufacture and publication, and the author had no further financial claim'.[80] Parsons lamented to the Fund that 'as necessity always obliges me to sell the Copy right, my advantages are trifling to what the Publisher gains'.[81] Many of Parsons' works were reprinted in Dublin, but there are no records of whether these were pirated editions or whether Lane sold the manuscript onto Dublin publishers. It is impossible to know if Lane demanded the copyright for books from his authors, but one can surmise that the general low payment for manuscripts combined with many authors' pre-existing impoverished situations made selling the copyright hard to refuse. Recalling St. Clair's point about 'post-dated bills' and the frequent use of 'money-market dealers' for 'immediate cash', this letter from Parsons reveals that the most common form of contract may have granted greater payment initially, but deprived the authors in the long run. Additionally, while the publisher paid more for a manuscript and its copyright, the sums these Minerva authors received were still insufficient as they still applied to the Fund. Selling copyright simply was not enough but authors had no choice not to. Parsons, therefore, shows that she was forced to be complicit in her later poverty due to the economic machinations of the book trade.

Another letter of Young's reveals the risk to an author if their publisher becomes insolvent. While many publishers profited and made a success of the marketplace, Raven declares that '[f]or every ostentatious self-starter, from Lane and his Minerva Press to Lackington and his Temple of Muses, there are dozens of sad and stunted entries in biographical book trade registers' of those whose business failed.[82] Young had the misfortune to be published by a publisher in the latter group, writing that

> my Publisher became a Bankrupt when he was indebted to me <above> seventy pounds of which I have received only one dividend of about seven pounds, twelve months ago, and am told that no further payment can be made until debts arrive

[80] St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 161.
[81] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.
[82] Raven, *The Business of Books*, p. 295.

> from abroad. Had that money being according to my expectations, paid to the full I should not now Sir have had occasion to solicit your intercession in my behalf.[83]

Young is owed approximately two or three manuscripts worth of payment. This would have covered her expenses for almost a year. Instead, she is insolvent due to her publisher failing. If Raven's estimate of 'dozens' of such failures is accurate, Young's experience illustrates another way in which the life of the professional author was inherently precarious and challenging.

The letters to the Fund disclose other, more material ways in which the conventions and actions of publishing houses made the life of the professional author difficult. Not all of these are directly concerned with money. Publishers did not necessarily give authors their own copy of their work upon publication. Writing of the novels she produced in the 1790s, Isabella Kelly stated that she 'was never allowed to retain a Copy of one, and lately by paying twice their value I have picked up some dirty mutilated vols'.[84] Kelly published with the Minerva Press in the 1790s, before moving onto different publishers: J. Bell in 1802 and P. Norbury in 1803. Kelly's letter indicates that once she sent her manuscripts to Lane, she had no copy of her own work. Mary Julia Young also experienced this, telling the Fund that 'most of my originals, and all my translations, have been committed but once to paper'.[85] Young elaborates upon the anxiety the existence of a sole pre-publication manuscript causes an author as she was 'tormented with a thousand apprehensions from the moment the pages went out of my hands'.[86] Paper, ink, candles, and the other necessities for writing were expensive and could not be frittered away. Additionally, the time it would take to provide a second copy of a manuscript would be time that could be spent drafting another work to earn more money. Kelly's complaint that she paid 'twice their value' to gain copies of her works at a later date reveals she forfeited more of her income due to Lane's initial action of not providing author copies of her own works. 'In the romantic period new books of the time were expensive luxuries which could be bought, if at all, only

[83] Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808. Loan 96 RLF 1/216/1. Appendix B3.
[84] Isabella Hedgeland [Kelly] to Joseph Snow. 25 October 1832. Loan 96 RLF 1/632/12.
[85] Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808. Loan 96 RLF 1/216/1.
[86] Ibid.

by the richest groups in society', writes St. Clair. Kelly had to buy copies of her novels and could only afford to do so years after they were published and the prices had depreciated. Even then, the 'tranching down' or depreciation of books was 'slow'.[87] Kelly had to expend more of her money on her own works, a bitter expenditure which results in her own distaste her for 'dirty' works. These mutilated copies are apt metaphors for the disrespectful treatment of the author in the era.

Withholding, or simply not providing, author copies had other consequences. It restricted an author's ability to provide a history of their work, essential when applying to the Fund and building a case that they were worthy of assistance. Many case files include a bibliography of the author's works. Kelly attempted to provide the same. Kelly writes that 'I enclose you a list of my writings and their dates as accurately as I can' in one letter.[88] The list included in the case file comprises some 17 works.[89] There are several errors in this list. The list records that *The Ruins of Avondale Priory*, notated as *Avondale Priory*, was published in 1795, when it actually appeared in 1796; *Eva* is written as appearing in 1796 when it was 1799; and *Edwardina* is dated as 1810 but it was first sold in 1800. Kelly wrote this list more than three decades after she was first published. She was not accurate and that facts that she wrote books quickly and in large numbers and that she had no copies to verify the publication dates may have contributed to her inaccuracy. She provides what is, in essence, an unreliable account of her authorship in a situation where a reliable account would have been most beneficial. From correlating dates of letters with events they allude to, Kelly's and Young's letters refer to a time when they were publishing with the Minerva Press. Their letters indirectly critique Lane's common practices as a passive, or perhaps active, perpetuator of authorial precarity.

[87] St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 198; Ibid.

[88] Isabella Hedgeland [Kelly] to Joseph Snow. 25 October 1832. RLF Loan 96 1/632/10.

[89] List of published works by Mrs Kelly (Isabella Hedgeland). August 1832. Loan 96 RLF 1/632/10. It should be noted that this predates the letter in which she says she encloses the list and that this list has no clearly identifiable author. A librarian at the British Library Manuscripts Reference Service advises that 'the list of published works would usually be submitted by the applicant in support of their claim. However, it is possible that the list was prepared by or for Joseph Snow, who was the Clerk of the Royal Literary Fund at this time'.

Eliza Parsons' letters are more specific and vehement in their criticism of the English book trade and publishers. Parsons makes the prejudiced treatment of authors explicit in her first letter of her second application to the Fund; 'I have struggled thro' innumerable difficulties to persevere in my Employment & preserve a decent appearance knowing the illiberality of the World ridicules & tortures an unfortunate poor author'.[90] Parsons took care to showcase her social connections via prefaces.[91] She also worked to convince the Fund that she was a dutiful mother and a respectable woman whose works 'are at least Moral and lend to amend the Hearts', this letter provides a contrasting portrayal of the desperate and impoverished author.[92] It is an author whose desperation is transforming into anger. The sequencing of adjectives combined with the emotive verbs of 'struggled', 'ridicules' and 'tortures' conveys her frustration at the subjugation and at the perpetuated poverty imposed on authors.[93] The register contrasts the more beseeching tone of her first application to the Fund, suggesting an anger and perhaps a shame that she had become insolvent and dependent on the Fund for a second time, despite writing prolifically between 1792 and 1796. Returning to the atmosphere surrounding applying to charity in the 1790s, Parsons' letter demonstrates the conflicted emotions inherent in applications, where financial needs outweigh the personal wishes to preserve appearances.

Moreover, in her desperation for financial assistance, Parsons named Lane directly as someone who could attest her indigence. Parsons' first application indicates that the Fund required an account substantiating her poverty from another. She pointed them to the Lanes: 'M^{r}: & M^{rs}: Lane of Leadenhall Street have long known me, have purchased my works and know the efforts I have made to support a large family, I am sure they will have the kindness to do me justice and speak in my behalf if applied to'.[94] Yet Lane was not forthcoming in his testimony of Parsons' poverty. Parsons' next letter

[90] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.

[91] Sangster, 'Living as an Author in the Romantic Period: Remuneration, Recognition and Self-Fashioning', pp. 110-111. See also Morton, *A Life Marketed as Fiction*, pp. 60-92.

[92] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 17 December 1792. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/1. Appendix B1a.

[93] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.

[94] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 18 December 1792. RLF Loan 96 1/21/2.

reminds Dale of her reference to Lane; 'I hope you will have the goodness to pardon my importunity, but in my answer to the letter you honoured me with, I made a reference to M^{r}. and M^{rs}: Lane of Leadenhall Street as knowing me & my situation perfectly'.[95] It is possible that Dale forgot about this reference and then did contact Lane. Or it is possible that Lane did not respond to Dale's request the first time, forcing Dale to repeat the request to Parsons and then make a repeated petition to Lane. On January 5th 1793, the Fund awarded Parsons 10 guineas, to be given to her in instalments.[96] Lane may have attested Parsons' poverty, or the Fund may have confirmed this by other means. One cannot know, but it is likely that Lane did not corroborate Parsons' poverty. He was being asked to testify that one of his authors did not have enough to live on, a fact that he could directly change if he increased pay. The repetition of Lane's name combined with the absence of it in Parsons' third, fourth, and fifth applications suggests that she did not turn to Lane to support future applications. Instead, her 1796 application references a 'M^{r}. Carpenter of Bond Street who has known me & my family some years' as a source to attest her poverty.[97] These letters display a writer's desperation and anger and yet her reliance on a publisher who perpetuated her poverty. Lane was an unreliable advocate as well as an exploitative publisher and Parsons' letters create this unfavourable representation of him.

The Minerva authors who applied to the Literary Fund provided reasons for their destitution: their dependents and their illnesses being two central reasons for needing a grant from the Fund. The letters drawn on here highlight that the authors positioned publishers as another reason for their poverty. Some of the publishers' actions were beyond their control, such as Young's publisher going bankrupt. However, other letters direct the Fund's attention to the ways in which publishers limited and controlled the authors' access to their novels and their finances. The letters would be circulated

[95] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 2 January 1793. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/3. Fern Pullan has also discussed Parsons' letter referencing Lane in her thesis, 'Women's Writing In Popular Genres, 1790-1870: Gothic, Silver Fork, And Sensation', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leeds Beckett University, 2021), pp. 59-60. Pullan notes Parsons' 'acuteness': 'she names William Lane herself as one of her referees' (p 60). My thanks to Fern for allowing me access to her thesis.

[96] Edward Brooke to Thomas Dale, with schedule of payments to Eliza Parsons. 5 January 1793. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/4.

[97] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.

amongst the patrons and board members, approximately twelve gentlemen, meaning that these complaints become wider public knowledge. Isabella Kelly made the public aspect of the letter explicit, writing that the recipient had 'my full permission to give my letter to whoever your judgement may direct'.[98] Kelly wished to share her plea of poverty with others; a wider audience increased the likelihood of finding someone sympathetic to and supportive of her cause. Yet, it also disseminated the accounts of publisher power and authorial subjugation amongst more people. As such, these letters become vehicles through which these authors petitioned against their economic treatment by publishers and the literary marketplace. Their letters show that they were resourceful in identifying who they could apply to. It does not, however, show that authors had any power in the Romantic literary marketplace. On the contrary, the individual writer had very little power and ability to intervene in their own treatment by a larger publishing economy. They were trapped by a patriarchal economic system and forced to depend on another institution.

5.5 Probing the Boundaries of the Help offered by the Literary Fund

The powerlessness and desperation of these Minerva writers in the wider literary marketplace are evident. They needed money and they had no option but to apply for charity. Yet, a selection of letters from the Fund reveals that the powerlessness of the professional writer in the literary marketplace did not translate into powerlessness in their applications, negotiations, and actions regarding the Literary Fund. Certainly, they had to make their case in a way that appealed to the Fund and they were dependent on the patrons' beneficence and goodwill yet, once that was secured, certain writers tested the boundaries of the assistance the Literary Fund could provide.

This section looks at two writers whose letters modify the expected dynamic between beseeching applicant and condescending benefactor. The contents and the dates of the letters of Eliza Parsons and Isabella Kelly reveal that they requested earlier payments, sent family members to send

[98] Isabella Hedgeland to William Thomas Fitzgerald. 25 July 1828. Loan 96 RLF 1/632/3.

and receive notes and money, and made other requests from board members which were external to the parameters of the Literary Fund. It becomes evident, therefore, that these two Minerva women writers were courageous, resourceful, and innovative in how they strived to turn a situation arising from their poverty into one of financial and literary benefit.

5.5a Pressing for Advance Payments

The letters from Eliza Parsons to the Fund reveal that she negotiated the dates and sums of money she received from the Fund. Tracing when she was paid, the amounts she received, and who collected the money reveals that Parsons was given money from the Fund at moments she chose, rather than according to the Fund's schedule. Parsons' actions may be audacious, but they were motivated by desperation. On one occasion, she was unable to provide the resources necessary for her son's first voyage with the Navy and so pressed the Fund for an advance. Her letters highlight her poverty but also her determination to improve her situation and that of her offspring. When one looks at who she sent to receive money and the repeated deployment of this strategy, it becomes clear that Parsons was a resourceful individual who ensured that the assistance the Fund provided her would be as useful as possible.

Eliza Parsons requested to receive specific amounts of money at specific times. These requests were granted, meaning that the Fund deviated slightly from their intention to pay her in instalments of 'a guinea or two a week', as the top of the first letter states.[99] In January 1793, the Fund awarded Parsons the round sum of 'Ten Guineas'.[100] This was given as follows; the Fund paid her two guineas on the 6th January 1793, three guineas 'on her request by Letter' on the 10th January, two more guineas '<sent by her Son>' on the 21st January, and the remaining three guineas on the 28th January.[101] These were advance payments: Parsons asked 'if you would be so kind to advance me now two or 3 guineas

[99] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 17 December 1792. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/1. Appendix B1a.

[100] Edward Brooke to Thomas Dale, with schedule of payments to Eliza Parsons. 5 January 1793. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/4.

[101] Ibid.

instead of next week' and that she 'has taken the liberty to send my son for Two Guinea's [sic] if you will have the goodness to spare it to me'.[102] Parsons received the 10 guineas by the end of January 1793, whereas if the Fund had paid her according to their original schedule of one or two guineas a week, she would have received money in smaller instalments and it would have lasted until at least mid-February. Parsons requested larger amounts and reduced the timeframe, sometimes receiving money as little as four days apart.

The duty to provide for her children motivated Parsons. Her first request for an advance payment was because she needed to equip her son for his career in the Navy and 'he was in want of a few absolute necessaries'.[103] She explains that 'only this urgent call upon me would have induced me to take so great a liberty and will I hope procure your Pardon'.[104] Acknowledging that she is conscious of the favour she is asking for and justifying it by saying that she takes it out of motherly duty mediates the impropriety of the request. She must make this request as she has no other alternative to prepare her son for the Navy. The letter's brevity reflects the urgency of her application; she wrote it on a Thursday and her son is to set sail on the Saturday. She does not have the time to write at length. She is aware of the 'liberty' she is taking with the Fund by asking for an advance, but she takes it nonetheless as she has no other option available to her to prepare her son for the Navy. Moreover, the postscript indicates that Parsons has a close relationship with her son; 'I can confide in my son that waits on you'.[105] He is aware of the exigencies of their situation. This admission is emotive; it is the reverse of a conventional parent-child relationship where the parent cares for their child. Parsons has had to admit she cannot prepare her son for the Navy by herself and that she is dependent on the goodwill of the Literary Fund. This is a humbling admission, eliciting an image of a mother simply wanting to do her best by her child but unable to without external assistance.

[102] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 10 January 1793. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/5; Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 21 January 1793. RLF Loan 96 1/21/6.
[103] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 10 January 1793. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/5.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

Motherhood, duty, and desperation are combined with resourcefulness in this letter. Parsons sent her son to receive this advance payment. Perhaps this was because her left leg was still painful and it troubled her to walk. However, it was also a judicious move to send the son who was going to be the main beneficiary of the money to collect the money. It engages him in the relationship of provider and recipient and the Fund meet the man whose career they are directly assisting by advancing the money. This intensifies the emotion attached to her request for an advanced payment of a larger sum of money, perhaps a move made knowingly by Parsons.

Over the next three years, Parsons introduced another two of her children to the Literary Fund by using them to deliver notes and collect money. In January 1793, she sent a different son to collect another two guineas and in 1796 she sent one of her daughters, writing '[i]f you will have the goodness to give my Daughter the order you mention, to the Treasurer of the payment of the money, it will add to the obligations already conferred on Sir your grateful & obedient humble Serv^{t} Eliza Parsons'.[106] Sending her children to the Fund provides visual corroboration of the other individuals who are depending on her income. It attaches faces to the eight 'fatherless' children who depend on her for 'preservation […] from the worst of Evils'.[107] Parsons, once more, is endeavouring to fulfil her maternal role, embodying Batchelor's contention that '[t]he public function of the woman writer […] derived precisely from her domestic and private virtues'.[108] Parsons verbally and physically loads her applications with her desire to mother: to care for, to protect, to provide for, to guide. By drawing on one resource of motherhood, her children, Parsons' applications show that she applies to the Fund because she is eligible to do so as a writer but her letters reveal that she needs their financial assistance because she is a mother. Her domestic duties are too expensive for her professional role, and yet she cannot give up her children. Her negotiation of dates and advance payments of specific funds was courageous and resourceful. Using her sons and daughter to collect money was ultimately

[106] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 25 July 1796. Loan 96 RLF 1/21/9.
[107] Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 28 January 1793. RLF Loan 96 1/21/7; Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 18 December 1792. RLF Loan 96 1/21/2.
[108] Batchelor, *Woman's Work*, p. 174.

for their benefit. That they delivered and collected notes highlights that she was unable to survive without the practical and financial assistance of others, despite her prolific rate of writing and her second position as a seamstress.

Parsons' presentation as an author is deliberately inextricable from her presentation as a mother. To provide for her children, she endures 'the illiberality [sic] of the World [which] ridicules & condemns an unfortunate poor author'.[109] Her presentation is that of a mother deliberately suffering the injustices perpetrated on professional novelists to fulfil her maternal duties. She directs attention to the specific circumstances of many of her transactions with publishers, highlighting their unjust treatment of her. Her poverty, perpetuated by the economic systems of the literary marketplace, results in her desperate and resourceful letters. While Parsons openly admits her poverty in her letters and in the preface to *Miss Meredith* (1790), later prefaces do not mention it. Instead, she dedicates works as a means of thanking her patrons for their 'goodness and favour' or their 'favour and indulgence'.[110] Her poverty remains discernible, but it is less explicit in the novels' prefaces. Her presentation as an author in her preface alters throughout the 1790s. Her private letters to the Fund convey the interminable threat of poverty throughout the 1790s and early 1800s, while the prefaces portray a gentler and more gentlewomanly account of her profession. It is a more palatable presentation for the readers unacquainted with the systems of the literary marketplace. Authorship does not 'manifest as a last resort' in her prefaces, contrary to Sangster's view, but it must manifest as a last resort in her letters to show her desperation. It is in these letters that scholars encounter the precarity of the author in raw terms, designed for a limited number of readers who were attuned to the exigencies of authorship and in position to help. Parsons received 45 guineas from the Fund between 1792 and 1803 and she navigated how they could help her with courage and resourcefulness. The Fund gave her financial assistance, suggesting she did meet their criteria for being a deserving author.

[109] Eliza Parsons to Dr Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796. RLF Loan 96, 1/21/8. Appendix B1b.

[110] Parsons, *Ellen and Julia*, Vol. 1, a^{r}; Parsons, *Women as they are*, Vol. 1, p. v.

5.5b Positioning the Literary Fund as Literary Agents

While Parsons negotiated the dates and amounts of payment, Isabella Kelly negotiated the means of help the Fund could provide. Kelly approached the Fund for financial assistance and help with publishing. Like Parsons, Kelly involved her daughter in her exchanges with the Fund, as Kelly's request for help in publishing was for her daughter:

> I venture to solicit your advice suspecting a little French work arranged by my daughter, which is calculated to direct the French scholar in the elegant accuracies of the idioms, and pronunciation of the language; could you in your acquaintance with the various departments of literary recommend to her a publisher? She would require very little for the M.S. her anxiety being to have it published: she will present this and save you the trouble of writing.
>
> I am perfectly aware of more than you have described of inaccuracies and blunders in the Etimon "Epitome", I know nothing of Latin and it went from the press "with all its imperfections on its head": the works published by country Publishers are seldom if ever patronized by the trade in town, and this of ours was never I believe advertised; the time of 9^{d} was for subscribers but it is now bound up in one Vol: and sold for 5^{o}6 if you xx or any of your friends could speak a word in its favour to the superiors of schools it might further its sale and enable us to liquidate part of the printing expenses which I lament to say are still due to the printer.
>
> […]
>
> My daughter (Mrs Crookshank) will have the pleasure to present this, and will indeed be grateful and gratified for any advice or direction you may have the kindness to give her.[111]

[111] Isabella Kelly to Joseph Snow. 4 August 1832. RLF Loan 96 1/632/8. Appendix B4a.

Kelly asks the Fund to act as a literary agent for her daughter's French manuscript and for her own Latin translation. Kelly's daughter is sent to deliver the letter, connecting a person to the reference to her daughter.

Kelly's letter addresses the Fund more as literary agents than as financial aids. In this, she seeks to expand the type of help they could provide, broadening literary philanthropy to include publication and publicisation. It also shows that Kelly is aware of how the Fund may help her in a way which has longstanding benefits; she seeks potential future patrons or propitious literary connections by writing to the Fund. Such connections would be more beneficial for Kelly's family than a one-off payment. Her letters reveals that she values these as equal to receiving the immediate financial assistance.

Initially, the Fund did not meet Kelly's request. Kelly, however, perseveres in asking for this literary assistance and repeats the situations of her own 'unsold' book and her daughter's 'French work in M.S. which would improve a good French scholar in the elegance of the language' in her next letter.[112] She elaborates further on the actions they have taken to try and secure publication for her daughter's manuscript, 'we have applied to many in the literary department for employment but all have pleaded prior engagements'.[113] It is therefore necessary for her 'venture once more to entreat your generous commiseration'.[114] Kelly's determination came to fruition as the Fund suggested that the daughter visited Hatchard as a potential publisher of her work.

Kelly was extremely proactive in her attempts to act on Snow's information to secure a publisher for her daughter's manuscript. Kelly's daughter visited Hatchard on the very same day that Snow recommended him. A second letter Kelly wrote on 22 August 1832 thanks the patrons for their 'unmerited attentions and kind intentions' but laments that 'Mr Hatchard was out of town and not expected for a fortnight or three weeks, and Mrs Crookshank thought it advisable <that> such a letter

[112] Isabella Hedgeland [Kelly] to the Committee of the Literary Fund. 22 August 1832. Loan 96 RLF 1/632/9. Appendix B4b.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

as yours should be presented personally'.[115] Kelly's daughter, Mrs. Crookshank, wants to present the letter in person, presumably to maximise the chances of Hatchard accepting her manuscript. These letters reveal that the financial donor has been transformed into a literary agent. Kelly is resourceful in asking the members of the Fund to introduce her and her daughter to publishers and she is driven as she seeks to engage this publisher with her daughter's manuscript. Her letters convey her resilience and resourcefulness as she seeks to extend the boundaries of the help the Fund can offer her.

Underlying Parsons' introductions of two of her sons and one of her daughters and Kelly's introduction of her daughter to the committee members is each woman's role as a mother and as an author. They describe their helpless and fatherless children in their applications to the Fund, but their use of their children as intermediaries makes the financial exchange personal and increasingly emotive. Each woman's determination to reap the benefits of the Fund as much as she can indicates both their great need for assistance but also their ingenuity as they approach the Fund for literary and professional assistance, as well as financial. They act in this way in the name of authorship; using authorship to excuse their actions of motherhood and using motherhood to excuse their presentations of their authorial need and pursuits.

Through the medium of letters, the six women investigated in this chapter – Eliza Parsons, Mary Pilkington, Isabella Kelly, Mary Julia Young, Charlotte Lennox, and Maria Hunter – make the patrons of the Fund aware of the unjust treatment of professional writers and the inherent precarity in living as an author in the Romantic period. Their letters disclose to scholars the untenability of the Romantic ideal of the author as a solitary genius who distances themselves from writing for mercantile reasons. These women's lives, those of their children and their parents, depend on the marketplace altering their treatment of authors. These letters reveal that making a reasonable living by their writing was not a viable option for many. Even when they did write prolifically, the threat of debtor's prison

[115] Isabella Hedgeland to Joseph Snow. 22 August 1832. Loan 96 RLF 1/632/11. Appendix B4c; Ibid.

loomed. Their letters adhere to homocentric models of labour and a hierarchy of literature which disadvantages the female novelist, yet all they while they craft a feminine experience of authorship. The women make use of their roles as daughters, widows, and mothers to add weight to their professional labour as authors and to forge social relationships with the patrons at the Fund. The women do not seek to overturn the reputation of the novel. Rather, they are, to some extent, complicit in its denigration. The writers acquiesce that the popular novel remains an undesirable 'Species'.[116] However, the Fund provided them with a platform to argue that they were worth assisting. Applicants marry the personal privations they experience with the economic and material marginalisation of writers by saying they are usually forced to sell the copyright and they have no access to their own works after they send a manuscript to a publisher. Hunter, Kelly, and Parsons also show remarkable opportunism in asking for specific types of help or, in Hunter's case, for asking for help when it was not necessarily vital. They wanted to ameliorate their existence as authors and their strategies for doing so are demonstrate resilience, innovation, and determination.

These letters read as individual accounts of personal deprivation perpetuated by publishers and by the widespread, ongoing lack of respect for this form. Yet, while individual and individualised, the letters share common tropes, rhetoric, and reasons why they are impoverished. There was a systemic prejudice against female authors in the 1790s. This was reputational, as seen in the stereotyping of the female writer in reviews, and also financial, as demonstrated in these letters. Despite these letters, the treatment of the female author did not improve much. Isabella Kelly, a popular Gothic author in the 1790s and first two decades of the nineteenth century, found herself in the exact same impoverished position in the 1830s as Eliza Parsons did in the 1790s. The respect for and payment of popular novelists remained unchanged from the 1790s until the mid-1810s, when the entrance of the *Waverley* novels incited a reappraisal of the form to some extent.

[116] Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808. RLF Loan 96 1/216/1. Appendix B2.

Conclusion

Narratives of authorship are complex and multifaceted. In this thesis, I concentrate on a selection of female writers who published with the Minerva Press. I observed that many female writers at the Press focused on the concept of the female writer and the status of the novel in their texts and I theorised that authorship was an enduring concern for these writers and a concept with which they engaged with through their texts. Using Vivien Jones' statement that 'writing women into eighteenth-century literary history involves scrupulous attention to the details of this ambivalent position', I trace and examine the ways in which some Minerva writers defined, nuanced, and to some extent redefined the role and status of the female author and the novel.[1] By attending to the minor narratives, the subtexts, the frames and paradigms, and the characterisation of the author-figure and reader in novels, I argue that the Minerva writers conceptualised and presented the female author and the novel in both conservative and more liberally-minded ways. By presenting a balanced view of the female author and of popular fiction, I argue that the representations of authorship in Minerva Press novels seek to expand the concept of the Romantic period author in their society.

In Chapter One, I pay close attention to the specifics of ascriptions, or authorial identities, of representations of the author-figure to understand more about representations and configurations of an author on title pages. My taxonomy of title page ascriptions, grouping certain ascriptions with common features together, reveals that there are layers to authorial ascriptions and there are gradations of anonymity. In identifying other forms and manifestations of authorial ascriptions and identities, I destabilise the prevalence of the anonymous author in the Minerva corpus. Additionally, my research shows that ascriptions hitherto perceived as anonymous could and did promote other elements of an identity: the writer's gender, for example, or a list of their previous works. My approach prioritised looking at identity through specific elements of an ascription, rather than through writers'

[1] Vivien Jones, 'Introduction', in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-13 (p. 12).

names. It proceeded from text (title page), to author-figure, to writer, rather than the reverse. To approach a text by its named author attaches a set of connotations and expectations to a novel. Calling something 'Radcliffean' projects a reader's expectations of Radcliffe (perhaps of her Gothic plots, focus on nature, persecuted heroines) onto a text. This is why studying title page ascriptions reveals how an author-figure was created in that precise moment. This is crucially important as we seek to understand more about the Romantic period author, identity, and legacies. The Minerva texts complicate the correlation between consumerism and canon. This chapter reveals the numerous ascriptions a single writer could use, thereby illustrating the chameleonic reinvention of the author-figure throughout a writer's career, providing a way to approach authorship in the Romantic period which focuses on the malleable and strategically managed qualities of an authorial identity.

In Chapter Two, I trace how writers presented the author-figure and their texts in relation to a variety of other subject positions: reviewer, dedicatee, parent, literary critic. I argue that the figure of the author gains definition and purpose when contrasted with other participants in the book trade, signifying that an author-figure's meaning was not discrete. Moreover, the Minerva authors used their prefaces to craft specific hermeneutic starting points – frameworks of interpretation and reception – for their novels. They devised canons prioritising specific contemporary writers and these invited comparisons between their novels and those of the invoked writers. Rather than capitulating to the established frames of reference invoked by reviewers, some writers cultivated their own framework of reference and reception. They suggest in what company and milieu their works will be most enjoyed or best received. Such prefaces demonstrate an awareness that the reception of a text ought to be highly specific to that text. This suggests a need to think critically about what frameworks are used to approach Minerva novels. A future project could be to read Minerva Press novels within the canons or lists of novels crafted in their prefaces to see what this framework and network of authors reveals about shared concerns of the time. These women adjust the focus away from their male predecessors and write women into current literary history. They direct their readers to the names of other women authors who they should read and admire. This sorority of select female writers, however, leaves

those who are not included as labelled as copyists or raw girls whose works do not merit the praise of their peers.

The characterised and caricatured writer and the reader are the foci of Chapters Three and Four. Their presence in novels reveals that these figures were deemed to be of public interest and it reflects that the stereotyping of the reader and the writer were ripe for speculation and interpretation. The wide array of writer-characters and reader-characters and their varying trajectories in Minerva Press novels illustrates the uniqueness inherent in responses to literature, indicating that the Minerva novels embody an approach to reading which did not homogenise writers or novels. Chapter Three contrasts the denigratory stock types of the female writer against the commercial viability and the successes of real-life female writers, demonstrating a disjunction between perception and actuality of the female writer. Bennett, in replicating literary society's concerns about the female writer, caters for popular taste while demonstrating her own discernment in evaluating what constitutes a popular novel and, in part, fuels the belittling treatment of popular authors by reproducing nuanced versions in her own works. Chapter Four demonstrates the individuality of reading. While catering to public opinion about the pernicious nature of novels, writers included minor narratives which posit alternate responses to novels. It closed by turning to Anna Larpent's diaries to shed light on how a real reader engaged with Minerva novels. Larpent's journals attest the individual attention she bestowed on each novel; she did not let cultural prejudices deter the focus she gave to each novel, but her diaries also show that she did not wholesale praise or critique Minerva novels. Her diaries evidence a critical open-mindedness.

The final chapter explores letters sent by a selection of Minerva Press authors to the Literary Fund. These letters provided dramatic and vivid accounts of the precarity of authors in the 1790s. Turning to these letters at the end of the thesis invites comparison between the treatment of novelists in the 1790s, explored and engaged with in Chapters Two to Four, and the hardship of some writers' lives. These letters evoke images of authors who are desperate, yet innovative and resilient. Such understanding of the author is missed when one concentrates solely on the novels themselves. While

prefaces may allude to precarity and hardship, the raw detail of poverty is glossed over in a novel. Each author approached the Fund for financial help, and, in some cases, vied opportunistically for literary assistance as well.

Cumulatively, my thesis reveals the author-figure to be a multifaceted, complex, and chameleonic entity in the late-eighteenth century whose presentation is dependent on numerous factors. I seek to make two contributions to knowledge on the Romantic-period author. Firstly, Minerva Press texts demonstrate that the part of the text in which the presentation of the author is located, the audience of that text, and the purpose of that text (to entertain or to plead for assistance, for example) has significant bearing on the presentation of the author and what attributes of authorship are emphasised or shrouded. Secondly, Minerva Press novels provide narratives which broadly reinforce the prejudices against which their writers prevailed and, at times, succumbed to. The Minerva writers project the author, at times, to be a humble servant, the belittled young writer, the precarious mother, and they portray the novel to have deleterious influences. These novels do not initiate a reinvention of the female author or the popular novel. Yet, by attending to the minor narratives of these novels and the strategic framing of the novel and of the author-figure, one can realise that the Minerva Press portrayals of authorship show the complexity and variability inherent in the position of the author and they indicate that this plurality should be highlighted in current scholarship on the Romantic-period author. Indeed, two writers whose works withstood the test of time more so disdained to associate with the Press and crafted their authorship without mentioning the publishing house which launched their careers. William Godwin and Amelia Opie published their first works with the Minerva Press. Godwin published *Imogen: a Pastoral Romance* in 1784 and Opie published *The Dangers of Coquetry* in 1790. Both novels were anonymously published. Godwin never laid claim to *Imogen* on later title pages: Opie, likewise. The pressures of reputation and reception, the expectations of authorship, written form, and gender, and the commerciality of the book trade influenced these writers and the Minerva writers' portraits of authorship. The versatile, multifaceted construction of the author explored in this thesis presents authorship to be a complex performance,

where fact and fiction can merge and where the protean nature of identity means the author in the Romantic-period is a shifting, flexible, selective, commodified, and composite construction.

Appendices

Appendix A – Taxonomy of Authorial Identities

The following taxonomy was devised after I had researched and collated information on authors in the 544 Minerva Press works of fiction published between 1775 and 1809. These terms apply to the title page authorial ascriptions found on Minerva Press title pages. They relate to the rest of the thesis by highlighting the flexibility of the authorial identity in the Romantic period, establishing the notion that the figure of the author has both individual and group characteristics, unique yet sharing commonalities with other writers' identities.

Term	Definition
Onymous	The full legal name of the writer is given, including first name and surname. E.G. 'Anna Maria Mackenzie'
Pseudonymous	A false or fictitious name is used. E.G. 'Gabrielli' or 'Catherine Harris'
Anonymity	No name or signature of any kind appears on the title page. There is no ascription at all.
Monogrammatic-anonymity	Initials are used as the authorial ascription. E.G. 'C. R.'
Substantive-anonymity	The ascription contains the title of the author-figure and no first name. The sex of the writer is clear through the noun used. E.G. 'Mrs. Parsons', 'a Young Lady', or 'a Gentleman'
Pseudo-anonymity	The writer's onym is not in evidence on the title page but it can be discovered through a title page chain, 'by the Author of X' where 'X' is an onymous novel. E.G. 'by the Author of Monmouth'; the title page of *Monmouth* displays an onym.
Quasi-anonymity	Where the title page identity is formed by the ascription 'by the Author of Y' but 'Y' is an anonymous novel. E.G. 'by the author of Edmund or the Child of the Castle'; the title page of *Edmund or the Child of the Castle* is anonymous.

Methodology:

To categorise a title page, I looked at the first element of the title page ascription. For example, if the title page transcript read 'Frederic And Louisa; A Novel. In Four Volumes. By The Author Of Adeline' This would be quasi-anonymous because the 'by the author of…' phrase is the first part of the authorial ascription. If the title page ascription was 'Ellen And Julia. A Novel, In Two Volumes. By Mrs. Parsons, Author Of Errors Of Education, Woman As She Should Be, Intrigues Of A Morning, And Castle Of Wolfenbach' then this is labelled as substantive-anonymity as the first part of the authorial ascription is 'By Mrs. Parsons', and the title page link, 'by the author of…' comes second.

Naturally, there could be some overlap between the categories owing to the composite nature of authorial ascriptions. The title page of *Ellen and Julia* could be substantively-anonymous and quasi-anonymous depending on what element the researcher prioritised. However, for the purposes of this thesis and appreciating the first way in which the author-figure was presented on the title page, I have prioritised the element that came first.

Appendix B – Selected Letters to the Literary Fund

The eight letters I have transcribed below are held at the British Library, London. To reference them, I have given the name of the letter writer and the name of the recipient, the date when the letter was written, and the archive reference. The archive reference is in the form of RLF Loan 96 1/….

I have provided transcripts of the eight letters I referenced most frequently in Chapter 5, believing this to most assist the reader in understanding the fuller context of these complete letters. To my knowledge, these are the first published transcripts of these letters.

These transcriptions are included with the kind permission of the Royal Literary Fund.

Methodology:

All letters are transcripts of the original letters seen in person at the British Library, London, and have been checked for accuracy on two subsequent occasions.

These letters were transcribed according to the plain-text style methodology outlined by the General Editors of *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*. The plain-text methodology was used to provide transcripts of the letters which were faithful to what the original letter writers wrote. No spellings have been corrected in the transcribing process and no amendments to punctuation have been made. The writers were inconsistent in their use of full stops and sometimes used an underscore in lieu of a full stop. I have endeavoured to transcribe these as accurately as possible. Paragraph breaks have been reflected as they were on the original letters. Some writers used a hyphen to connect two halves of a word if it ran over two lines. These have been kept where they were used. I have not kept any indents of new paragraphs in this transcription as reflecting these accurately is very difficult given the different margins of the letter paper and this thesis' paper sizes. Additionally, keeping those would not have contributed any new meaning.

As outlined by the General Editors of *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, the following processes were applied to these letters:

- Deletions are indicated by striking through the cancelled word and, where legible, the original word has been transcribed.
- Illegible characters are denoted by the letter 'x' and the number of x's reflects as closely as possible the number of illegible characters.
- Underlined words in the letters have been put in italics.
- Editorial square brackets, […], indicate the few rare occasions where a letter has been damaged and is now missing. This was most frequent where the seal of the letter was.
- Editorial <…> denote the writer's insertion above or below the line with the added word or words included within the arrows.

Please see Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford, and Ian Packer, 'About this Edition. Editorial Methodology', *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, *Romantic Circles.* This is available at:

https://romantic-circles.org/editions/southey_letters/letterEEd.26.about.html.

Appendix B1: Eliza Parsons

B1a. Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 17 December 1792

RLF Loan 96 1/21/1. British Library, London.

Dec, 17. 1792. To D^{r}. Dale

Jan^{y} 1793. 10 Gs. voted. to be dispensed by D^{r}. Dale at the rate of a guinea or two a week.

Sirs

Not properly comprehending the full extent of your Benevolent Institution for the Benefits of Unfortunate Authors in Distress, I know not how far I may presume from my unhappy situation to claim any assistance, or whether the very small degree of merit I can boast from trifling publications will entitle me to your Considerations. Necessity however, the most powerful of all plea's compells me to make the application, if I presume too much, I beseech you Sir to let that necessity plead as my excuses. Three years since the Death of a Worthy and respectable Husband, left me under the most deplorable Circumstances with Eight children entirely unprovided for! born and accustomed to affluence I had no recourses but my needle & pen, poor & insufficient supports for so large a Family,

yet I was compelled to avail myself of the fashion of the times and write Novels which I trust tho' perhaps deficient in Wit and Spirit are at least Moral and tend to amend the Hearts. I wrote "Miss Meredith" in Two Volumes and after that "The Errors in Education" in Three Vol[s] and Translated a play of Moliere's which was performed as an after piece at Covent Garden. _ My sole View was to realise a small sum to place Myself in Business and enable me to place out some of my children, but an unhappy accident rendered my endeavors fruitless, plunged me into Difficulties and has reduced me to the painful necessity of this Application. On the 2 of last January by a dreadful fall I had the misfortune to break my left leg, a Compound Fracture of the worst kind which Confined me near Six months to my Bed without the possibility of getting a shilling expending the little I had saved which was insufficient for my support, and obliged unavoidably to Contract Debts which now threaten me with impending Evil within a few days. Still confined to my room my leg on a pillow, splinters of Bones Continually working thro' which keeps me in extreme Tortures, I have been nevertheless obliged to struggle with Pain and try to write. I have finished another Novel now in the Press, but incapable of soliciting Subscriptions in Person I fear my advantages will be very small, and at this time I am in the most alarming situations from the certainty of being dragged to a prison miserable Cripple as I am if I do not raise near Twenty Pounds for Christmas besides little wants that will Oppress me till next March. After several helpless nights and wretched days it occurred to be that an application to your Benevolent Society might possibly afford me some assistance and that such Hearts could not be Insensible to the distress of the Widow and Fatherless; if I judge wrong and do not come under the description of merit in distress Deign Sir to pardon this liberty as painful to my own feelings, as presumptuous to you.

I have the Honor to remain Sir

your much obliged and obedient Servant Eliza Parsons

No. 5 Princes Place, Vauxhall Road, Lambeth, Decem[br] 17

D[r]. Dale M.D.

B1b. Eliza Parsons to Thomas Dale. 7 July 1796

RLF Loan 96 1/21/8. British Library London.

July 7. 1796 To Dr Dale

July 1796

10 guineas voted

Sir,

I scarce know what words to preface an Apology for I fear an unwarrantable presumption; about three years and half ago, when labouring under the dreadful Accident of a broken leg which had thrown me into infinite distress, and was indeed in a great degree the cause of all my subsequent difficulties; thro' your kindness Sir I received a very handsome donation from the Literary Society. therefore 'tis with a very ill grace that that I presume to make a second appli=cation; but necessity often compels one to act contrary to the feelings of Delicacy and decorum, and on that plea I trust your humanity will forgive if you cannot approve of this liberty. My former Application, & your enquiries I believe Sir made known to you, that a series of misfortunes had deprived <me> of a respectable Husband, a good fortune, and left me a Widow with Eight young children to support. Necessity, not inclination, nor any opinion of my talents induced me to turn author, and in the course of little more than five years, I have written five & Twenty Volumes, under all the disadvantages of a disordered Body & Mind, for I have struggled thro' innumerable difficulties to persevere in my Employment & preserve a decent appearance knowing the illiberality of the World ridicules & condemns an unfortunate poor author. I have for some years held a place in his Majesty's Household, Sempstress in Ordinary to the wardrobe about forty Pounds which is regularly paid was very inadequate to the support of so large a family as I have brought up; but the Civil list is now in the seventh Quarter of arrears consequently all my support has been derived from my little abilities in writing, with the additional hardship that I have been obliged by the nature of my employment to lay out a good deal of ready money & has greatly embarrassed me from the want of money to pay my just debts. Indeed what I have suffered for the last six months is not to be described, and the distress brought upon me has compelled me to leave my residence in town 22 Leicester Square where I have lodged a year and half, and fly where I now am to avoid applications I cannot comply with, and insults I do not deserve, but low minded people cannot be reasoned with & 'tis in vain to tell them I will pay, when I am paid _ Money is scarce & they will not wait. Unable to bear unmerited reproaches, and fearful of impending Evil, I have been driven to the mortifying necessity of quitting my home and having a temporary residence here, but sure nothing is so painful to a feeling mind as such kind of concealments, and a spirit oppressed gives little scope for the power of fancy or fertility of Imagination requisite in all works of fiction; therefore at this time when "my daily labour must earn my daily bread" the difficulties I labour under are doubly distressing affect my health, and blunt the edge of genius. The public have honored my writings with general appro=bation infinitely more

than I could hope for; but as necessity always obliges me to sell the Copy right, my advantages are trifling to what the Publisher gains.

M[r]. Carpenter of Bond Street who has known me & my family some years, has encouraged me to make this application thro' you Sir to the Generous & Benevolent Society who foster genius & assist indigent talents. Should I be so fortunate to obtain your interest, and fall under the Consideration of those beneficent gentlemen, a line addressed to me at Point Pleasant Wandsworth fields _ Wandsworth Surrey will bring me joyfully to wait on you; if on the contrary I am still pursued by ill fortune, and am deemed too presuming on benevolence; Deign Sir to pardon this liberty & let not my intrusion operate to the disadvantage of others. I have the honour to remain with respect & gratitude, Sir

your much obliged and most obedient servant Eliza Parsons

Point Pleasant Wandsworth Fields

July 7 1796

Appendix B2: Mary Julia Young

Mary Julia Young to the Literary Fund. 28 March 1808

RLF Loan 96 1/216/1. British Library, London.

April 2 1808

£15 granted

35 Oxford Street, March 26. 1808.

April 2 1808, £15 granted

Sir,

As Mr. Rough is at present greatly occupied by professional affairs, on the Circuit, he has requested me to thank you, most gratefully, in his name and my own for the very kind attention you have paid to his solicitations in my behalf, and to give you the account of my publications which you require; of their number and titles I will inclose a list; of their value *I* am an incompetent judge, and by one part

of your letter to Mr R I am fearful lest you Sir should condemn them all as worthless – trembling, therefore at the difficulty of obtaining your interest as a Novelist, yet permit me to plead for myself before you withdraw me from your patronage.

Brought up under the immediate care of a sensible and virtuous mother who early taught me to discriminate between right and wrong, both in living characters and those in literary productions, I have strictly adhered to her excellent instructions in the works of fancy which I have written, and considering Novels as a species of literature sought after with avidity by the younger part of both sexes I have invariably, to the extent of my abilities, endeavoured to render the strictest observance of relative duties and indispensable to amiable and sensible characters, and to inculcate virtue, fortitude, and benevolence by the most engaging examples; nor can I accuse myself of having written either in my original compositions or translation "One line which dying, I could wish to blot." on account of the slightest immoral tendency.

May I not also plead that I have followed, although at a humble distance, the steps of many Males and Females whose names are respected and whose talents are admired tho; they have condescended to gather their wreaths of Fame from the flowery vales of fiction?

But if all that I can say in defence of myself, as a Voluminous scribbler in Prose and Rhyme, will have no effect, may I not have some claim to your patronage as the *only* surviving relative of Dr. Edward Young, of Welwyn, who in almost all countries and by all sects is esteemed as one of the brightest ornaments of English Literature? – May the respect due to his justly celebrated <name> induce you Sir to be the *Advocate and Friend* of his lonely Kinswoman, who though born into two very large families is now the *last* of both, even the younger branches having all died in infancy, or in the prime of life, except myself who have survived six brothers and sisters and twenty five cousins, which may certainly be deemed as remarkable, as it has been to *me* unfortunate. Dr. Young honour'd my father with his friendship and was Godfather to my eldest Brother, to whom he gave his own name, Edward; I have several letters in my possessions written by the sublime Author of the Night Thoughts, which Mr Rough has seen.

You ask Sir for my Chef d'oeuvre – Alas! my literary family can scarcely boast of one superior to the rest if I am partial to one more than another I think it is to Rights and Wrong – but as they are all in the Circulating Libraries and have what the trade call a very fair reading; perhaps some Ladies of your acquaintance may have read a part of them and will pass their judgement. Mr. Shury of Berwick Street, a subscriber to the Literary Fund, has printed most of my books and given a favourable opinion of them, he also knows that my Publisher became a Bankrupt when he was indebted to me

<above> seventy pounds of which I have received only one dividend of about seven pounds, twelve months ago, and am told that no further payment can be made until debts arrive from abroad. Had that money being according to my expectations, paid to the full I should not now Sir have had occasion to solicit your intercession in my behalf with the liberal Society of which you are a member as I should be clear in the world, with a sufficiency to sup-port me until I obtained a supply by a future production; but since that loss I have in vain endeavour'd, by the strictest economy, and the closest application to my literary pursuits, to extricate myself from pecuniary embarrassments and maintain, in the credit I have hitherto done, a life of humble retirement; and this very severe winter by injuring my health, has added to my embarrassments, if you think they intitle me to a claim on the bounty of the Literary Institution I trust my cause in your hands; and will bend sub-missively to your decision if you think it is not likely to prove successful as I would on any account subject you Sir to the disagreeable task of pleading for me in vain.

I have taken the liberty of inclosing, with the list of my books, two sonnets, the tenth and sixteenth, from my printed Poems, which I think will at least engage your pity for the writer as they flowed from a sorrowful heart. I wish that I could as easily send you one of my Novels, as those in my own library have been corrected – that is, in the numerous *typographical errors* with which, added to my *own*, they have appeared in the world; most of my originals, and all my translations, have been committed but *once* to paper, and sent sheet by sheet as I finished them to the press without time even to reperuse them, such is the fate of those who write for a maintenance, and tormented with a thousand apprehensions from the moment the pages went out of my hands I have felt thankful what they *are* even with the errors of the press for which I hoped the readers would make allowance as few books escape them … For this intrusion on your time I hope Sir, you will pardon you most Obliged and Obedient servant Mary Julia Young.

Appendix B3: Mary Pilkington

Mary Pilkington to the Secretary of the Literary Fund. 2 June 1810

RLF Loan 96 1/256/1. British Library, London.

To ___ Esq^{re}

Secretary to the

Literary Institution

Gerrard Street Soho.

June 1810 £10.10 voted

Sir

I am aware that I ought to apologise for taking the liberty of addressing a Gentleman to whom I have not the honour of being personally known; yet the only apology I can venture to offer, is, the Conviction I feel that true Benevolence must actuate the feelings of that Being who undertakes the Office of Secretary to an Institution established upon the basis of Humanity.

When first informed Sir that a Fund had been established for the Reward & Support of Literary Merit, struggling under *Sickness*, & *Misfortune* my heart glowed with sensations of Delight, & most sincerely did I regret not being able to add my mite to such a noble proof of Feeling & Generosity, little imagining I should be reduced to the necessity ~~xxx~~ <of imploring aid> from that beneficent Institution I so much admired.

In what manner to apply for that assistance, Sir, of which I stand, in so much need, I am wholly ignorant; allow me then to ask whether it ought to be in the form of a Petition addressed to the Benevolent Society at Large? or in a statement of Facts made to one of the Benevolent Member's. – if the latter measure is most orderly, I should esteem it a particular favour Sir if you would indulge me with a list of the Governors, & Subscribers, as I doubt not, but there may be some amongst the number to whom as an *individual*, & an Author, I may be known. –

If a simple statement of my real situation should alone be necessary, I will in as few words as possible impart it.

Permit me then to inform you Sir, that I am the Daughter of the late M^{r} Hopkins an eminent Surgeon at Cambridge; I was Educated under the prospect of enjoying an Independent, if not an affluent fortune, but either by an Error in the form of the title Deeds of an Estate, or by the illegal conduct of a Brother of my Father's, it was claimed by him, as *Heir Male*, & at the age of fifteen I was thrown destitute upon the World with only a few Hundred Pounds the legacy of my Grandfather to support me. _ The same dark cloud which overspread my faltering Prospects, overshadowed those of an amicable and tenderly attached mother, whose mind sinking under the weight of affliction <she> fell a Prey to the most dreadful of all human infirmi<ties>; *Insanity*. – From this deplorable situation she was at length rescued by the kind attentions of Doctor Monro, & in a few years afterwards I married M^{r} Pilkington a Surgeon, at a time when my trifling legacy was nearly expended in the support of my

Mother & self – M^{r} P- was endowed with an amicable disposition & a generous Heart; but alas! totally devoid of Worldly Providence, & in a very short time <he> was compelled to resign his situation & seek support in the Navy. _ various were the Plans which my friends suggested both before, & after this second Trial; Fortune however smiled not upon my Undertakings; for though I could have supported my Self the expences of attending my poor Mother, exceeded the Income derived from Exertion. _ at length I obtained a desirable Situation as Private Governess to four Motherless Children, which for some years I filled with Credit to my self, & I trust, advantage to my youthful Charges; but a succession of Ill-health compelled me to resign this comfortable Situation, & involved me in heavy Expences. _ Upon regaining the most valuable of human Blessings, I resolved to convert those talents which had been cultivated for amusement, into the mean's of support; & from that period Sir my time & attention have been chiefly devoted to the improvement of the rising Generation – though by way of diversifying my Occupation I have written a Biographical Dictionary of celebrated Female Characters, & two, or three Moral Novels._ A succession of Ill-health has for the last two year's not only retarded my Literary Pursuits, but deprived me of that vigour of mind so essentially necessary to an Author._ but this Sir I should have borne without repining, a Application; had I not for the past six weeks laboured under a most dreadful Nervous Fever which prevents me from making the lightest Execution._ Five & Twenty Pound I paid last year for medicine which together with the Pop of Thirty Guineas from a Draft given me by M^{r} Hughes the Bookseller, a short time before he became a Bankrupt have involved me in difficulties which prey upon my feelings & render ineffectual every Medical exertion for my Recovery. _

The idea of making application to the Benevolent Institution which does so much honour to Humanity struck me during a Sleepless Night near a fortnight back, but inability to state my Case prevented me from soliciting that aid, I so ardently implore, & so fervently Request._

To you Sir I again apologise for trespassing so long upon your time & Patience; but if through your representation […]ould receive but the slightest assis[…] […] most lively emotions of Gratitude will be excited._

Allow me only to add that I have for several years been a Widow; that my poor Mother (who is now near Eighty) still depends upon me for Sustenance, & that it has been the Will of Heaven, not my *own Improvidence* which has reduced me to the present state of Distress._ I have the Honour of being Sir your Respectful Humble Servant, M Pilkington.

NB I flatter myself ever Error in style or Expression will be Pardoned Sir; when I inform you I have been three Days writing this unvarnished statement of Facts._ June 5th

Appendix B4: Isabella Hedgeland (prior Kelly)

B4a. Isabella Hedgeland to Joseph Snow. 4 August 1832

RLF Loan 96 1/632/8.

20 Compton Street Brunswick Sq

Augt 4th -32

Dear Sir

The kind sympathy expected in your letter was received, and felt like “the oil and wine” of gener-ous feeling poured on the wounds of a suffering heart, and you in yourself will feel a higher reward than <in> any tribute of thanks my feeble pen could offer yet Sir a grateful spirit will ever hold it in remem-brance you have encouraged me and I venture to solicit your advice respecting a little French work arranged by my daughter, which is calculated to direct the French scholar in the elegant accuracies of the idioms, and pronunciation of the language; could you in your acquaintance with the various depart-ments of literary recommend to her a publisher? She would require very little for the M.S. her anxi-ety being to have it published: she will present this and save you the trouble of writing.

I am perfectly aware of more than you have described of inaccuracies and blunders in the ~~Etimon~~ “Epitome”, I know nothing of Latin and it went from the press “with all its imperfections on its head”: the works published by country Publishers are seldom if ever patronized by the trade in town, and this of ours was never I believe advertised; the time of 9d was for subscribers but it is now bound up in one Vol: and sold for *5o6* if you xx or any of your friends could speak a word in its favour to the superiors of schools it might further its sale and enable us to liquidate part of the printing expenses which I lament to say are still due to the printer.

I have the greater part of a work founded on an historical tradition written in the form of a novel but the productions of the present day are so different to my style of writing that I fear to waste my eyes upon it unless xxx of a purchaser; I believe I am the last survivor of all the authoresses of the era in which I took up the pen; I have survived all my powerful friends and all the publishers I knew are either dead or retired. My literary and other efforts were powerfully nobly supported by the great and the good, and enabled me to rear and liberally educate my fatherless family and I *then believed*

my labours ended; but with some misfortune seems hereditary, for owing to adverse circumstances too numerous and painful to detail, I have now my daughter and her three children looking up to me with endearing claims which my advanced years, and the unpropitious times ill calculate me to answer. to enumerate our difficulties, our struggle to support the dexxxises of life would be unpardonably intrusive, but perhaps dear Sir it may please with the generous and the kind of heart should I be constrained to profit once more by the hint you in your benevolent feelings gave me.

My daughter (Mrs Crookshank) will have the pleasure to present this, and will indeed be grateful and gratified for any advice or direction you may have the kindness to give her.

Believe me Dear Sir, with much esteem your most obliged

and obedt St

Isabella Hedgeland

B4b. Isabella Hedgeland to the Committee of the Literary Fund. 22 August 1832

RLF Loan 96 1/632/9

£20 voted.

Nov. 1832.

20 Compton Street Brunswick Squ

Augt 22 1832

Gentlemen,

No words, or none that I have power to use can convey an idea of the painful and com-plicated feelings which agitate my heart in being again constrained to entreat your generous con-sideration. Sorrow and disappointment too nu-merous to obtrude on your important time, a dan-gerous and lingering illness with its attendant expences, with a daughter and her three infants cast upon my care by irremediable circumstances which we could neither influence nor control, induce me (assisted by her) though enfeebled in health, and broken in sprits to compile a work, “an Epitome of

general knowledge”; it having been published by a country Bookseller consequently unpatronized by the trade in town and not advertised, it remains unsold, and except to a few subscribers little known; for the expences of printing I am responsible; my daughter who has had a very liberal education can put it to no efficient purpose; she has a French work in M.S. which would improve a good French scholar in the elegance of the language; we have applied to many in the literary department for employment but all have pleaded prior engagements. Thus gentlemen surrounded by inextricable difficulties I venture once more to entreat your generous commiseration.

Do me the justice kind and beneficent Pa-trons of the unfortunate to believe, that my prin-ciples and pride were both gratified when self-sup-port was acquired by self-exertion, and enabled me to rear and educate my own fatherless children in a manner becoming their birth, time has now weakened every intellectual power, many noble friends are dead, others removed and some – but recollections become bitter – forgive me and if I do not too much presume on your liber-ality, too much presume on a fund sacred to me-rit, talent and misfortune, will you allow, once more allow my humble pretensions, my many sorrows to plead? my only hope is in your be-nignity, in your generous kindness, your aid will alleviate, will remove a heavy xxxxxxxxx, give energy for future exertion and secure the eternal gratitude of one who has only gratitude to offer

Condescend to accept the the Respect and diference of Gentlemen you much obliged and obedient humble Servant

Isabella Hedgeland

B4c. Isabella Hedgeland to Joseph Snow. 22 August 1832

RLF Loan 96 1/632/11

Aug 22^{d} 1832

Dear Sir

I wish I could express half that I feel for your unmerited attentions and kind intentions towards my daughter, if a grateful sense and respectful acknowledgement can be acceptable believe me Sir that tribute will ever be offered, while your reward will be in the consciousness of having alleviated undeserved misfortune.

M^{r} Hatchard was out of town and not expected for a fortnight or three weeks, and Mrs Crookshank thought it advisable <that> such a letter as yours should be presented personally.

I now Sir presume on your kindness, and request you will when you deem it proper to present the enclosed; I have forgotten if I ever knew how to address the gentlemen, many I request you to do it? and allow me to request your interposition and support of my application. If[?] the answer to propitious, it will not only mitigate the present evils, but give energy to the mind, and encourage perseverance. My daughter writes with me in best wishes and regards and I beg you will accept the esteem and gratitude of dear Sir your much obliged and obedt

I Hedgland

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