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‘THE FIRST IMPRESSION, YOU,  
YOURSELF, WILL BUY’

The Gunninghiad, *Virginus and Virginia* and  
the Art of Scandal at the Minerva Press

*Kurt Edward Milberger*



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

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

In any case, the scandal ended with General Gunning’s determination that Elizabeth and Susannah produced the letters, and he cast them both out of his

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

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

mention, and critics leave the impression that the poem had no special role in Gunning's life or literary career.

Critics have largely contented themselves with classifying Gunning's works as sentimental, or even simply 'epistolary'. In much the same way that generic labels have been used to pigeonhole the Minerva Press, Gunning's literary output has been reduced to clichéd dismissals. According to Pam Perkins's entry in *The Literary Encyclopedia*, the early novels are 'filled with melodrama, high emotion, and lengthy declarations of fine feeling'.<sup>8</sup> For Bridget G. MacCarthy, the early novels are 'poor in construction and unduly sentimental'.<sup>9</sup> For Thomas O. Beebee, Gunning is simply 'a prolific author of epistolary fictions'.<sup>10</sup> This manner of reducing Gunning's output to a handy critical label obscures a complex and interconnected series of writing and publishing activities and papers over the nuances of her career. The epistolary label, especially, makes it easier to write about Gunning and her work, but it has two rather stark drawbacks. First, it offers an inaccurate and limited way to classify Gunning's production. Second, it remains a subtle critical sneer against the lowbrow, used to replace 'sentimental novelist' which her first critics employed to dismiss her work but serving the same function. Critics need not take Gunning's fiction seriously or consider it or read it at all, the label says, because it can be neatly categorised as 'epistolary fiction', the metadata appropriately tagged, and the nuances conveniently overlooked. In this case, the label also has the advantage of buttressing interest in the Gunninghiad while condemning Gunning's part in it: she wrote novels made of letters and then got caught up in a scandal over forged letters! How delicious! Dismissive and salacious assumptions like these, however, remain inaccurate ways of talking about both Gunning's literary career and her involvement in the scandal.

Contrary to the critical history, Gunning's literary output cannot be neatly described by any familiar generic terms. In her youth, along with her sister Margaret, Susannah Minifie produced at least three novels, *The Histories of Lady Frances S—*, and *Lady Caroline S—* (1763), *The Picture* (1766) and *The Hermit* (1769). She followed these early works with *Barford Abbey* (1768), *The Cottage* (1775) and two more novels published in the 1780s, *The Count of Poland* (1780) and *Coombe Wood* (1783). These four novels are typically attributed to Susannah alone, but some critics speculate that Margaret Minifie might have also had a hand in them.<sup>11</sup> Regardless, thanks in part to Susannah Minifie's marriage to Major General John Gunning in 1768 and the scandal that consumed her energy in the late 1780s, she did not publish another work of fiction for almost ten years. Gunning's early publications in collaboration with her sister Margaret and later novels published 'By a Lady' but attributed to her make it difficult to draw an accurate picture of her bibliography, but Gunning's early novels are not strictly epistolary in style.<sup>12</sup> Gunning was involved in the production of at least fourteen literary works, excluding publications to do with the scandal, such as her *Letter* to Argyll. Of these fourteen, three were certainly written in collaboration with Margaret. Two of those three novels, incidentally, include

narrators rather than epistolary mechanisms. *The Histories* is the only of the three completely composed in letters. Excluding those works, however, and assuming that the remaining works (such as *Barford Abbey*, which was published without a clear attribution of authorship) were indeed produced by Gunning alone, as has been the critical consensus, portrays an equally complicated picture of a prolific career dedicated to exploring the uses and limits of literary writing.

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

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

Nicholas Mason claims that Gunning’s Minerva publications ‘capitalized on the high-society author’s widely reported separation from her husband’,<sup>13</sup> but to call the Gunninghiad scandal merely ‘widely reported’ or even simply the story of a marital squabble proves a remarkable understatement. Other

scholarship on the Minerva Press tends to focus on what Mason calls Lane's 'shameless commingling of the worlds of publicity and literature' to drive the sales of Minerva books.<sup>14</sup> The details of the Gunninghiad were certainly salacious, but commingling them with literature did more for Gunning's writing career than drive sales. Publishing with Minerva allowed Gunning to employ a notion of authorship that she could use to wrest control of the public narrative of the Gunninghiad back from the critics and satirists. Even as the only poem in the bibliography of a fiction writer, *V&V* reveals the extensive degree to which Gunning worked with the Minerva Press to construct herself as a literary author, how she manipulated Lane's system of publishing and publicity to generate a version of herself as an author in charge of her own story. The Minerva Press, in fact, provided an essential outlet for Gunning's return to artistic literature, driving her renewed popularity as a writer of fiction and facilitating her bold foray into the poetic genre. Lane's publication practices proved conducive to Gunning's experiments in storytelling as both sought to capitalise on the attention generated by the Gunninghiad for their own reasons.

*The Printing Poulterer at the Sign of Minerva*

Already the proprietor of a newspaper called *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, Lane began using the Minerva imprint in 1790 as he approached the pinnacle of his publishing career.<sup>15</sup> Until then, Lane had published widely in a variety of genres, including songs, fairy tales and instruction books alongside novels, but the end of the eighteenth century witnessed the explosion of novel publications with which the Minerva imprint became synonymous. As Deborah Anne McLeod reports, in total, '73% of the works published by Minerva Press were novels. The lowest percentage is found in the 1790s when novels made up 61% of the total production; this ratio increased to 82% between 1800 and 1809, then decreased to 79% between 1810 and 1820'.<sup>16</sup> By some estimates, Lane produced one quarter and maybe as much as one third of the new novels published in England in the thirty years between 1790 and 1820. As Hannah Doherty explains, Lane produced 'more than five times as many [novels] as any other single publisher during that time period'.<sup>17</sup>

In the oft-repeated narrative, Minerva purveyed lurid gothic, supernatural and sentimental novels written in reductive imitation or even outright plagiarism of other readily available books. Hack writers, many of them women who published anonymously, worked to formulae to churn out lowbrow fiction that critics dismissed and scorned or enshrined as examples of what not to read and how not to write. Even Dorothy Blakey, the Minerva's greatest twentieth-century historian, concedes that 'the works issued by the Minerva Press are, as Peacock declared them to be, "completely expurgated of all the higher qualities of mind"'.<sup>18</sup> As McLeod summarises, 'the standard critical position has been that the bulk of the press's productions are inferior formulaic novels pandering to the underdeveloped tastes of a predominantly female readership'.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Minerva Press developed this reputation in the eighteenth century when crit-

ics were rather less delicate in their assessments than contemporary scholars: the *Critical Review* classed a typical Minerva novel 'one of the overflowings of dissipated brains, with which circulating libraries abound: in truth, it is some of the vilest trash, in every respect, that probably ever disgraced their shelves'.<sup>20</sup>

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

Rather than a hack publisher churning out more of the same, Lane proves an irrepressible eighteenth-century entrepreneur, building diverse lists to maximise his works' market and cultural appeal while pioneering the novel imprint to brand the press's work in particular genres. From this perspective, the two works Gunning published at the Minerva Press reveal how Lane's diverse interests and energetic promotional practices facilitated the career of one of the late eighteenth century's underappreciated authors. This mutually beneficial relationship between a cunning publisher and an ambitious author complicates notions of authorship, publishing and literature at the dawn of the Romantic period. Critics have left the relationship between Lane's behaviour as a publisher and the work of the writers he published largely unremarked, but Gunning's publications show an intimate association between Lane's publishing programme and the works he published. In the paratexts of *V&V*, Gunning constructs an authorial persona that directly confronts the marketplace and the



hash of gossip called the Gunninghiad with the complications of allegory and fiction. She employs this authorial persona in an attempt to both reconfigure and transcend the scandal, offering last words on her role in it and laying the groundwork for her next steps as an author. In the wake of the scandal, Lane's publishing programme and publicity practices allowed Gunning to use her newfound infamy to return to literary publishing and extend the scope of career.

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

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

Lane's publishing practices produced a wide variety of Minerva products, both original to the press and reproduced from other sources. The novels them-

selves occupy a notable mix of genres, ranging from social novels like *Juvenile Indiscretions* (1786) and *Susanna, or Traits of a Modern Miss* (1795) to gothics like *Count Roderick's Castle* (1794) and *The Animated Skeleton* (1798). But, in addition to novels, Lane published compendiums, such as *The Ladies Museum* (1773) and *The British Songster [...] A Choice Collection of Comic and Entertaining Songs* (1800) and several collections of fairy tales including the *Persian Tales, or the Thousand and One Days* (1800), which says nothing of the miscellanies, such as *Historical and Entertaining Anecdotes* (1776) or *Wits Museum* (1780?); the travel, military and shipwreck writing, such as *Travels through the Interior Parts of America* (1789), *A Circumstantial Narrative of the Loss of the Halsewell (East-Indiaman)* (1786) and *The Soldier's Companion* (1803?); the collections of poetry like *The Parnassium* (1775); or the many sets of sermons and hymnals in Lane's list. Lane even stamped the Minerva imprint upon *A Succinct Account of All the Religions* (1791). Minerva, in short, did not hesitate to seek new ways to appeal to its audiences, even as Lane characterised himself as a manufacturer of novels. He also encouraged authors to bring a wide variety of works to his press—what he calls in *An Address to the Public, on Circulating Libraries*, the various productions of their 'eminent Talents'.<sup>29</sup>

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

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

That final, beautiful phrase, 'from their earliest Dawn to their meridian Splendor', implies a whole career approach to working with authors, who Lane urged to exercise their personal talents.<sup>30</sup> Encouraging them in whatever work they might choose, Lane presents himself as willing to entertain any potential publications that would help realise the universal spread of the 'Literary Museums' he called circulating libraries (p. 1). Lane's *Address to the Public* describes his press's mission not by singling out any one particular genre of work but rather by emphasising the press's plasticity, its willingness and ability to acquire, encourage and produce quality work. And, barring his own imprint on the books, Lane offered Minerva as a sort of service printer to anyone with a book they would like to bring to market:

*Such as chuse to print on their own account, will find, at the Minerva, Attention superior to common Presses; where Paper, Types, and*

*Accuracy will combine in Displaying their Abilities to uncommon Advantage:—And the Public at large, in every Species of Printing, will experience Dispatch and Elegance united.* (p. 3)

Gunning's work at the Minerva Press, then, proves typical of the institution, but not for its rigid adherence to conventionality. Instead, Gunning's late career work fit into Lane's scheme to publish projects 'in every Species of Printing' that would bring audiences a wide variety of entertainments, arts and sciences. Further, Lane's offer of Minerva as a service printer allowed Gunning to use the press to publish *V&V*, the back pages of which Lane coopted to promote the second edition of the *Anecdotes*. Several other examples of the press facilitating authorship in this way appear among Lane's lists. Whereas many of Lane's authors, such as Mary Charlton (fl. 1794–1824) or Helen Craik (1751–1825), produced works which were relatively generically consistent,<sup>31</sup> others, such as Elizabeth Meeke (1761–1826?) and Pigault-Lebrun (1753–1835), worked in a variety of genres.<sup>32</sup> Lane's later Prospectus of 1798 re-emphasises this open attitude in its account of 'CONDUCT RESPECTING LITERARY SUBJECTS':

Authors may be assured, that Manuscripts committed to the care of this Office, shall be paid all due attention to; and it is presumed, the Works which have been printed and published from the Minerva Press, will announce the Spirit with which the Undertaking is conducted; and as such, Genius and Taste will find no less Fidelity in ushering their Productions to the World, than Encouragement and Advantage in their LITERARY PURSUITS.<sup>33</sup>

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

Just as Lane printed and published a variety of different kinds of works to squeeze the most value out of commercial and circulating-library markets, so too did he innovate in advertising those works, a practice he employed to a remarkable degree upon the 1792 works of Susannah Gunning. A famous example of Lane's marketing genius appears in the somewhat later *Publishers Advertisement of 1794*.<sup>34</sup> As Michael Sadleir argues, this pamphlet 'shows an enterprise and an elaboration of publicity-method which are astonishing for

their period'.<sup>35</sup> Two parts comprise the pamphlet *A Tale Addressed to the Novel Readers of the Present Times* and a list of texts 'JUST PUBLISHED' beneath the device of the Minerva Press.<sup>36</sup> The pamphlet crafts a narrative out of the titles and incidents from Minerva Press books on offer in the accompanying list of texts. For example, the list of just published texts includes 'Weird Sisters, 3 vols. 12mo. Price 9s. sewed (by the author of *A Butler's Diary*. 1794)'.<sup>37</sup> Some incidents akin to those in that novel appear in the narrative advertisement as a vision of Lady 'ELLEN, COUNTESS OF CASTLE HOWELL'. Ellen is herself the subject of 'Ellen, Countess of Castle Howell, 4 vols. 12 mo. 12s. sewed (by Mrs. Bennet. 1794)', which also appears on the list of just published works.<sup>38</sup> In the description of the Countess's vision we learn

One evening [on a walk] she perceived, coming from the side of a rivulet, three figures in female attire: As they advanced towards her, she found they were the three WEIRD SISTERS, who then cautioned her with these solemn words, '*Lady, beware—*' 'Of what?' exclaimed Ellen. '*Of your visit to the Castle to-morrow.*' With these mysterious words they disappeared.<sup>39</sup>

Sadleir describes the 'handling of punctuation and capital letters' as 'highly unorthodox and the results from the point of view of literary quality ludicrous in the extreme',<sup>40</sup> but the unorthodox use of capital letters and punctuation actually constitutes a rather ingenious device whereby the reader of the advertisement can track the interesting portions of the text to the relevant books offered by the just published list. The advertisement attempts to provide readers with an approximation of the experiences they can expect from the novels offered. Sadleir points out how astonishing this variety of print devices is 'for their period', but he misses something of the nuance and excitement conveyed by the pamphlet and its place in Lane's publishing practice. Not only was this advertisement designed to raise awareness of Minerva books, it also served as an entertainment in its own right. Lane used the same technique to turn the entertaining *V&V* into an advertisement for Gunning's *Delborough*, and he used other advertising techniques as well, as discussed in more detail below.

Recent work by Megan Peiser reveals another of Lane's publication habits that played to Gunning's advantage in the literary marketplace: extensive advertising campaigns to position the work in front of potential readers. Peiser's quantitative analysis of 1639 book reviews collected in her *Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820* (a collection of reviews of novels published in the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*) demonstrates the extent of Lane's publicity practices. Unlike other publishers who might have sought to produce fewer works of greater quality, Lane assaulted the marketplace with an enormous number of books, making his publishing activities impossible for reviews to neglect. Peiser states: 'Novels in our modern canon, like those of Frances Burney or Jane Austen, received more pages of review, and reviews in the prominent front section of the Review periodical (rather than relegated to the Monthly Catalogue), but Lane was most visible in terms of volume'.<sup>41</sup> Lane, in other words, managed to turn re-

view periodicals into catalogues for the work of his press, inundating them with a huge number of new works, which they dutifully announced and sometimes reviewed. Peiser argues that, especially outside of the metropolis, many readers depended upon reviews to determine which volumes to take out of their local circulating library: 'And where novel reviews were concerned, Lane was easy to see in their pages [...] A reader of Review periodicals would reliably run into a review of one of Lane's works every month'.<sup>42</sup> In this way, Lane exploited the review periodicals in the same way that he used advertisements in *The Star*: filling their pages with announcements of Minerva publications simply by generating so much new work, and, in so doing, keeping Minerva on the minds of readers.

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

No other novel of 1792 published at the Minerva was brought so prominently to public notice as *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*. Mrs. Gunning's private affairs were undoubtedly responsible for much of the interest in it, and no doubt too, many who hastened to order their first impression read *Gunning for Delborough* in the title.<sup>43</sup>

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

Rather than a key to the *Anecdotes*, Gunning provides another literary response to the Gunninghiad in *V&V*, which Lane printed for her, leaving his name off the title page, rather than imprinting for himself. This slim volume, evidence of Gunning's poetic ambitions, followed on the models of several canonical authors in reviving a popular story from Livy. It also served as an advertisement for the second edition of the *Anecdotes*, stoking the public lust for yet more material to do with the scandal and seriously exploring allegorical depictions of the Gunning family in literature. According to an advertisement printed at the back of *V&V*: 'So rapid has been the Demand for this much-approved Novel [*Anecdotes*] that the First Edition was sold in a few Days' (see Figure 1, overleaf).<sup>44</sup> The poem/pamphlet, then, served as only one part of a publishing event. Using the techniques of advertising to capitalise on the public's interest in the scandal and Gunning's writing about it, Lane and Gunning did not produce additional scandal-writing, such as her *Letter*, but multiple attempts

THE FOLLOWING WORK, BY THE SAME AUTHOR, IS THIS DAY PUBLISHED:

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SECOND EDITION.

---

A N E C D O T E S  
OF THE  
D E L B O R O U G H F A M I L Y.

---

In FIVE VOLUMES 12mo.

---

Price 15s. fowd.

---

So rapid has been the Demand for this much-approved Novel, that the First Edition was sold in a few Days.

FIG. 1. ADVERTISEMENT FOR 2ND EDN OF *ANECDOTES OF THE DELBOROUGH FAMILY* (1792) AT BACK OF *VIRGINIUS AND VIRGINIA* (1792).

to make literature out of her life experiences, to construct and deploy a specifically commercial notion of literary authorship on her behalf. Playing with what Michael Gamer identifies as ‘the relation between self-commodification and self-canonization’, Gunning’s work with Lane traded on the notorious affairs of her life in an attempt to capitalise on the trauma and simultaneously install herself in the English literary tradition.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to this back-page advertisement in *V&V*, Lane promoted the *Anecdotes* no less than a dozen times in *The Star and Evening Advertiser*. This series of advertisements, which Blakey suggests probably comprised more ads

than have been preserved or archived, includes several reports on the demand for the novel during its printing but prior to its publication.<sup>46</sup> In March, 1792, Lane described the demand for the book as 'so great, that the first impression is nearly subscribed for amongst the Trade—such Ladies and Gentlemen, therefore, as request this Novel, will be early in their directions to the Booksellers, that they may not be disappointed.'<sup>47</sup> The advertisements, frequently repeated throughout the month of March, indicate an ever-increasing demand for the forthcoming novel and supply instructions for how to obtain the work in the event of its selling out from a list of 'over thirty booksellers [...] together with eight circulating libraries, which would also stock the novel.'<sup>48</sup> But the series took a dramatic turn at the end of the month when Lane printed an advertisement responding to 'a most invidious, false report' that Gunning was not, in fact, the author of the *Anecdotes*:

In confutation to such base reports, any person who doubts the authenticity, may, on application at the Printing-Office, Leadenhall-street, see the original copy, in the hand-writing of Mrs. Gunning, or be further satisfied by the public avowal of that Lady.<sup>49</sup>

Accompanying Lane's guarantee of her authorship, the advertisement also includes a series of twenty-four signatures from employees at the press and others willing to attest that the *Anecdotes* were, in fact, 'the Production and Writing of MRS. GUNNING'.<sup>50</sup> This bid to establish Gunning's authorship of the *Anecdotes* was certainly an attempt to verify the work as an official part of the Gunninghiad's growing bibliography, but it also solidified Gunning's return to writing as an author of literary works, a role she consciously embraced and defended in the paratext of *V&V*.

The considerable public notice Lane generated by advertising in *The Star* and the simultaneous printing of *V&V* traded on Gunning's famous name. Edward Jacobs suggests that circulating libraries, generally, and the Minerva Press, in particular, 'powerfully constructed femininity as an "author function" for fiction' in this period.<sup>51</sup> For Jacobs, a major factor in how circulating libraries such as Lane's contributed to constructing the feminine author function derives from the practice of anonymously publishing writing supposedly done by women. Jacobs, however, points out that many of the anonymous fictions written by 'a lady' could well have been written by anyone, even a man.<sup>52</sup> For Gunning, attaching her name to her literary works with impunity helped capitalise on her infamy in the marketplace and exert authorial control over the public narrative of her life. The feminine author function Jacobs describes must be complicated by powerful attempts like Gunning's to write against the increasingly mainstream literary culture of feminine anonymity.

Gunning's literary works refashion the many millions of interpretations of the Gunninghiad scandal Walpole had predicted in 1791. Refracting some ideas in the *Anecdotes* and complicating the character of the major players in *V&V*, Gunning produced a literary interpretation of the Gunninghiad that she signed with her own name, thus working to erase the epithet of famous socialite and

replace it with that of accomplished author. Publishing Gunning's literary works, Lane certainly contributed to another aspect of the high visibility of feminine authorship. The scandal gave Lane every reason to expose (and then verify by way of signatories) this particular author. The *Anecdotes* and *V&V*, though, were the genuine works of a female author; one who had contributed to a major fracas about the veracity of women's writing generally speaking and one whose literary ambition compelled her to attempt to enter the ranks of earlier English writers, as well as a whole host of late eighteenth-century Romantics, including Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who adapted the ancient story of Lucius Verginius and his daughter Virginia.

*I've felt your arrows! You shall feel my dart!': Gunning's Literature at Minerva*  
 No one in the eighteenth century or since has revered Gunning as a poet, but in *V&V* she calls on literary artistry to complicate the received narrative of the Gunninghiad and exert her authority as a participant in the scandal's events. Gunning's entire oeuvre—ranging from the works produced in partnership with her sister through the rhetorical works of the scandal years, the realistic novels and *V&V*—reveals a writer setting her pen to a variety of forms in search of those that fit her evolving needs. As with other writers in this period, Gunning's novels, particularly the *Anecdotes*, intersperse narration with poems supposedly authored by the characters, songs, excerpts of other texts and, indeed, the occasional letter, all of which offered her opportunities to hone her skill in a variety of forms. The *Anecdotes* includes tropes associated with sentimental fiction, but, chapter by chapter, it uses those techniques to heighten the reader's emotional experience 'to represent the complicated feelings of amazement, grief, anger, horror, love and compassion that divide the soul, and [agonise] the countenance'.<sup>53</sup> When it came to depicting elements reminiscent of the Gunninghiad, Gunning used the *Anecdotes* to consider how a woman in her position might employ writing to structure her character, affect perceptions of herself and steer the course of events in the world.

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



Selina's sister secure her marriage. 'Anonymous letters', she explains, 'might be made very useful on particular occasions' (III, 56):

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

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

Gunning explicitly announces her desire to use writing in this way in the paratext of *V&V*. Her only poem has generic ancestors in the heroic poems of Pope and Dryden and few poetic compatriots in Minerva's lists. *V&V* revives a familiar tale from the Roman historian Livy. Joining the ranks of works by the likes of Geoffrey Chaucer and the playwrights John Webster and Thomas Heywood by adapting the tale, Gunning crafts an allegory of the Gunninghiad. In Livy, the Roman centurion Lucius Virginius stabs his daughter Virginia to death before the Shrine of Venus Cloacina to protect her honour after she had been granted to the consul Appius Claudius Crassus. Gunning celebrates Virginius, explaining, 'You'll call him murd'rer, cry your blood runs cold: | Quite, in another light his deeds I see'.<sup>54</sup> In Gunning's version of the story, a series of legal deceptions places Virginia in Appius's power, and she blesses 'the parental stroke' that rescues her from his ravaging. Gunning's verse is serviceable, if lacklustre, but she tells the story with skill and tact, weaving complicated elements into a powerful denouement. The poem abounds in meditations on the relationship between private and public, as well as who has the authority to act from which motivations. But, throughout, Gunning emphasises literature's power to make the private public and hints at its ability to correct the public record:

Thou, canst not say my muse, or nature tell,  
Why, in those hearts, where love, and peace should dwell,  
The seeds of hate, and envy, should be sown?

How quickly thriven, and how rapid grown!  
 Nature, her little errors, may conceal,  
 But, come my muse, and greater, crimes reveal,  
 Enormous, crimes! assist me to display,  
 Whilst, lesser vices, shun the glare of day. (*V&V*, 12)

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

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

I'm independent of your words and looks;  
 You independent! don't you sell your books?  
 I answer yes, I sell them if I can,  
 Still, independence, is my noble plan.  
 A landlord I, at will, a tenant you,  
 The estate's my own, it's produce all my due;ß  
 Take it, or leave it, I am not afraid,  
 That tho' you murmur, rents will still be paid;  
 Nay, I expect, however you may shy,  
 The first impression, you, yourself, will buy,  
 For your own sake, I mean, I want no prop,  
 But look straight forward, to a second crop,  
 A third, a fourth, a fifth, I see you start,  
 I've felt your arrows! you shall feel my dart!  
 And should I, ever reassume my pen,  
 Which, that I shall, is more than nine, to ten,  
 'Tis not impossible, that I might make,  
 Some other strictures, just for fashion's sake.  
 Madam, you may, or you may not believe,  
 That, calm and fearless, I dare, take my leave;

Falshood, has ever been allied to shame,

I write but truth, and sign it with my name. (*V&V*, xiii–ix)

Everything about this passage reveals a skillful and competent writer engaging the literary marketplace from a position of authority. Gunning declares herself independent of fashion, of critics, of strictures that would dictate the manner of her publications, even of the need to sell her works. Instead, she appears as an independent author, ‘calm and fearless’ in her pursuit of the truth through literature and confident of her ability to stake her own claim to literary fortune. In some editions of the text, these lines were followed by a signature, authenticating their authorship and recalling Lane’s assurances that Gunning had, in fact, written the *Anecdotes* (Figure 2, below).

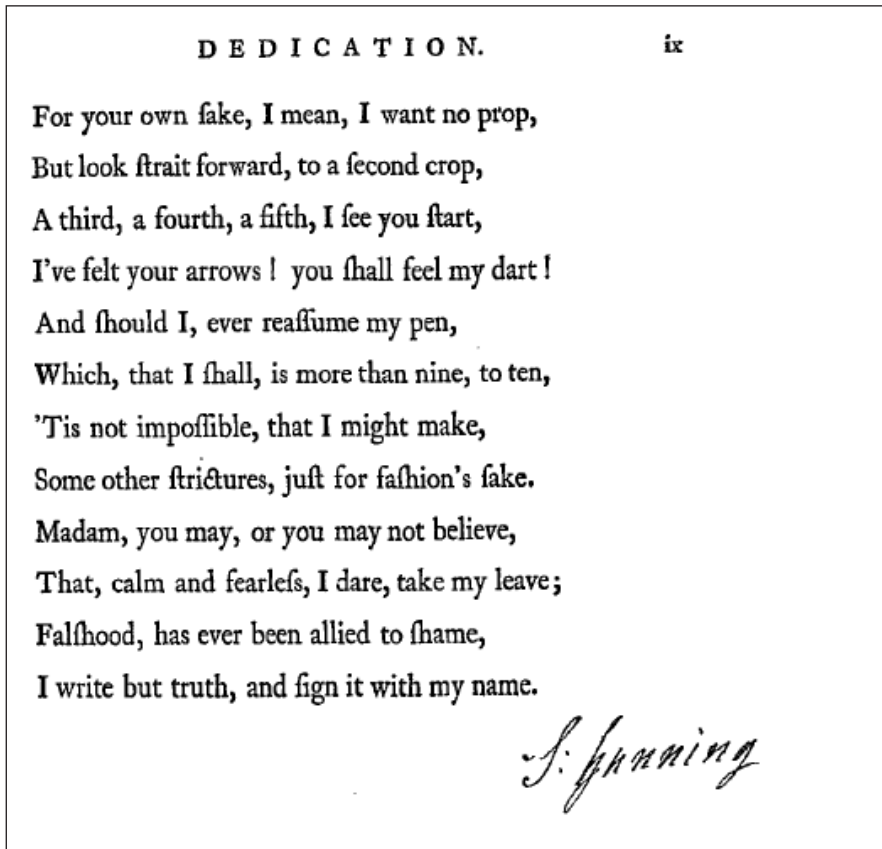



FIG. 2. SUSANNAH GUNNING’S ‘SIGNATURE’  
AFFIXED TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE DEDICATION  
TO *VIRGINIUS AND VIRGINIA* (1782).

With her signature, Gunning cements the relationship between her attempt at poetic writing and the innovative publicity practices of William Lane’s Minerva Press. In her bid for literary authority to recast the events of the Gunningiad,

Gunning took advantage of Lane's willingness to print and publish a wide variety of literary works as well as his revolutionary publicity techniques. In exchange, Minerva's influential imprint afforded Gunning a unique opportunity to extend her literary ambitions and to fight back against a public that had condemned her and her daughter to a *fame* worse than death. 

## NOTES

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

1. Hereafter, *Anecdotes* and *V&V*.
2. Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 6 vols (London: Bentley, 1840), VI, 394.
3. Betty A. Schellenberg provides this account of the relative success of Susannah Minifie's early publications in collaboration with her sister:
 

the Minifies are run-of-the-mill imitators of the latest in generic trends, neither innovators nor even the best imitators, but also not unskilled or unscrupulous copyists. At no point are they seen as setting a trend or as improving upon a precursor, but they are relatively effective practitioners of an increasingly recognizable set of genre conventions. Although [their fictions] are regularly commented on in the reviews, and to a lesser extent, by contemporary lay readers [...] no commentator speaks of the fictions of [...] the Minifies as making a contribution to the republic of letters.—*The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 136–40 (p. 139).
4. Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660–1800* (London: Virago, 1989), p. 177.
5. 'Susannah Gunning', in *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* <[http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person\\_id=gunnsu](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=gunnsu)> [accessed 3 May 2018].
6. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 5 (Aug 1792), 570–72 (p. 570).
7. *English Review*, 21 (1793), 148.
8. Pam Perkins, 'Susannah Gunning', in *The Literary Encyclopedia* <<https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=1915>> [accessed 3 May 2018].
9. Bridget G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen: Women Writers and Novelists, 1621–1818* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 305.
10. Thomas O. Beebee, 'Publicity, Privacy, and the Power of Fiction in the Gunning Letters', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 20 (2007), 61–88 (p. 62) <<https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.2007.20.1.61>>.

11. Thomas O. Beebee, 'Minifie, Margaret and Susannah', in *The Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. by Gary Day and Jack Lynch, 3 vols (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), II, 797–98 (p. 798).
12. Beebee, 'Publicity', p. 62.
13. Mason, *Literary Advertising*, p. 120.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
15. By 1808 Lane had certainly retired from the printing business, passing on responsibility for the publishing activities at the Minerva Press to his partner, A. K. Newman. See Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939), p. 22.
16. Deborah Anne McLeod, 'The Minerva Press' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 1997), p. 51.
17. Hannah J. Doherty, 'The Myth of Minerva: Publishing, Popular Fiction, and the Rise of the Novel' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 2013), p. 5. Other estimates appear in James Raven, 'Historical Introduction: The Novel Comes of Age', in Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwerling, *The English Novel 1770–1820: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2000), I, 15–121 (p. 73); Megan Peiser, 'Review Periodicals and the Visibility of William Lane's Minerva Press', *Research Society for Victorian Periodicals*, 4 Mar 2016 <[rs4vp.org/review-periodicals-visibility-william-lanes-minerva-press-megan-peiser-university-missouri](http://rs4vp.org/review-periodicals-visibility-william-lanes-minerva-press-megan-peiser-university-missouri)> [accessed 2 May 2018] (para. 6 of 14).
18. Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p. 2; and William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 244.
19. McLeod, 'Minerva Press', n.p.
20. *Critical Review*, 62 (1786), 149. The review considers *Albina: A Novel, in a Series of Letters* (1786) by Mary Graisbury.
21. Elizabeth A. Neiman, 'A New Perspective on the Minerva Press's "Derivative" Novels: Authorizing Borrowed Material', *ERR*, 26.5 (2015), 633–59 (pp. 633–34) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2015.1070344>>.
22. E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 137.
23. Christopher Skelton-Foord, 'To Buy or to Borrow? Circulating Libraries and Novel Reading in Britain, 1778–1828', *Library Review*, 47 (1998), 348–54 (p. 353) <<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242539810233477>>.
24. McLeod, 'Minerva Press', p. 13.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
26. 'Biographical Memoirs of William Lane, Esq. Proprietor of the Minerva Library and Printing-House, in Leadenhall-Street, in the City of London', in *The New, Original and Complete Wonderful Museum and Magazine Extraordinary*, vol. VI, ed. by William Granger (London: Allen, 1868), pp. 2748–56 (p. 2749).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 2749.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 2751.
29. William Lane, *An Address to the Public, on Circulating Libraries* (London: [Lane], 1795), p. 2. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.
30. Both Neiman and McLeod discuss the generous fictional depictions of Lane, which emphasised the ease of working with him and his enthusiasm for authors.

- See Neiman, 'New Perspective', pp. 636 and 640–43; and McLeod, 'Minerva Press', pp. 7–9.
31. Charlton's eleven works for Minerva include *The Pirate of Naples* (1801), *The Philosophic Kidnapper* (1803) and *The Rake and the Misanthrope* (1804). Kraik's five novels for Minerva include *Julia de St Pierre* (1796), *Henry of Northumberland* (1800), *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800) and *Stella of the North* (1802).
  32. Meeke's twenty-eight novels with Minerva range from *The Abbey of Clugny* (1795) through *Which Is the Man?* (1801) to *The Spanish Campaign* (1815). Pigault-Lebrun, the pseudonym of Guillaume-Charles-Antoine Pigault de l'Espinoz (1753–1835), produced nine novels for Minerva, among them *My Uncle Thomas* (1801) and *The History of a Dog* (1804).
  33. Reproduced in Blakey, *Minerva Press*, pp. 311–12 (p. 312).
  34. Quotations from this pamphlet refer to the reprint in Michael Sadleir, "'Minerva Press' Publicity: A Publisher's Advertisement of 1794', *The Library*, 2nd ser., 21 (1940), 207–15 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/library/s4-XXI.2.207>>.
  35. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
  36. *Ibid.*, pp. 208–13.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
  38. *Ibid.*, pp. 208 and 212.
  39. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
  40. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
  41. Peiser, 'Review Periodicals', para. 5 of 14.
  42. *Ibid.*, paras 6 and 8 of 14.
  43. Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p. 101.
  44. Blakey demonstrates that using 'the blank leaves at the end of his books to bring new novels to the attention of his readers' was Lane's common practice; she continues, 'he seems to have taken considerable trouble in the setting of these advertisements, a number of which are carefully laid out, with ingenious spacing and rules, after the fashion of a title-page' (*ibid.*, p. 101). Indeed, the end leaf advertisement for the *Anecdotes* in *V&V* approximates the former's title page quite nicely.
  45. Michael Gamer, *Romanticism, Self-Canonization, and the Business of Poetry* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), p. 4.
  46. Blakey's remains the definitive account of this series of advertisements (*Minerva Press*, pp. 98–100); see also Nicholas Mason, *Literary Advertising and the Shaping of British Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 120–22.
  47. Reprinted in Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p. 98.
  48. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
  49. *The Star*, 21 Mar 1792, reprinted in Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p. 99.
  50. *Ibid.*
  51. Edward Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-Century British Circulating Libraries and Cultural Book History', *Book History*, 6 (2003), 1–22 (p. 3) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2004.0010>>.
  52. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
  53. Susannah Gunning, *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*, 3 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1792), III, 102. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.

54. Susannah Gunning, *Virginius and Virginia* (London: Minerva Press, 1792), p. vii. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.

### REFERRING TO THIS ARTICLE

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



**Angela Aliff** is an independent researcher with interests in epistemology, English reformist writing, women's writing and the digital humanities. Her doctoral thesis finds that early modern women writers justify their ideological authority using the instability in epistemic shifts within religious belief and practice. Formerly a Livingstone Online research assistant with contributions to design and user experience, Angela is now a commercial project manager and mother of an endlessly curious toddler.

**Jennie Batchelor** is Professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies at the University of Kent where she teaches and publishes on women's writing and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century periodicals, as well as visual and material culture. Her most recent books include *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture, 1690–1820s*, co-edited with Manushag N. Powell (EUP, 2018) and (with Alison Larkin) *Jane Austen Embroidery* (Pavilion, 2020). She is currently completing her third monograph, *The Lady's Magazine (1770–1832) and the Making of Literary History*.

**Johnny Cammish** is a PhD Student and Research Associate at the University of Nottingham, working on the concept of 'Literary Philanthropy' in the Romantic Period. He works on the philanthropic efforts of Joanna Baillie, James Montgomery, Elizabeth Heyrick and Henry Kirke White, particularly in relation to charitable collections of poetry, works lobbying for the abolition of slavery and chimney sweep reform, and posthumous editing of work in order to preserve legacies.

**Carmen Casaliggi** is Reader in English at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Her research interests include Romantic literature and art, the relationship between British and European Romanticism, and Romantic sociability culture. She has published widely on the long nineteenth century and her books include: *Ruskin in Perspective: Contemporary Essays* (Cambridge Scholars, 2007) and *Legacies of Romanticism: Literature, Culture, Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2012), both co-edited with Paul March-Russell; and *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History* (Routledge, 2016), with Porscha Fermanis). She is currently working on a new book-length study entitled *Romantic Networks in Europe: Transnational Encounters, 1786–1850* for EUP and she is guest editor for a special issue on 'Housing Romanticism' for the *European Romantic Review*. She was a Visiting Fellow in the Arts and Humanities Institute at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (2019–20) and is recipient of a fully funded Visiting



Fellowship awarded by the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University (2020–21).

**Daniel Cook** is Head of English and Associate Director of the Centre for Scottish Culture at the University of Dundee. He has published widely on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and Irish literature, from Pope to Wordsworth. Recent books include *Reading Swift's Poetry* (2020) and *The Afterlives of Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (2015), both published by CUP.

**Eric Daffron** is Professor of Literature at Ramapo College of New Jersey, where he teaches gothic literature and literary theory. He has published widely on those and other topics.

**Colette Davies** is an AHRC M4C PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham. Her research explores novels published by the Minerva Press written by a range of neglected professional women writers. These works shed light on how women writers responded to an era of transformation in the literary marketplace and to a socially turbulent context through their works of fiction. Colette is one of two Postgraduate Representatives for the British Association for Romantic Studies and co-organised the BARS 2019 International Conference, 'Romantic Facts and Fantasies' and the BARS 2020 ECR/PGR Conference, 'Romantic Futurities'. She is a co-contributor for the 'Romantic Novel' section of the *Year's Work in English Studies* and has published blogs with *Romantic Textualities* and the British Association for Romantic Studies.

**JoEllen DeLucia** is Professor of English at Central Michigan University and the author of *A Feminine Enlightenment: British Women Writers and the Philosophy of Progress, 1759–1820* (EUP, 2015). Recently, she co-edited an essay collection with Juliet Shields entitled *Migration and Modernities: the State of Being Stateless, 1750–1850* (EUP, 2019). Portions of her current research project on George Robinson's media network and Romantic-era literature have appeared in *European Romantic Review* and Jennie Batchelor and Manushag Powell's *Women's Magazines and Print Culture 1690–1820s: The Long Eighteenth Century* (2018).

**Michael Falk** is Lecturer in Eighteenth-Century Studies at the University of Kent, and an Adjunct Fellow in Digital Humanities at Western Sydney University. His key interests include digital methods, the global aspects of Romanticism and the Enlightenment, and the literary history of the self. He has published on Maria Edgeworth, Charlotte Smith, John Clare and Charles Harpur; co-edits the Romantic Poetry section of *Year's Work in English Studies*; and has work forthcoming on the problem of Artificial Stupidity and on eighteenth-century Swiss book history. He is a keen digital humanities educator, and has run workshops on coding and other skills across the UK and Australia. He is currently at work on his monograph, *Frankenstein's Siblings*, a digital study of contingent selfhood in Romantic literature.

**Peter Garside** taught English Literature for more than thirty years at Cardiff University, where he became founding Director of the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research. Subsequently, he was appointed Professor of Bibliography and Textual Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He served on the Boards of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels and the Stirling/South Carolina Collected Edition of the Works of James Hogg, and has produced three volumes apiece for each of these scholarly editions. He was one of the general editors of the bibliographical survey *The English Novel, 1770–1829*, 2 vols (OUP, 2000), and directed the AHRC-funded *British Fiction, 1800–1829* database (2004). More recently, he has co-edited *English and British Fiction 1750–1820* (2015), Volume 2 of the Oxford History of the Novel in English; and forthcoming publications include an edition of Scott's *Shorter Poems*, along with Gillian Hughes, for the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry.

**Michael John Goodman** is a postdoctoral researcher based at Cardiff University's Centre of Editorial and Intertextual Research. He is the director of the *Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare Archive*, an online open-access resource that contains over 3000 illustrations taken from Victorian editions of Shakespeare's plays. He is currently writing his first monograph, *Shakespeare in Bits and Bytes*, which explores how the digital can help students and the general public engage meaningfully with the humanities.

**Hannah Doherty Hudson** is an Assistant Professor of English at Suffolk University in Boston. Her publications focus on the popular print culture of the long eighteenth century, on topics ranging from magazine biography to gothic fiction. She is currently completing a book on the Minerva Press and fictional excess in the Romantic period.

**Matthew C. Jones** is a Lecturer in the English Department at William Paterson University of New Jersey. His research focuses on Welsh literatures and cultures of the long nineteenth century, and changing English attitudes toward Wales in state and popular literature from the later Enlightenment into the mid-Victorian era.

**Joe Lines** lives in Xi'an, China, where he teaches English on dual-degree programmes run by Chang'an University and University College, Dublin. His articles have appeared in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* and *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. He is the author of a chapter on the novel and criminal biography in the collection *Irish Literature in Transition, 1700–1780*, edited by Moyra Haslett (CUP, 2020). His first monograph, *The Rogue Narrative and Irish Fiction, 1660–1790*, will be published by Syracuse University Press in November 2020.

**Aneta Lipska** holds a PhD from the University of Silesia and has recently taught at the State University of Applied Sciences in Włocławek, Poland. She is the author of *The Travel Writings of Marguerite Blessington: The Most Gorgeous Lady on the Tour* (Anthem Press, 2017). Her main research interests include travel literature of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Italian literary and cultural relations, and literature didactics.

**Simone Marshall** is Associate Professor in English at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research platform, *A World Shaped by Texts*, concerns how our understanding of the world around us is directly shaped by texts: religious, scientific, literary, legal and historical. Her research programmes include race, women, medievalisms and anonymity, as well as a specific focus on Chaucer. Marshall's research programme on Chaucer and his afterlives includes attention on the continuations of *The Squire's Tale*, an examination of an edition of John Urry's 1722 Chaucer located in Auckland City Library, as well as cross-cultural comparisons between Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* and Sufi poet Farid Ud-din Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*. Marshall's research has been featured in the media, including *The History of Anon*, a BBC Radio 4 series on the history of literary anonymity, broadcast 1–4 January 2013, as well as interviews on Radio New Zealand National in 2010 and 2013 on the 1807 Chaucer. Further details can be found at <https://simonecelinmarshall.com/>.

**Kelsey Paige Mason** is a PhD candidate at Ohio State University interested in nineteenth-century transatlantic literature, futurity and utopianism. She analyses nineteenth-century primary texts from ideological and repressive spaces (such as prisons and plantations), as well as from utopian communities and draws correlations between these primary texts and utopian/dystopian fiction. She is interested in how published and unpublished narratives portray the utopian impulse towards the future, including questioning which populations are excluded from future speculation. Her recent publications include 'Writing Revolution: Orwell's Not-So-Plain Style in *Animal Farm*' and 'A Lifetime Sowing the Blues: The Diary of Lucius Clark Smith, 1834–1915'.

**Kurt Edward Milberger** serves as Coordinating Editor in the College of Arts & Letters at Michigan State University. His work has appeared in *Jonathan Swift and Philosophy*, edited by Janelle Pötzsch (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), and in *From Enlightenment to Rebellion: Essays in Honor of Christopher Fox*, edited by James G Buickerood (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). With Margaret Doody, he has edited Susannah Gunning's *Barford Abbey*, which is forthcoming from Broadview Press.

**Amy Milka** is a researcher in eighteenth-century history, literature and culture at the University of Adelaide. She is the author of several articles on law and emotions, including: (with David Lemmings) 'Narratives of Feeling and

Majesty: Mediated Emotions in the Eighteenth-Century Criminal Courtroom’, *Journal of Legal History*, 38.2 (2017), 155–78; ‘Feeling for Forgers: Character, Sympathy and Financial Crime in London during the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42.1 (2019), 7–25; and ‘“Preferring Death”: Love, Crime, and Suicide in Eighteenth-Century England’, which is forthcoming in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* in summer 2020.

**Christina Morin** lectures in English literature at the University of Limerick, where she is also course director of the MA in Global Irish Studies. She is the author of *The Gothic Novel in Ireland, c. 1760–1829* (MUP, 2018), which won the prestigious Robert Rhodes prize in 2019, and *Charles Robert Maturin and the Haunting of Irish Romantic Fiction* (MUP, 2011). She has also edited, with Marguérite Corporaal, *Traveling Irishness in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2017) and, with Niall Gillespie, *Irish Gothics: Genres, Forms, Modes and Traditions* (2014), both published by Palgrave Macmillan. Current projects include a monograph on Irish writers and the Minerva Press and a 200th anniversary celebration of the publication of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) in collaboration with Marsh’s Library, Dublin.

**Elizabeth Neiman** is an Associate Professor of English and also Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Maine. Her monograph, *Minerva’s Gothics: The Politics and Poetics of Romantic Exchange, 1780–1820* (UWP, 2019) shows that popular literary conventions connect now canonical male poets to their lesser-known female colleagues, drawing them into a dynamic if unequal set of exchanges that influences all of their work. A second book project explores what Minerva and other popular women’s novels reveal when read for glimpses of the personal. Deathbed scenes are a convention in women’s Romantic-era novels, but does this make the heroine’s expression of grief impersonal, generic—her lamentations the language of cliché? Neiman is also currently writing a memoir that explores grief, love and loss, though from the distance of sister.

**Lauren Nixon** is a researcher in the gothic, war and gender, and was recently awarded her PhD from the University of Sheffield. She is the co-organiser of the academic collective Sheffield Gothic and the ‘Reimagining the Gothic’ project.

**Megan Peiser** (Choctaw Nation) is Assistant Professor of 18th-Century Literature at Oakland University, just north of Detroit, MI. She is currently completing her monograph, *The Review Periodical and British Women Novelists, 1790–1820* with accompanying database, *The Novels Reviewed Database, 1790–1820*. Peiser and her collaborator, Emily Spunaugle, are the principal investigators on *The Marguerite Hicks Project*. Peiser’s research and teaching focus on women writers, periodicals, book history and bibliography, Indigenous sovereignty, and digital humanities. She is President of the Aphra Behn Society

for Women in the Arts 1660–1830, and an executive board member for the Modern Language Association’s Bibliography and Scholarly Editing forum.

**Victoria Ravenwood** is an English teacher at Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys in Canterbury, Kent. She recently completed, at Canterbury Christ Church University, a Research Masters titled ‘William Lane’s “Horrid” Writers: An Exploration of Violence in the Minerva Press Gothic, 1790–1799’, which examines the trope of violence and its many manifestations in Minerva works, and aspires to continue her research into the gothic more widely at doctoral level. Her interests include the formation of the gothic genre, its efflorescence during the late eighteenth century and its enduring impact in the popular imagination and classrooms of today.

**Matthew L. Reznicek** is Associate Professor of Nineteenth-Century British and Irish Literature at Creighton University, where he also teaches Medical Humanities in the School of Medicine. He has published widely in the field of nineteenth-century Irish women’s writing, including *The European Metropolis: Paris and Nineteenth-Century Irish Women Novelists* (Clemson University Press/Liverpool University Press, 2017). His second monograph, *Stages of Belonging: Irish Women Writers and European Opera*, is under contract with SUNY Press.

**Yael Shapira** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Literature and Linguistics at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and the author of *Inventing the Gothic Corpse: The Thrill of Human Remains in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Her work has appeared in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, *Narrative*, *Women’s Writing* and elsewhere. Her current research focuses on forgotten Romantic-era gothic fiction and the challenge it presents to established narratives of gothic literary history. Essays from this project are forthcoming in the first volume of CUP’s *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, edited by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend, and *Lost Legacies: Women’s Authorship and the Early Gothic* (UWP), edited by Kathleen Hudson.

**Sarah Sharp** is a lecturer in Scottish Literature at the University of Aberdeen and Deputy Director of Aberdeen’s Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies. Her work focuses on the relationship between death and ideas of nation in nineteenth-century Scottish writing

**David Snowdon** completed his PhD at Newcastle University in 2008. He was Associate Lecturer at the University of Sunderland where he primarily taught on Victorian Literature. He has had academic articles published in journals such as *Romanticism on the Net*, *The Historian* and *wordsworth.org.uk*. His first book, *Writing the Prizefight: Pierce Egan’s ‘Boxiana’ World* (2013), was

awarded the prestigious British Society of Sports History Aberdare Literary Prize in 2014. He continues, in an independent capacity, to undertake further scholarly research in the field of nineteenth-century literature and maintain a Pierce Egan related website ([www.pierce-egan.co.uk](http://www.pierce-egan.co.uk)). His most recent book, *Give Us Tomorrow Now* (2018) focuses on 1980s' football history.

**Christopher Stampone** is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Bethel University in McKenzie, Tennessee, where he is developing cutting-edge literary and compositional modules for asynchronous learning. His work has recently appeared in *Studies in American Fiction*, *Studies in the Novel* and *ANQ*. He can be reached at [StamponeC@BethelU.edu](mailto:StamponeC@BethelU.edu).

**Joanna E. Taylor** is Presidential Fellow in Digital Humanities at the University of Manchester. Her work intersects digital and environmental humanities via nineteenth-century literature, spatial poetics and cartographic history. She has published widely in leading literary studies, digital humanities and geographical information science journals on these topics. She is co-director of the AHRC-funded network Women in the Hills, and her next research project explores connections between women's nature writing and environmental policy. You can find her on Twitter: @JoTayl0r0.

**Katherine Voyles** lectured at the University of Washington, Bothell from 2010 to 2020. She holds a PhD in English from the University of California, Irvine.

**Mischa Willett** is author of two books of poetry as well as of essays, translations and reviews that appear in both popular and academic journals. A specialist in nineteenth-century aesthetics, he teaches English at Seattle Pacific University. More information can be found at [www.mischawillett.com](http://www.mischawillett.com).

