◆ SPECIAL ISSUE : THE MINERVA PRESS AND THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE ◆

www.romtext.org.uk

Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic
Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to fore-
grounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality and
textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed
articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists and biographical
profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that re-
flect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality and cul-
tural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

Imitation, Intertextuality and the Minerva Press Novel

Hannah Doherty Hudson

✣

IN A PASSAGE NEAR THE END of *Northanger Abbey*, in what may well now be
the most famous literary characterisation of Minerva Press gothic, Jane Austen
refers archly to the 'charming' works of Mrs Radcliffe and 'all her imitators'.[1]
The novels of Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), in particular *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
(1794), are discussed throughout Austen's tale as the favoured reading material
of its unlikely heroine, Catherine Morland. But *Northanger Abbey*'s premise
also depends on our awareness of a much larger body of texts, among them
those 'hundreds and hundreds' of novels that Catherine's suitor Henry Tilney
claims to have read (p. 108), as well as the group of seven 'all horrid' novels
recommended to Catherine by her friend Isabella Thorpe (p. 33).[2] Although
Austen only periodically mentions specific titles of contemporary novels, and
never emphasises a particular publisher as their source, her readers would no
doubt have recognised the Minerva Press—the most prolific publisher of novels
in Austen's lifetime and the publishing house behind six of the seven 'Horrid'
novels—in her satirical depiction of the recent rage for popular fiction.[3]

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

imitation's function differently.[4] I suggest that the fiction produced by the Minerva Press's novelists is deeply entwined with the press's status as Britain's highest-producing novel publisher, in that the form and function of Minerva's novels stem from their collective identity: each novel is produced and consumed specifically as one of many.

I am far from alone in noting that the popular fiction of the 1790s and early 1800s seems to be unusually—perhaps even uniquely—interconnected. Elizabeth Neiman has recently described Minerva Press novelists as 'develop[ing] their own model of collective authorship', in which these writers '[link] their works to the codes and conventions of formula', 'connect their writings to seminal literary and philosophical texts' and '[connect] with each other over space and time via a market-driven system of exchange'.[5] Deidre Lynch describes a slightly different kind of interconnectedness, noting the gothic's affinity for literary referentiality and writing that these novels 'are remarkable [...] for the density of their intertextual allusions',[6] while Melissa Sodeman explores the connection of women writers to the popular marketplace, arguing that their novels 'memorialize the literary–historical conditions of their writing'.[7] Other scholars including Franz Potter, Anthony Mandal, Diane Long Hoeveler and Edward Jacobs have considered various facets of the Romantic novel's remarkable web of relationships.[8] Here, I examine this interconnectedness specifically in terms of 'imitation': how was imitation used to characterise popular fiction in this period, and what did these characterisations imply? Even more importantly, how does embracing, rather than rejecting, the label of 'imitation' and seeing it as a rich and flexible *practice* rather than just a restrictive critical *discourse* allow us to better understand the fiction of the period? James Watt has shown how Minerva gothic novels in particular have long been dismissed as 'symbols of mass-produced uniformity'; I suggest that we should, instead, value their variations within the constraints of commodity form as uniquely compelling attributes.[9]

While the distinctiveness of certain plot elements and the presence of the highly visible Radcliffe made the gothic a prime target for dismissive claims of imitation, I close this essay by briefly showing how widely the concept applies to Minerva novels across genres—and, I would ultimately suggest, to networks of novels across publishers. In so arguing, I simultaneously make a claim for the importance of continued introspection on and innovation in our own critical methods. In an age where we are deluged with print in ways never before seen, where fan fiction, hyperlinks, literary prizes and reader-generated reviews (among many other phenomena) force us to grapple on a daily basis with issues of originality, multiplicity, reputation and excess, the critical problems raised by the Minerva Press and its novels are newly urgent. Despite the drastic changes in the conditions of reading and authorship since the Romantic period, we still recognise both the anxiety inspired by too many texts and too little time, and the generative creativity and pleasure to be found in a like-minded literary community. Literary overwhelm necessitates categorisation and systems of selection, which, as in the Minerva Press's era, tend to be strongly inflected by perceptions

of genre related to gender and prestige. Considering the foundations of these perceptions in the mass-produced novel's early decades may shed new light on our present-day reading circumstances; conversely, recognising the inseparability of concerns about literary quantity and literary quality—and acknowledging the broad range of possible responses to such concerns—suggests new scholarly approaches to the literature of the past.

'Imitators of Radcliffe'

William Lane's London publishing business was relatively well established, but not yet famous, when he founded the Minerva Press in 1790.[10] His new business model was uniquely well timed to capitalise on—and contribute to—the meteoric rise of a new genre: the gothic novel. Ann Radcliffe published her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, in 1789; this was followed by *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), the very successful *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and then her best-known works, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797).[11] During the very same years that the Minerva Press grew from fledgling press to publishing behemoth, capturing fully one-third of the market for novels, Radcliffe's fame, and the popularity of the gothic novel, increased exponentially. While this synchronicity has often been attributed straightforwardly to Radcliffe's critical success—and her works indubitably inspired direct responses of numerous kinds, stage adaptations and poems, as well as novels[12]—such an explanation not only overstates the coherence and uniformity of the 'gothic' and minimises the contributions of countless individual authors, but it obscures the multilayered connections between authors, works and motifs that, as I will suggest here, characterise the period's popular fiction. The extent to which any early 1790s novels should be seen as 'imitative' of Radcliffe's work is currently being challenged by scholars including Yael Shapira, who points to the significant divergences from Radcliffe in the novels of Minerva authors like Isabella Kelly and, in forthcoming work, reconsiders Radcliffe's place in gothic chronology.[13] In this essay, I take a different approach to the idea of imitation—and, indeed, to the idea of 'the gothic'. I am less concerned with the genealogy or definition of genre—who published what first; how gothic is the gothic?—than with the explicit and implicit ways that the novels I analyse *do* function as (by my definition) imitations. That is, they form a body that is explicitly referential and shares key identifiers, allusions and genre markers, but they also challenge the idea of isolated genius and, most importantly, the notion that imitation is or must be abject or culturally disempowered.[14] I follow the long-standing critical habit of identifying this group of novels, which do undeniably share a number of distinctive attributes, as 'gothic' in this essay in order to illuminate how the repetition—or imitation—of recognisable tropes produces genres that are recognisable to the reader as such. As I will suggest, however, a sustained examination of imitation-as-practice ultimately reveals genre itself as porous and protean rather than fixed, and constantly evolving in relation to past works and reader expectations.

If there are two sides to the story of gothic imitation, the better-known one is clearly that espoused by numerous scornful critics. It is not at all difficult to find examples of 1790s reviewers lending credence to Austen's depiction of the literary landscape as a sea of nameless imitations. *The Abbey of St Asaph* (1795), declared the *Critical Review* in 1795, was composed '[i]n humble imitation of the well-known novels of Mrs. Radcliffe';[15] by 1797, a reviewer at the *Monthly Visitor* would write of a particularly unfortunate novel: 'This work, as an imitation of Ann Radcliffe, is perhaps one of the most despicable performances that ever appeared'.[16] Even more straightforwardly pejorative was the *Critical Review*'s claim that it was a severe 'penance' for enjoyment of earlier novels to be forced to review 'such vapid and servile imitations as the Orphan of the Rhine, and other recent romances'.[17] Such uses of 'imitation' clearly function not only to identify supposed similarities between texts, but to place the 'imitations' in a subordinate literary position to a more valorised 'original'.

'Since Mrs. Radcliffe's justly admired and successful romances, the press has teemed with stories of haunted castles and terrors; the incidents of which are so little diversified, that criticism is at a loss to vary its remarks', wrote one reviewer in the *Critical Review* in 1796.[18] Although this now famous remark is often used in contemporary criticism as a straightforward indictment of the fiction of the age, for the purposes of my argument, it is the reviewer's comments about *critical* unoriginality that seem remarkably prescient. A genre-specific identification of a literary fashion was clearly also functioning as a convenient catch-all phrase, designed to dismiss the works discussed as 'imitations' and to effectively exclude them from the realm of literary criticism. Reliance on this formula could be a shorthand with which critics—possibly anxious about the increasing numbers of novels taxing their review capacity—could categorise and dismiss at least one substantial group of them.[19] As Megan Peiser notes in her essay in this issue, summing up Minerva novels pejoratively as a 'class' or 'tribe' of their own—often using originality as a criterion for so doing—was common practice in the era's major reviews (see p. 130 of this issue). While Austen's defence of novelists in *Northanger Abbey* wryly critiques such blanket dismissals, these summations have had lasting effects: later scholars have seized on the formulation 'imitators of Radcliffe', perpetuating it widely and often uncritically.[20] In the next section, I examine some of these 'imitations' themselves, arguing that whereas the charge of imitation became grounds for dismissal, for a clear verdict of 'not-literature' on the part of reviewers, the books themselves showcase the imitative mode in order to capitalise on the narrative possibilities of genre. This opposition arises from the advent of mass production and mass consumption: critics identified overwhelming volume—the 'innumerable' gothics—as a symbol of non-value, but the novels use their own strength in numbers as a symbol of literary power.

Gothic Machinery and Generic Expectations
Writing the preface to her gothic novella, *The Castle of Kolmeras*, in 1804, Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis explicitly acknowledged the perceived relationship

between the genre in which she wrote and Ann Radcliffe. As soon as *Kolmeras* was published, she declared:

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

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

Reviewers, of course, did not necessarily share this perspective, and the use and reuse of recognisable gothic formulae form one of the most frequent targets of gothic criticism. Just as *The Abbey of St Asaph* was said to be 'duly equipped with all the appurtenances of ruined towers, falling battlements, moats, draw-bridges, Gothic porches, tombs, vaults, and apparitions',[22] another novel, *Dusseldorf; or, the Fratricide* (1798), was summed up with the remark: 'It seems to be agreed that those who write on the horrific plan must employ the same instruments—cruel German counts, each with two wives—old castles—private doors—sliding pannels—banditti—assassins—ghosts, &c.'[23] When discussing *The Wanderer of the Alps* (1797), the *Critical Review* referred to 'the hackneyed and borrowed machinery of *haunted castles, skeletons, banditti,* &c.'[24] Whether characterised as 'appurtenances,' 'ingredients' or 'machinery', descriptions like these reinforce the idea that the gothic novel depends on certain highly predictable topoi. What such a formulation leaves out entirely, however, is the potential that such set elements provide for creative variation.[25] Precisely because certain 'ingredients' of these gothic fictions are so predictable, authors were able to meaningfully alter and destabilise them to create a range of effects. Predicating their experiments on an assumed readership intimately familiar with the 'norms' of the genre, Minerva's authors undermine and repurpose the gothic conventions they employ.

If castles, banditti and ghosts create the mandatory backdrop for a gothic tale, the unfortunate young women who encounter them are no less central—and no less stereotyped. Marilyn Butler sums up the situation thus:

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

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

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

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

On other occasions, novels contain narrative interjections or tonal inconsistencies that throw the status of the entire novel—its seriousness, its intended effect, its likely outcome—into question. When Matilda, the heroine of *Castle Wolfenbach,* finally penetrates the hidden room in the castle where a countess has been cruelly imprisoned, for example, we are told that she finds lines of poetry cut into the window with a diamond, and that these writings are 'expressive of misery, though not of poetical talent'.[30] Given that the reader has already been alerted that these lines are one of the most terrifying aspects of the castle—Matilda is warned before visiting that it contains '[in]scriptions [...] on the windows, to make a body's hair stand on end' (p. 4)—it is difficult to know how to respond to this sudden cool appraisal. Taking the statement as a joke

undermines the whole premise of the novel as terrifying; to interpret Matilda's words as seriously meant, however, places her in the role of jaded critic rather than compassionate heroine. Lines like this should certainly be understood in part as what Horner and Zlosnik have identified as gothic's 'Comic Turn': that is, the potential for comedy that they argue 'is intrinsic to a mode of writing that has been hybrid since its very inception'.[31] However, I would also suggest that Matilda's comment is most resonant only when it is read in context: that is, against a backdrop of dozens of other gothic novels in which characters compose poetry of questionable merit at every opportunity.[32] (While the quality of gothic poetry is of course a matter of subjective judgment, it is tempting to read this line as a gentle dig at Radcliffe, whose heroines' poetic flights are often cited as evidence of her genius.) Similarly, *Lucy's* narrator remarks at one point that the eponymous heroine (while exploring a deserted underground passage) is 'entirely unacquainted with any stories of ghosts and apparitions' and thus 'apprehend[s] no danger' and is not 'sensible of the hazards she run[s]' (1, 76). The necessity for an explanation of this kind, of course, only stems from the sure awareness of a projected reader who will know exactly what kind of 'story' Lucy is in, and what kinds of 'hazards' she is sure to face in it. In all of these cases, the novels' genre becomes their subject.

Although examples of this kind could be gathered endlessly, I will conclude this discussion with one more cluster of references from *Lucy*, which illustrates the potential range of purposes to which such metacommentary could be put. At the stage of the novel in which the heroine seems not yet to have recognised her gothic status, the narrator suggests that her lack of generic self-identification— that is, her failure to act as the heroine of a gothic romance should do—may stem from a similar failure on the part of her guardians, given their unseemly (for the gothic) dependence on the prosaic needs of life. Upon first settling in the 'ugly old castle' that Lucy wonders at, their first act is 'planting potatoes' (1, 4), and potatoes make cameo appearances surprisingly often thereafter. It is 'while roasting a few potatoes' that the couple hears the fateful footsteps of the horse-man who abandons the infant Lucy (1, 9), and it is hunger that then motivates the young Lucy to rouse her mother from her stupor of grief after her father's death: 'I am very hungry', she remarks, 'must we all die together?' (1, 22). Left alone in the castle some years later, Lucy makes a stab at typical gothic-heroine exploration, but finding that the path to the subterranean passages she hopes to explore is 'walled up, and she could go no further', she goes home instead, 'to boil her potatoes' (1, 30). And after the death of her foster-mother, when Lucy is left to fend for herself once and for all, her embarkation on the path of an orphan heroine is marked by her romantic refusal of all life's necessities: 'She returned to her room, alas! how gloomy, how frightful its appearance! No gentle friend to speak the words of kindness; no mother to instruct or amuse her [...] she lighted no fire, boiled no potatoes, made no bed' (1, 43).

While my aim here is not to attempt an extended close reading of the Gothic Potato, I dwell on this detail at some length because of its potential to illustrate

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

Imitation beyond the Gothic

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

parts of the plot.[35] Thus, *Rosella* provides a representative example of a Minerva author's imitative and intertextual relationship with other Minerva authors, readers and texts. Not only does the imitative mode allow authors to import plots, characters and even the identities of other authors into their own works, it renders the intertextual project explicit. The devoted readers who are merely implied in many other gothic fictions here make their way right into the text.

    Rosella begins, even at the subtitle, by highlighting its supposedly 'Modern' sensibilities.[36] Miss Sophia Beauclerc, at the novel's opening, finds herself 'in one of the fashionable streets at the west end of the metropolis' (1, 1); more to the satirical point, this young lady is immediately identified as a female quixote, foolishly addicted to contemporary novels. The opening scenes of *Rosella* predate the eponymous heroine's birth; as we soon discover, Miss Beauclerc is in the midst of a fiction-inspired and friend-abetted elopement with an unsuitable lover. Both Sophia and her friend, the equally novel-addicted Selina, derive immense enjoyment from imagining themselves to be gothic heroines. Charlton plays up the humour of their heroic self-perception, but she also grounds the satire in the mechanisms of popular readership. Looking in the mirror, Sophia enjoys the

> elevated pleasure of beholding *in propria persona* a heroine in the bloom of youth, emerging into those delightful, mysterious, and sentimental situations which so agreeably occupy the imagination, when viewed within the inclosure of a tremendous breadth of margin, and cased in a surtout of marbled paper, extremely soiled by the devotion of the curious. (1, 9)

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

    No reader familiar with the quixotic tradition will be surprised to learn that the young heroine's escapade does not go smoothly. Despite Sophia's parents' refusal to spurn her in traditional literary fashion—instead, upon discovering her elopement, they place an ad in the paper requesting her to return home, 'where she will be received with kindness and indulgence' (1, 32–33)—her love affair with the feckless and indebted Raymond ends in his death and her own pregnancy. Both her impending motherhood and the fact of her brief marriage are hastily hushed up by her concerned parents; the child—Rosella—is shipped off for fostering; and Selina and Sophia both return home, somewhat chastened but, as we soon learn, no wiser for the experience.

    If the story ended here, *Rosella* would be an entertaining and relatively simple rewriting of the female quixote trope. As the title suggests, however, this tidy plot—which fills only the first hundred pages or so—is merely the prelude to the central story of the novel. As the action begins to unfold, we find ourselves in what seems to be a parody of a parodic novel (or, to put it in the terms I have thus far been using, an imitation of an imitation): now it is the innocent Rosella (innocent of moral error as well as of excessive novel reading) who is the heroine, and Selina and Sophia, grown up into Mrs Ellinger and Miss Beauclerc, who

are the 'authors' of her melodramatic escapades. Charlton misses no opportunity to reiterate gothic and sentimental stereotypes through the musings of Selina and Sophia, but she also repeatedly emphasises the active, writerly role these two ladies take in creating their own novelistic tale, as Sophia recounts Rosella's adventures in lengthy letters to her friend. Where Rosella's natural inclinations and experiences, like Lucy's in Parsons's earlier novel, do not align with her status as heroine, her guardians do their best to alter them, a process that necessitates such steps as the purchase of a harp, voice lessons and removal to a country estate: 'her progress in celebrity and heroism [...] [was] not to be attained in the odious metropolis' (I, 124).

Charlton and Rosella's two guardians all seem eminently conscious of the story's potential for metanarrative, and scenes are often deliberately contrived to highlight this aspect of the plot. Miss Beauclerc's constant writing, as she narrates Rosella's day-to-day activities, is described as an activity that is in itself dependent on reading: 'Miss Beauclerc wrote her interesting narrative, and read another equally interesting from the large packet of books she had brought with her from her Circulating Library' (II, 29–30). Fiction is thus presented not just as a creative endeavour, but as an intermediary between readers and other novels. Readers within the novel—Sophia and Selina—use fiction to learn how to write and how to live; at the same time, actual readers of *Rosella* are invited to use the novel to test the breadth of their own reading, and possibly to envision themselves as future Minerva Press authors.[37] *Rosella* gets endless comic mileage out of Miss Beauclerc's dissatisfaction when her life fails to unfold like a novel plot. She is disappointed to find

> little to interest her attention on a well-frequented turnpike road, where the moonlight walks of fair ladies would probably terminate uncouthly, from their being run over by mail-coaches, or being knocked down and robbed in a common vulgar way by a footpad (II, 6)

and she makes herself dangerously ill when she insists on sitting up through the night (as a heroine would) to record one of her escapades for posterity (II, 194).

The satirical force of these humorous but relatively predictable scenes is, however, continually undermined by the tendency of the story to veer beyond the pale of realism straight into the melodramatically fictional zones that the narrator so frequently mocks. Though Rosella consistently serves as the sensible foil to her guardians' bizarre machinations, her unquixotic nature does not safeguard her from becoming embroiled in countless scenarios of unmatched literary stereotype. Forced by her guardian to violate the rules of prudence and politeness to pursue a potential hero, for example, Rosella ends up caught in what is surely the most dramatic thunderstorm of the century, and is obliged to take refuge in a mountain hovel that turns out to be the hideaway of precisely the stranger she set out to find. Secretive and melodramatic, this young man conceals a tormented past, writes Rosella confessional letters signed 'a wretch', and ultimately dies in exile (II, 68). Later in the novel, Rosella finds a scene equal to *Clermont* in its gothic excess, after arriving at an abandoned house where,

she learns, the master has just died at midnight (II, 99–100). Subplots like this constantly take over the novel's satirical momentum, embracing the attractions of gothic machinery with all the verve of a circulating-library devotee. The surprise climax of Volume Three, and the turning-point of the entire novel, is the conspiracy-laden arrest and institutionalisation of Miss Beauclerc for insanity, leaving Rosella just as alone and unprotected as any other orphan heroine.

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

These fictional gambits depend on readerly familiarity with genre norms. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that though Miss Beauclerc is the object of many of the novel's jokes, and supposedly represents the cautionary tale at which the reader is meant to laugh, *Rosella* also contains many passages in which the reader is invited to identify with her. Early in the novel, after Rosella has met with some malicious gossip, the narrators tells us that Miss Beauclerc

> was, in fact, not displeased that Rosella, beloved as she was, should become the object of transient malevolence and misrepresentation. Was there indeed a single heroine in the great circle of her reading, who had escaped them?—Not one of any celebrity. (I, 297)

The first response to this may well be laughter: obviously, we think, such a passage is designed to highlight Miss Beauclerc's terrible shortcomings as a

mother. But it also has quite a different effect, in that a reader who has any knowledge whatsoever of fictional heroines will likely acknowledge the truth of her statement. Miss Beauclerc may be an unfit parent, but she is also, by this literary logic, correct. Thus, the more novels the reader of *Rosella* has read, the more she will find herself aligned (in knowledge, if not in behaviour) with the novel's ostensible scapegoat.

Nor is such identification purely abstract. Throughout *Rosella*, Miss Beauclerc discusses specific plot points, characters and incidents from other novels she has read, in order to compare them to the situation at hand. The scenes are often stereotypical or comically melodramatic, as one might expect; what might not be so immediately apparent, however, is that they are also often referencing actual contemporary novels. When Miss Beauclerc describes the 'captivating heroine [...] who made a pedestrian tour on the Continent of more than eight hundred miles, in pursuance of the dictates of "Plain Sense"' (II, 173–74),[38] readers would likely have thought of the best-selling Minerva Press novel *Plain Sense* (1795), which reached at least three editions in the 1790s. Similarly, when we are told that in Miss Beauclerc's favourite reading spot she 'relished more particularly the descriptive progress of the loves of all the Ethelindas, the Jemimas, the Fredericas, and the Georgianas, with all their panics, their castles, and their visions' (I, 125), we may not now recognise that these names refer specifically to heroines in different popular novels published in the 1790s, some published by the Minerva Press and some not.[39] When Miss Beauclerc asks Rosella, 'in the charming new novel we lately read, did not a very amiable, honest, and moral man introduce a very lovely young stranger to his wife and daughters, as their niece and cousin', she is not merely justifying her own point of view; this description (and the entire page-long plot summary that follows it) also serves as a hint to all of Rosella's readers who have also read the seven-volume novel in question, *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (1797), by Anna Maria Bennett (II, 244).

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

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

Knowing Fictions

As Deidre Lynch has argued, 'Gothic fictions [...] produced a nation of knowing readers [...] [t]his knowingness bespoke the repeatability of this fiction's formulae'.[40] Just what did those knowing readers know? As the Minerva novels I have examined here suggest, one of the most salient characteristics of the Romantic-era novel is a hyperconsciousness of other novels. Materially and textually, these books and their 'marbled paper' casings represent a vast and mobile fictional field, in which circulating libraries facilitate the movement of texts from reader to reader, and the texts themselves evoke the very milieu(s) in which they move. If we acknowledge that Minerva's authors were engaged in a deeply imitative and intertextual writing practice, what does that mean for us as critics? Given the broadness of the field and the obscurity of most of the works involved, it can be a challenge for a twenty-first-century reader to achieve the depth of fictional knowledge of a Catherine Morland or a Sophia Beauclerc. Some references are hard to miss, even if one does not know the original; countless others, however, are subtle, invisible to a less-expert reader (there are quite a number of references in *Rosella* that I have yet to identify, and likely still more that I have not even recognised as such). We must read, and read broadly, to catch examples of imitativeness like these.

If a reader encounters a plot in which a heroine is shocked to learn that her guardian-turned-love-interest may be her father (as readers of the 1818 Minerva novel *Genevieve; or, the Orphan's Visit* will do), she will receive an explicit hint of the intertextual issues at play when another character alerts the heroine that the problem she is facing has been encountered before: specifically, in a work called *The False Friend: A Domestic Story* (which, though the character does not share this information, and appears to be somewhat misinformed as to the details of the plot, is in fact a 1799 work by Mary Robinson). But only extended reading will reveal that this plot twist, in a wide variety of manifestations, actually features in multiple novels of the period, and that the variations in its construction and resolution not only challenge stereotypes about the sentimental novel, but comment on the issues of class and gender raised by intergenerational (and potentially incestuous) romance. Characters from Fielding's *Charles Grandison* pop up in 1810s novels; novels are published in hasty response to earlier novels; and numerous novels feature young authors in the act of attempting publication.[41]

As my earlier readings have suggested, the ramifications of this kind of imitative practice extend far beyond issues of plot. If the novelist Robert Bage repeatedly refers to his projected readers as explicitly female in his two Minerva Press novels (of 1792 and 1796), the significance of the claim, and its relationship to the realities and stereotypes of Romantic readership, only comes into view when we contrast it with differently gendered portrayals of readers

in other works of the period, and, perhaps, most strikingly, with the sharply divergent portrayal in Bage's earlier novels of an English nation in which 'all people read'.[42] In the fiction of this period we see not only countless portrayals of reading and writing, but reflections—which, we should be aware, may also ultimately be *reshapings*—of the physical ways that literature instantiates and circulates. These references are often real and specific; at other times they may be red herrings (as with Bage's supposedly newly female readership) or simply erroneous.[43] But in all of these cases, they serve a specific function: they invoke the authority of a large body of fellow texts and large numbers of fellow readers, making the reader feel part of a complex literary community that bridges real and fictional worlds across time. As critics, we must consider the historicity of this community in order to understand the aims and effects of fiction written in a climate of fictional abundance.

Invoking implied readers obviously necessitates a certain speculative leap: no matter how persuasive the evidence may be, the structures of a novel itself can never tell us for certain how its actual readers received it. In *Rosella*'s case, however, the patterns so provocatively suggested by the novel itself are also substantiated by the material form of one of the novel's surviving copies. In the British Library's copy of *Rosella*, a real reader has left marginal notes and annotations throughout, many of which explicitly respond to the novel's intertextual references.[44] In one typical passage, Miss Beauclerc is described as wishing to explore the palace of Edinburgh, 'where she had lately read a beautiful young creature had been immured from the ardent gaze of her lovers' (II, 216). Placing a firm 'X' beside this line, the reader then identifies the plot as that of 'The Beggar girl by Mrs Bennet'. Elsewhere, the anonymous reader calls attention to another Minerva Press author: where the narrator refers to that 'grand, minute, superb, sentimental, overbearing, manoeuvring lady of doubtful fame, Madame G——s', this reader helpfully writes in 'Genlis': that is, the author of *Castle of Kolmeras*, discussed in the previous section (II, 248–49). The same imitative plots, repeated and re-appropriated, create a frame of literary reference within which this reader locates herself and her reading practices.

When critical observers referred to literary 'imitators', then, they were not necessarily wrong. The critics who complained that 'Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, and Sterne, were the Wedgewoods of their days; and the imitators that have since started up in the same line, exceed all power of calculation!' were likely as accurate (which is to say, partially) as those who bemoaned the countless 'imitators of Radcliffe'.[45] When a writer in the *Monthly Review* remarks, 'With due respect to the memory of Fielding, we cannot but think that his *Tom Jones* has produced more imitators of his vices, than of his virtues',[46] or the author of *The Mystic Cottager of Chamouny* [*sic*] (1794) is said to 'imitat[e], though very feebly, the tender simplicity of Sterne',[47] we ought to recognise the essential genre affinities potentially revealed by these claims, even as we challenge their pejorative valences. For, what both this kind of criticism and, frequently, that of subsequent scholarship has come to obscure is how openly and purposively

many of Minerva's novelists practised the art of literary imitation, and how widely the practice spread, beyond the gothic, and beyond the press itself. The eighteenth century's many 'imitators' cannot be summed up simply as time-strapped and idea-pressed authors unself-consciously banging out rote copies of famous books, and lacking the time and the talent to do otherwise. While examples can certainly be found which support this cynical assessment, such a blanket dismissal prevents us from seeing the effects on the works themselves, just as it makes it impossible to consider the field of popular fiction at large as an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century reader would actually have experienced it. In an age of literary multiplicity, then as now, imitation offers us one way to think about the complex relationships between novels, and a means to consider the ways that sheer numerousness (and its potential corollaries: popularity, economic power, cultural influence) can give authors themselves a way of asserting themselves in the marketplace. What the Romantic era's 'knowing' novel readers certainly knew, then, is that fiction is, to a great extent, *about* fictionality, and that imitation, in all its forms, is a part of its ongoing negotiations between readerly expectation and authorial innovation.

Notes

1.   Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. by Barbara Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 205. Subsequent citations refer to this edition.

2.   For further discussion of the 'Horrid Novels', see Michael Sadleir, *The Northanger Novels: A Footnote to Jane Austen* (Oxford: OUP, 1927); Douglass H. Thomson and Frederick S. Frank, 'Jane Austen and the Northanger Novelists', in *Gothic Writers: A Critical & Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Douglass H. Thomson, Jack Voller and Frederick S. Frank (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 33–47; and Natalie Neill, '"The trash with which the press now groans": *Northanger Abbey* and the Gothic Best Sellers of the 1790s', *Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 4 (2004), 163–92.

3.   We now have a relatively detailed picture of prose fiction production during the Romantic period: see Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling, *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2000), especially I, 26–7 and 79.

4.   For a brief discussion of the Minerva Press's commercially sanctioned ability 'to ignore the dictums of official culture', see E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 137.

5.   Elizabeth A. Neiman, 'A New Perspective on the Minerva Press's "Derivative" Novels: Authorizing Borrowed Material', *ERR*, 26.5 (2015), 633–58 (p. 634) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2015.1070344>.

6. Deirdre Lynch, 'Gothic Libraries and National Subjects', *Studies in Romanticism*, 40 (2001), 29–48 (p. 31) <https://doi.org/10.2307/25601485>.

7. Melissa Sodeman, *Sentimental Memorials*: *Women and the Novel in Literary History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), p. 3.

8. See e.g. Franz Potter, *The History of Gothic Publishing* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Anthony Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Gothic Adaptation, 1765–1830', in *The Gothic World,* ed. by Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 185–98; and Edward Jacobs, 'Anonymous Signatures: Circulating Libraries, Conventionality and the Production of Gothic Romances', *ELH*, 62 (1995), 603–29 <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.1995.0027>.

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

10. The classic study of William Lane and the Minerva Press is Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939). A more recent account of the specifics of Lane's business can be found in James Raven's introduction to the first volume of Garside, Raven and Schöwerling's *English Novel*, I, 79–86. See also William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 2004), pp. 237–44 and 665–66.

11. For discussion of reviews of Radcliffe's novels, see Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788–1802* (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 132–39.

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

13. Yael Shapira, 'Beyond the Radcliffe Formula: Isabella Kelly and the Gothic Troubles of the Married Heroine', *Women's Writing* (2015), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2015.1110289> [accessed 27 May 2019] and 'The Gothic Novel Beyond Radcliffe and Lewis', in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic, Volume I: The Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1820,* ed. by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: CUP, forthcoming).

14. On Radcliffe's 'genius' and contemporary periodical treatments of it, see Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp. 73–74. Robert L. Mack discusses imitation more broadly in the eighteenth century, especially in relation to parody, in *The Genius of Parody: Imitation and Originality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

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

distinct Gothic formulas' that 'differ from each other significantly' ('Beyond the Radcliffe Formula', pp. 4–5).

16. *Monthly Visitor, and Pocket Companion*, 2 (1797), 478.

17. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 27 (Nov 1799), 356.

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

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

20. The use of 'imitators of Radcliffe' or closely related phrases to characterise 1790s gothics is ubiquitous in gothic criticism; to give just a few representative examples, see Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 207; Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789–1830* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 52; Rictor Norton (ed.), *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764–1840* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), p. 89.

21. Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, *The Castle of Kolmeras* (London: Minerva Press, 1804), p. 4. Subsequent parenthetical citations refer to this edition.

22. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 14 (July 1795), 349.

23. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 24 (Oct 1798), 236.

24. *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. 20 (July 1797), 352–53.

25. See Neiman, 'New Perspective', p. 635 on Minerva novelists' relationship to 'popular formulas' and their 'revisions of value-laden conventions'.

26. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760–1830* (New York: OUP, 1982), p. 29.

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

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

29. Regina Maria Roche, *Clermont: A Tale*, ed. by Natalie Schroeder (Chicago: Valancourt Books, 2006), p. 104.

30. Eliza Parsons, *Castle of Wolfenbach*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler (Chicago: Valancourt Books, 2006), p. 26.

31. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2005), p. 4.

32. For further discussion of the Radcliffean novels' use of poetic quotation, see Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).

33. Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: OUP, 1980), pp. 168, 322 and 365.

34. Jennie Batchelor discusses Parsons in 'The Claims of Literature: Women appli-
     cants to the Royal Literary Fund, 1790–1810', *Women's Writing*, 12 (2003), 505–20
     <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699080500200266>. Also, in her book *Women's
     Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester: MUP, 2010), she
     considers the central importance of *work* to the self-conception of many female
     authors in this period. Edward Copeland shows that preoccupation with financial
     issues, and the emergence of financial themes in fictional plots, is characteristic
     of many novels of this era, perhaps particularly Minerva Press novels, in *Women
     Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790–1820* (Cambridge: CUP,
     1995).

35. In this sense we can see that less well-known female authors were also participating,
     if in slightly different ways, in the process of writing books that 'memorializ[e],
     quite self-consciously, the conditions of their writing' that Sodeman identifies in
     the works of authors like Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith (*Sentimental Memorials*,
     p. 13).

36. Mary Charlton, *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (London: Minerva Press, 1799).
     For a related discussion of *Rosella*, see Deborah Anne McLeod*,* 'The Minerva
     Press' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 1997), pp. 80–84.

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

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

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

40. Deidre Shauna Lynch, 'Gothic Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in
     the Romantic Period*, ed. by Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge:
     CUP, 2008), pp. 47–64 (p. 47).

41. For other critical discussions of this phenomenon, see e.g. Neiman, 'New Perspec-
     tive', pp. 640–47, and Sodeman, *Sentimental Memorials*, pp. 135–38.

42. I discuss this quotation, and the abrupt shift in Bage's gendered portrayal of
     novel readership, in greater detail in my essay 'Robert Bage's Novel Merchan-
     dise: Commercialism, Gender and Form in Late-Eighteenth-Century Fiction',
     in 'Robert Bage's Novel Merchandise: Commercialism, Gender, and Form in Late
     Eighteenth-Century Fiction', *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 9 (2012), 184–90.

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

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

45. *Monthly Review*, 25 (July 1791), 338; qtd in Sodeman, *Sentimental Memorials*, p. 6.

46. Review of *The Castle of St Donats* (London: Minerva Press, 1799), *Monthly Review*,
     29 (May 1799), 89–90.

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

Referring to this Article

H. D. Hudson. 'Imitation, Intertextuality and the Minerva Press Novel', *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840*, 23 (Summer 2020) <https://doi.org/10.18573/romtext.77>.

Copyright Information

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://simonecelinemarshall.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). 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*.

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*.