

**Readers in the Margins:  
Texts, Paratexts, and Reading Audiences  
in Romantic-era Fiction**

by  
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## Abstract

*Readers in the Margins: Texts, Paratexts, and Reading Audiences in Romantic-era Fiction* investigates how the form of the book influenced literary form in the Romantic period—not just how readers read and how publishers marketed, but how pre-existing paratextual norms shaped how writers conceived of and composed their writing. To do so, this project draws on a combination of book history and narratological strategies to explore how the material and historical realities of the Romantic-era book industry shaped fiction during the period. Contextualizing the narrative strategies of authors including Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Frances Burney within the early nineteenth-century material culture of the book reveals how Romantic-era cultural conceptions of genre, audience, and gender are encoded in the physical manifestations of their fiction. This argument builds on three critical discourses in the study of the period's fiction: discussions of eighteenth-century and Romantic-era paratexts and the book as technology, by Janine Barchas, Christina Lupton, Andrew Piper, and Alex Watson; scholarship that engages with the commercialization of print, historical reading practices, and their relationship to the construction of Romantic-era reading audiences in the popular imagination, by Stephen Colclough, Jan Fergus, Michael Gamer, Jon Klancher, and William St. Clair; and studies of the gendering of audiences, genres, and authors, by Adriana Cracuin, Ina Ferris, and Jacqueline Pearson, among others. Bringing together these disparate strands of criticism demonstrates how the paratext is a necessary context for understanding literary innovation in the Romantic period. The first two chapters explore what kinds of explicit and implicit information paratexts conveyed to readers during the Romantic period and what kinds of implications those had for readers who had to navigate an increasingly overwhelming number of books by looking at title page design and Maria Edgeworth's use of genre, respectively, while the third and fourth chapters take as case studies two authors, Jane Austen and Frances Burney who make use of their readers' paratextual expectations to experiment with narrative for political ends.

**Keywords:** novel; Romanticism; Jane Austen; Maria Edgeworth; Frances Burney; print culture; narratology; 18<sup>th</sup> century; fiction; landscape; book history

For Inge Sharren, without whom I might never have read a nineteenth-century novel.  
Who knew it would come to this?

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# Introduction: Romantic-era Paratexts and the Shape of the Novel

## Introduction

The first series of Walter Scott's *Tales of my Landlord* was published in four volumes in 1816, complete with an elaborate paratextual framework that created the transparent fiction that the tales were true. The two tales included in the four-volume set, "Black Dwarf," which filled the first volume, and "Old Mortality," which filled the remaining three, were surrounded by a title page that claimed the tales had been "Collected and Arranged by Jedediah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster and Parish-Clerk of Gandercleugh," an introduction by the same fictional editor, and a concluding "Peroration," also signed by Cleishbotham. In the "Peroration" Scott, in the guise of Cleishbotham, addresses the physical realities of the book, in which he complains:

It was mine earnest wish, most courteous Reader, that the "Tales of my Landlord" should have reached thine hands in one entire succession of tomes, or volumes. But as I sent some few more manuscript quires, containing the continuation of these most pleasing narratives, I was apprised, somewhat unceremoniously, by my publisher, that he did not approve of novels (as he injuriously called these real histories) extending beyond four volumes, and if I did not agree to the first four being published separately, he threatened to decline the article. (IV 346)

In the guise of a naïve editor who is powerless to object to the publisher demanding that his tales be contained in four volumes, or face rejection, Scott advertises future additions to the *Tales of My Landlord* sequence, calls into question the fictional status implied by the publisher's packaging, and draws his readers' attention to the physical form that they have taken. While Scott's original intention to include a different tale in each volume was indeed precluded by "Old Mortality," which filled three of the four volumes, the "Peroration" adds an additional layer to the usual paratextual play of fictional editors and pretenses to historical truth with its references to the material structure of the work and the way that the demands of the publisher influence the presentation of the text. The frame of an editor presenting true tales to the reading public brings the material reality of the book into the narrative, making it part of a set of tales that are encompassed by the

wider fiction of “Jedediah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster and Parish-Clerk of Gandercleugh.” Scott’s playful use of paratextual information indicates a belief that his readers will be able to correctly interpret his elaborate paratextual ruse, parsing the fiction of Cleishbotham’s editorship, at the same time as it explains the odd volume structure of the two tales.

*Tales of My Landlord’s* “Peroration” contains many of the elements that are central to the arguments I make throughout this dissertation, which investigates how the form of the book contributed to the shape of the literary form of fiction in the Romantic period. By this, I mean not just how readers read and how publishers marketed, but also how pre-existing paratextual norms shaped how writers conceived of and composed their writing. To do so, I draw on a combination of book history and narratological theory. Gérard Genette’s language of the paratext is central to articulating this project’s aims because of its ability to account for the various ways texts are mediated and framed. In his definition of the paratext as “a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence . . . that is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (2), Genette identifies the mediation of a text as central to understanding its reception. In this project, I engage with this definition, to ask what it would mean to approach the paratext not just as a way of conveying a text to an audience, but as a precondition for that text’s composition. The title page, with the title, byline, imprint, and, during this period, minimal adornment; the subtle distinctions between genres of fiction that became folded into the all-encompassing category of “novel”; the increasing restrictions on length that would make the three-volume novel the default structure: all of these features informed what readers understood fiction to be and how authors—including the anonymous novelists producing fiction for the popular Minerva Press, the famous Maria Edgeworth and Frances Burney, and the now-canonical Jane Austen—composed their works.

Contextualizing these authors’ narrative strategies within the early nineteenth-century material culture of the book reveals how Romantic-era conceptions of genre, audience, and gender are encoded in the physical manifestations of their fiction. This

argument builds on three critical discourses in the study of the period's fiction: discussions of eighteenth-century and Romantic-era paratexts and the book as technology, by Janine Barchas, Christina Lupton, Andrew Piper, and Alex Watson; scholarship that engages with the commercialization of print, historical reading practices, and their relationship to the construction of Romantic-era reading audiences in the popular imagination, by Stephen Colclough, Jan Fergus, Michael Gamer, Jon Klancher, and William St. Clair; and studies of the gendering of audiences, genres, and authors, by Adriana Cracu, Ina Ferris, and Jacqueline Pearson, among others. Bringing together these disparate strands of criticism demonstrates how the paratext is a necessary context for understanding literary innovation in the Romantic period. However, while these studies frequently account for how paratextual materials shape reader interaction with books, the role that books played in determining authorial practice remains largely unnoted. Treating the book as it existed in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century as a structure separate from but intimately connected with the novel identifies the narrative innovations associated with the novel's rise as a response to a material textual culture. If this logic seems circular, that is part of the point: the larger idea underpinning my claim is that the book and the narrative structure of the novel are in conversation, shaping each other at the same time as they respond to political and market forces.

In making this argument, the methodology that Caroline Levine articulates in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* provides a useful way to conceive of the relationship between literary form, codex book, and wider social context. As Levine elucidates:

Literary form does not operate outside of the social but works among many organizing principles, all circulating in a world jam-packed with other arrangements. Each constraint will encounter many other, different organizing principles, and its power to impose order will itself be constrained, and at times unsettled, by other forms. (7)

In the case of this dissertation, the literary form of the novel overlaps with what Levine describes as social forms, such as the gender binary, the operations of the Romantic-era literary marketplace, and the imagined readership that was being theorized by writers; the material structure of the book is yet another form that interacts with literary texts and the

cultural context that shapes them and one that, I argue, is key to understanding how these various forms overlap. In the Romantic period, the intersection between the literary, the social, and the material is of particular interest because it represents an historical moment during which, according to conventional narratives, the novel as a genre achieves cultural legitimacy, and, as Andrew Piper argues in *Dreaming in Books*, “The very hegemony that the book achieved . . . elided the complex mediations that were required to make literature’s location in the book seem both natural and immediate” (9).<sup>1</sup> Over the eighteenth century, the hegemony of the book was reinforced by the expanding print marketplace; as book production increased, so did access and therefore familiarity. The confluence of the rise of the novel and the increasing familiarity with the book as a form for literary dissemination means that a focus on fiction in the Romantic period provides a unique opportunity to scrutinize how books, the texts that they contain, and the cultural contexts that surround them interact with and act on each other. However, while Piper draws attention to “the complex process of how literature shaped and lent meaning to such a new media reality” (4), I am interested in the opposite: how, in the Romantic period, the medium of the book and its attendant features shaped literature.

By recognizing that the book as it was produced at the turn of the nineteenth century was a precondition—flexible, but increasingly standardized—for the fiction being published that shaped what could be done, we develop a fuller appreciation of literary innovation and the rise of the novel in the Romantic period as a media event that responded to the technology and pressures of the literary marketplace. Accordingly, I take as case studies three novelists—Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Frances Burney—whose innovations have long been understood as central to the novel’s rise. While my focus on these three authors can only make limited claims about the literary marketplace as a whole, it can help us understand how developments central to the

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<sup>1</sup> Piper’s argument for the hegemony of the book that began in the Romantic period points to how the contents of books themselves made the codex book seem like the natural way for fiction to be disseminated: “The work of romantic writers—both their books and their fictions—functioned as a key space where the changes to the material conditions of writing and communication that defined the nineteenth century could be rehearsed, interrogated, and ultimately normalized” (13). In this sense, the naturalization of the book as a medium for dissemination does not mean that the book became culturally invisible, but that it became, for Romantic-era readers, the obvious and default form for writing to take.

novel's canonization as a form occurred in response to the historical pressures that shaped the literary marketplace and were communicated, in part, by the book as it existed in this period. For example, as my second chapter explores, Maria Edgeworth's use of the didactic subgenre, the "moral tale," was shaped by the novel's reputation as a frivolous genre, even though reviewers sometimes objected to her choice of identifier; this tension between what her work claims to be and what its formal features suggest it is opens up a space to theorize fiction within her plots. Likewise, as I argue in the third chapter, Jane Austen's plots take shape around the structure of the three-volume novel, which acts as a landscape onto which the events of the plot are mapped; when Austen uses techniques that restrict points of view, such as free indirect discourse, they work in concert with the reader's physical location within the volume. The fourth chapter considers how Frances Burney's use of the conventions of author attribution allows her to link her narrative experiments later in her career to a pre-existing authorial identity at the same time as she questions the ethical implications of the narrative innovations that structure sympathetic relationships between reader and character. In each of these cases, the tensions between the form that the book and its expected features prescribe and the particulars of the work that a book contains structure formal experiments.

Viewed through this lens, the book becomes a site where the intersections between literary form and social context can be observed. By exploring different features of the book as a material and commercial object, this dissertation makes visible those intersections, with their complex network of contradictions and complementary features. Accordingly, each chapter of this dissertation focuses on a different paratextual element: title pages in the first chapter; genre designation (often but not always signalled on the title page) in the second; the physical structure of the three-volume novel in the third; and the potential conflict between the information stated in the author's byline and contextual knowledge of the author in the fourth. While the first chapter takes a wide approach to title pages in order to develop the marketplace context, the three subsequent chapters consist of single-author studies in order to explore how particular authors responded to these contexts in their fiction. By taking as their subject three major authors of the period these chapters situate authors noted for their innovations and contributions to the novel's rise within larger cultural forces, of which the form of the book is one. However, the

book, too is an expression of those forces and, before turning to the particulars of this dissertation's study of how the material features of the book can be used to explore the tensions between literary form and cultural context, it is first necessary to examine in brief the relevant material, literary, and cultural contexts that shaped it.

## **The Paratext and the Material Book**

The fiction of the Romantic period draws on and responds to a pre-existing paratextual apparatus that includes the material object of the book but is not limited to it. In order to distinguish between the paratext and the book, I draw on Gérard Genette's most expansive definition of "paratext," which goes beyond what he terms the peritext, or the paratextual features physically attached to the text, to include the epitext, which he defines as "any paratextual element not materially appended to the same volume" (344), claiming, "in principle, every context serves as a paratext" (8). The formula Genette provides of "*paratext = peritext + epitext*" (5) indicates how, strictly speaking, the definition of paratext should not—although it frequently is—be reduced only to those elements physically attached to the text. Instead, it should include contextual information, such as knowledge about the author not included in the front or back matter of the book, the structure of the publishing industry at a given historical moment, and the cultural implications of a chosen genre. Returning to this definition restores what Genette means when he refers to the paratext as a "threshold" instead of "a boundary or a sealed border" (1–2); it allows us to explore how the text and peritext can evoke, bleed into, and contradict the epitext, such as how the author attribution on a title page may or may not correspond to a real person, and how readers' extra-textual—and extra-paratextual—knowledge of the author informs their reading practices. Because they are usually outside of the author's control, most paratexts are deemed the proper province of reception



studies; however, paratextual conventions themselves influence the production of texts, a feature of their influence that remains understudied.

While Genette offers a language to talk about the social and material apparatus surrounding the book, his approach must be historicized in order to understand how paratextual studies can move beyond reception. Since Genette, discussions about paratexts have tended to focus on readers' responses; by calling them "thresholds of *interpretation*" (2, emphasis mine), he accentuates reception over production, focusing on how the extratextual information conveyed by the paratext frames the content of the text. The ahistorical tendencies of Genette's claims contribute to his focus on how paratexts influence the reception rather than the production of literature; when Genette says of Austen and Scott's anonymity, "The formula 'By the author of ...' became relatively common after Austen and Scott" (45), he assumes that authors who became canonical for their formal innovations were also innovative in their paratexts. By singling out canonical authors as the agents who determined the paratextual structures for later writers, Genette fails to acknowledge that the tendency for authors—both named and anonymous—to identify their previous works in the byline of the title page predates both Austen and Scott by decades.<sup>2</sup> Genette's approach creates a straightforward lineage, in which the authorial attribution on Scott's title pages imitates Austen's and other authors imitate Scott, implying that shifts in publishing practices are the straightforward result of exemplary texts, defined by their reception, rather than the result of strategies developed gradually, over time, and in response to a complex set of market conditions. It also ignores how literary innovation can occur in response to and within the context of pre-established structures. Historicizing paratextual practices thus allows for a more nuanced understanding of the way that the form of the book and literary form respond to and shape each other, especially how canonical texts, which often shape our understanding of

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<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming number of examples of this practice before either Austen or Scott preclude me from offering a definitive moment when it came into being. However, a cursory search of titles in the database the *Women's Print History Project, 1750–1836*, which only accounts for books that women were involved in producing, reveals that at least 751 titles published between 1750 and 1800 include some variation on the "By the author of..." formulation. 317 of these titles have been categorized as fiction.

an historical moment, respond to and participate in the marketplace trends that their exceptional status has obscured.

What Genette refers to as the epitext is central to reception studies, which often focuses on reviewing culture and individual reader responses as recorded in diaries and private correspondence, although these elements are rarely discussed in terms of the paratext. Explicitly accounting for the epitext in my discussion of the paratextual matter of the novel decentres authorial intent by drawing attention to the myriad of contexts that can shape the composition or interpretation of a text. It also corrects the tendency in scholarship that grapples with paratexts to focus almost exclusively on the peritext, beginning with Genette's choice to devote twelve chapters to it, but only two to the more amorphous epitext. His discussion of the epitext is limited to what he terms "the public epitext" and "the private epitext," which he defines respectively as the publicly disseminated reviews, interviews, and other documents that may influence how readers interpret the text, and private correspondence and journals. Restricting his focus to these two epitextual elements, even though his initial definition of the epitext encompasses all contexts, means that the wider possibilities represented by his initial definition of the epitext are lost, and, with them, the role cultural context plays in shaping and mediating a text.

This focus is mirrored by subsequent scholarship; the essay collection, *Ma(r)king the Text* (2000), which has often been cited as a ground-breaking volume in paratextual studies, focuses entirely on the visual layout of the text on the page. By contrast, Alex Watson's *Romantic Marginality: Nation and Empire on the Borders of the Page* (2012) is more inclusive, taking footnotes, endnotes, and glossaries as its subject, exploring how

these marginal commentaries contribute to the discourse of empire; however, he uses his focus on the peritext as a way “to go beyond a concept of textuality that isolates the paratext, and move towards a more inclusive definition. The ‘para’ of ‘paratext’ might then signify not just ‘ancillary to’ but ‘beside’, ‘in transgression of’, ‘continuous with’, ‘in counterpoint to’ and ‘beyond’” (12). Rather than framing text and paratext as complementary structures, then, he argues for an approach that accounts for the wider political implications of the complex interactions between text and paratext by looking at texts, such as Sydney Owenson’s *Wild Irish Girl*, for which paratextual matter including footnotes is an essential part of rather than supplementary to the text. Further complicating this claim through the language of peritext and epitext makes the relationships between texts and their literary, social, and political contexts more apparent by highlighting their position as adjacent, or “para,” to the text. In this configuration, the peritext is not just a way of packaging the text, but a place where various elements of the epitext surrounding the text’s composition and reception, become visible by taking on a material form. In other words, scrutinizing peritextual material can give rise to a more nuanced understanding of the material, economic, and social contexts that shape production.

The term “epitext” is useful precisely because of its expansiveness. It serves as a reminder that a text and the material form it takes always exist alongside and within a cultural context; that is, the material and cultural forces that shape a text are not distinct from it. However, this expansiveness means that isolating particular elements of the epitext, or context, can become difficult in relation to a particular text. Considering the peritext not just as something that affects reception, but as a way of identifying the

economic and social concerns of the literary marketplace at a given moment in history offers a concrete way to access the amorphous contextual elements that inform not just reception but composition, publication, and dissemination. Such understanding of the material book as not just a medium for transmission but as a precondition for the act of writing requires an historically specific understanding of the book as a technology that, by the Romantic period, had adopted standard features that could be taken for granted. Studies of the material and visual features of the book earlier in the eighteenth century have tended to focus on its openness to experimentation. Janine Barchas, for example, has explored how fiction published earlier in the eighteenth century used paratextual features such as typography to experiment with graphic design, justifying her focus on these earlier texts as more interesting than those of the later eighteenth century, which are comprised of “the bare narrative form of the novel, adorned only by the figleaf of attendant illustration” (18). However, as Christina Lupton has pointed out, Barchas’s method lacks the use of “discursive analysis to focus explicitly on the affinity of a given narrative with its graphic or physical incarnation” (*Knowing Books* 9), meaning that any focus on the content of the text is secondary to the design strategies the book employs. By contrast, Lupton places her emphasis on how narratives show self-conscious awareness of the form of the book, arguing for the middle decades of the eighteenth century as a moment when people have been “won over to a new medium, . . . [and] accepted its authority as an instrument for the collection and storage of data,” but before the “initial moment of consciousness about representation dies down into discussions of content that, regardless of tone, grant authority to the medium” (18).

By the early nineteenth century, narratives no longer assign the book the appearance of agency that Lupton describes. Instead of being figured as subject to the agency of the medium of individual books, in the Romantic period, the reader was figured as, in the words of Lucy Newlyn, “the humiliated victim of a powerful machinery of literary production designed precisely to remind him of his anonymous unimportance” (47).<sup>3</sup> The shift of agency from the medium to the industry results from the standardization of publishing, which affected the novel by establishing regular title page layouts, formats and sizes, and volume numbers. As a result, Romantic-era novels can have the appearance of unadorned text because the relationship between narrative and book, and text and paratext has become regularized; when they do draw attention to their medium, it is through reference to industry standards rather than the particularities of that specific novel. Thus, when Scott’s fictional editor complains about the publisher who will not publish a novel longer than four volumes, he reveals his own naïveté more than any oppressive tendency of the publisher; readers, who know that novels tend to run to a maximum of four volumes, are invited to laugh at his lack of basic knowledge about the norms of the literary marketplace. In this way, *Tales of My Landlord*’s “peroration” does not actually question the four-volume structure that it conforms to, but rather seeks to explain why it fails to conform to that structure more precisely; the lopsided structure, in which the first tale is contained in the first volume and the second tale fills the remaining three, requires justification, which Scott folds into his elaborate paratextual play. Nevertheless, the interplay between naïve narrator-editor and knowing author creates a space in which the tales and their material manifestation resist each other; this project is interested in these moments of resistance, or of tension between two overlapping forms,

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<sup>3</sup> Newlyn’s sense of the industry of print as an agent to which readers were helplessly subject is borne out by the anxieties expressed by nineteenth-century writers. During this period, critics sought to shape audiences and their reading practices in ways that allowed them to navigate the wider literary marketplace, rather than how to engage with individual texts. Jon Klancher locates in this period a shift from a moment when “it was still possible to conceive the writer’s relation to an audience in terms of a personal compact” (14) to an emerging mass audience, in response to which “writers began to negotiate the nineteenth century’s most awesome signs of historical change: industrial creation, the powers of the machine, the empire-building city” (16). Ina Ferris notes how the stated aim of the *Edinburgh Review* “explicitly lay less in what was being written than in what was—or should be—read” (25).

for their ability to account for the formal innovations that occurred in the Romantic period.

## **Genre, Audience, and Literary Form**

Particular chapters in this dissertation will focus in greater detail on the narrative techniques that individual authors developed in response to the Romantic-era paratextual apparatus; here, I wish to draw attention to my choice to focus on a single genre: the novel. While, as the first and second chapter explore, fiction could be divided into a variety of subgenres, each with its own associations and expectations, here I refer to the novel as a more global and all-encompassing category. By drawing on fiction published in the early nineteenth century for my case studies, I have chosen to focus on a genre that was in the process of acquiring greater cultural legitimacy, but had retained some of the commercial connotations that had tainted its earlier reputation. During the 1780s, the increase in production, largely driven by circulating library publishers, heightened the sense of the novel's status as a commercial genre, written to be published, sold, and disseminated to a wider audience, often at the expense of quality. This status intensified in the 1790s with the increase in the production of new novels, especially those produced cheaply; in describing the “[c]hiefly entrepreneurial” circulating library publishers that emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century, Michael Gamer notes that they “relied on new writers of no established reputation in order to keep their costs low, and, as might be expected, both literati and common readers accorded these productions a different and usually inferior status” (66).

At the same time, the novel was in the process of acquiring cachet. Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel* (1957) was the first to trace the processes by which the novel achieved this legitimacy,<sup>4</sup> but we need not look beyond the period itself to see these processes at

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<sup>4</sup> While countless scholars have responded to and modified Watt's central argument, his central claim, which links the rise of the novel to the rise of the middle class, remains largely intact. Other important studies of the novel's rise include Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987), which offers a more nuanced picture of how the novel as a form helped negotiate early eighteenth-century debates about truth and Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), which explores the novel's role in structuring and enforcing domestic ideology.

work. The publication in 1810 of Anna Letitia Barbauld's fifty-volume collection *The British Novelists* and Walter Scott's ten-volume *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* in 1821–4 shows the canonization of the novel as a form through the canonization of specific novels. Although these two collections differed in their ideological aims—Michael Gamer points out that the ordering of novels in Barbauld's collection “shift[s] the novel's centre of gravity back to the epistolary and the domestic” (“Barbauld, Scott, and the Rise of the (Reprinted) Novel” 185), while, as Claudia Johnson details, Scott's collection represents “the elimination of most of the women novelists generously represented in the earlier collection” (174), as well as evidence of the more general “deeply conservative tendencies we now almost reflexively attribute to canon-making” (175)—both collections group the fiction that they collect under the umbrella term “novel,” despite the fact that many of the works included were first published with other designations, demonstrating that “novel” was increasingly coming to be used as an umbrella term for all fiction, but especially fiction that was being granted respectability. This is one example of what Clifford Siskin calls “novelism,” or, “the subordination of writing to the novel” (172), which he links to the simultaneous growth of the number of novels published (what he calls the “*statistical* rise of the novel”) and the novel's increasing status as a genre (what he calls the “*generic* rise of the novel”) (183). This overlap between the naturalization of a literary form and the material form that it was frequently disseminated in provides an opportunity to understand the formal innovations attached to the novel's rise as integrated in the material form in which it circulated. In other words, its growing respectability corresponded to its recognizability—that is, readers' ability to distinguish, at a glance, what kind of novel they were reading.

The paratextual matter framing a novel, including the elements contributing to its physical appearance, thus had consequences for how a novel would be received before any reader had opened it. The novel's status during the Romantic period as a contested genre, able to belong to both high and low culture, was in large part a question, not just of actual audience, but also of projected audience. Although this dissertation expands the study of paratexts beyond the question of reception, readers and the communities they form are, nevertheless, central to many of the claims I forward. However, rather than treating readers as something that happens after publication, this project argues that

readers—at least, the readers imagined and theorized by popular discourse—are present at every stage of text and book production. The language of reader response theory, especially Wolfgang Iser’s concept of the implied reader, Hans Robert Jauss’s horizon of expectations, and Stanley Fish’s understanding of reading communities, is therefore essential to understanding how I conceive of readers in this dissertation.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, like Roger Chartier, who points to the major shortcoming of reception theory as “postulat[ing] a pure and immediate relation between the ‘signals’ emitted by the text (which plays with accepted literary conventions) and the ‘horizon of expectation’ of the public to which they are addressed” (53), this dissertation takes into consideration the material and cultural forms that a text takes in the way it addresses its reader(s).

Thinking about implied and assumed readers is of particular importance to studies of Romantic-era texts because, as numerous studies have remarked, the mass readership that became a reality during the Victorian era had its beginnings in this period. Although I am less concerned with the historical realities of readers and reading, readers’ actual habits and responses to texts matter to my understanding of the Romantic-era literary marketplace. As William St. Clair, Jan Fergus, and Stephen Colclough have explored, these realities do not necessarily correspond to how readers were represented by their contemporaries in popular discourse or how subsequent critics have understood them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Iser defines the “implied reader” as a “term [that] incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process—which will vary historically from one age to another—and not to a typology of possible readers” (xii). Jauss explores the implications of an implied reader in his discussion of the “horizon of expectations,” which accounts for the fact that “[a] literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions” (23). Fish imagines implied readers not as individuals, but as existing withing “interpretive communities,” which, he argues, are “made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around” (483).

<sup>6</sup> For example, in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004), St. Clair has used evidence of print runs and circulation to argue that the books Romantic-era readers actually read tended to be cheap reprints of out-of-copyright texts, rather than the works of their contemporaries. Fergus’s *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (2006), by contrast, looks at the evidence of a handful of provincial booksellers and circulating libraries to gather evidence about the eighteenth-century reading practices of readers outside of the urban centre of London and demonstrating that circulating library readers engaged with a range of different genres, rather than simply mass-consuming novels. Colclough’s *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (2007) takes a wider view, attending to some of the complications of



Rather, these scholars' explorations are all formed by a pre-existing narrative of the Romantic reader, which emerged alongside the expansion of the literary marketplace. Key to this process was the theorization of readers within the texts themselves, especially periodical essays; Jon Klancher has argued that Romantic-era writers "shaped audiences who developed awareness of social class as they acquired self-consciousness as readers" (4), thereby producing "the protean 'reader' that empowers so much contemporary criticism and cultural theory" (5). Yet, as Newlyn shows, writers' relationships to these imagined readers were often fraught:

More potential readers of literature existed than ever before, but fewer and fewer, it was feared, were genuinely qualified to understand what they were reading. Those, meanwhile, who did understand—the professionals, or experts—were often perceived as threatening. In some cases . . . this produced a kind of paranoia. (4)

By linking what she terms "the anxiety of reception" to writers' awareness of an expanding audience and their often-hostile positions in relation to them, Newlyn highlights one way that the anticipation of a readership shaped Romantic-era texts. The emergence of stable and easily recognizable genre categories is another; because genres identify and target specific audiences, writing within a particular genre, whether a gothic romance, a travel narrative, or a collection of lyric poems, allowed authors to anticipate readers on a formal level, before publication.<sup>7</sup>

## **Gendering Audience, Authorship, and Genre**

One of the ways that authors and publishers were able to anticipate readers was through a gendered marketing strategy. Gender of authors has long been a central

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tracing reception by exploring the shifts in individual and social reading practices over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Poovey's *Genres of the Credit Economy* (2008) traces the solidification of differentiation between fact-based (especially economic) and imaginative, literary genres over the course of the eighteenth century, arguing, "During the course of the eighteenth century, practitioners of both writing about financial matters and imaginative writing began to renounce their shared function—to deny that they shared the *same* function or practiced it in the same *way*." (7) While her argument focuses on the different kinds of value that economic and literary value promote, and the shared vocabularies that these forms of value draw from, her larger point that, by the nineteenth century, writers of various genres could take for granted readers who were familiar with their conventions, is useful for understanding the stratification of genres in this period.

concern of Romanticists seeking to move beyond the traditional canon, in part to demonstrate the significant role female authors played in the period.<sup>8</sup> My choice to focus primarily on female-authored fiction and the paratextual information that frames it is itself a product of the gendering of the novel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; before Scott, whose masculinization of the genre provided new opportunities for both writing and marketing, fiction was a largely feminized genre and the gender of many of the period's major novelists reflects that. The three authors my dissertation uses as case studies—Edgeworth, Austen, and Burney—form their own canonical trio of major authors whose literary responses to each other have been well documented. As comparatively elite women, they cannot offer insight into the female position of the marketplace as a whole; nevertheless, situating their fiction within the paratextual norms of the early nineteenth century contextualizes their innovations within the material culture of the period's literature, including how those paratextual norms signalled and made use of the author's gender.

However, the gendering of the novel does not just refer to the author, but also to the anticipated audience and, in a more abstract sense, to a particular novel's presentation. As Adriana Craciun points out in *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, both gender and sex were contested categories in the period, and “[t]he category of biological ‘women’ . . . must also be examined” (2): “This two-sex system of complementary difference gained greater credibility throughout the eighteenth century, supplanting an older one-sex model, in which women's bodies were seen essentially as inferior version of male bodies” (3). As Craciun explores, the increasing predominance of the two-sex model means that the male/female binary that organizes sexual difference became conflated with the masculine/feminine binary that identified gendered behaviours, and that both became assumed to be natural. She looks to texts by women that represent female violence in order to complicate the historical understanding of biological sex.

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<sup>8</sup> Early recovery attempts focused on establishing how women writers responded to, and frequently rejected, the focus on individual creativity, imagination, and feeling usually associated with Romanticism. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne K. Mellor explores how gender difference inflected writers' engagements with Romanticism, arguing that “women Romantic writers tended to celebrate, not the achievements of the imagination nor the overflow of powerful feelings, but rather the workings of the rational mind, a mind relocated—in a gesture of revolutionary gender implications—in the female as well as the male body” (2).

While Craciun looks for evidence of the contestation of these sexual and gendered binaries, I am more interested in the process by which gender difference was established and reinforced not just through authorship, but also through the materiality of the book. Studying how books adopted gendered marketing strategies provides an opportunity for seeing how cultural understandings of femininity inflect material culture; looking at how texts were visually and physically marked, and how those marks changed over time, reveals a shifting understanding of femininity as it related to the novel in the period.

This project thus considers how the material book can function as one of those sites of expression for a binary system of sex and gender, through features such as the byline, the genre designation and the associations that designation invokes, and visual design strategies. So, while an author's gender may form part of the peritext in the form of a byline that indicates that a work is "by a lady," as Austen's first novel *Sense and Sensibility* does, it may also remain implied or wholly unstated. Yet even in the latter case, an author's gender was frequently an object of speculation for reviewers, who often used it as a cause for condescension or outright dismissal.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the author's identity as expressed or not expressed in the peritext is not the only way gender inflects the novel; various scholars, including Ina Ferris and Jacqueline Pearson, have traced how "novels" and novel-reading" were widely disparaged because of their association with female readers as much as female authors. Although the novel became an increasingly masculine form during the period, the possibility of feminized readers and reading practices meant that this masculinization remained problematic. Who readers were imagined to be—speculations not requiring a basis in fact—had implications for how a genre was valued, and supposing that a book would be popular primarily with women

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Gamer cites a particularly convoluted instance of a female reviewer criticizing a male novelist using the terms by which male reviewers traditionally dismissed female authors. The review, of James Thomson's *The Denial; or, the Happy Retreat* (1790), not only upholds the usual critical tropes, but completely inverts the actual historical gender of both reviewer and author. He remarks, "The review is particularly breathtaking for the directness with which it defines and insists upon the specific gender and class inflections attached to the occupations of reviewing and novel-writing. What begins as a potentially negative review written by a woman of a romance written by a man quickly becomes something fundamentally different and more traditional: a self-identified 'male' reviewer denying the value of popular fiction written by 'Ladies' by asserting 'certain [and in this case overtly masculine] criteria for excellence'" (37).

was an effective way of dismissing it.<sup>10</sup> Understanding the gendering of authors, genres, and readers during this period is therefore essential to understanding the production of both texts and the books that contain them. Whether this gendering is present in the visual design of title pages, which my first chapter explores, or in an author's choice of genre designation, as the second chapter explores, shows how the book's features can function as a point of contact between literary form and cultural context.

## Chapter Breakdown

The structure of this dissertation moves from a focus on the concrete peritext, where I establish how the paratextual apparatus exists as a cultural form that shapes writing, towards more abstract concepts like plot structure and authorship. The first two chapters explore the kinds of explicit and implicit information paratexts conveyed to readers during the Romantic period, and the implications those had for readers who had to navigate an increasingly overwhelming number of books.

The first chapter looks at Romantic-era title pages to establish the peritextual context for fiction. During this period, title pages were a point of contact for various paratextual elements; features like genre designations, epigraphs, authorial information, and even strategic font choices provide subtle contextual clues for understanding a particular text's position within a rapidly expanding literary marketplace. By examining how the title page design of fiction published by Lane's Minerva Press, Longmans,

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<sup>10</sup> As Ferris has accounted for, the Romantic novel before Scott was a feminized form, and Scott's incorporation of the more masculine discourse of history contributed to the novel's increasing cultural authority; yet even this seeming increase in authority is undermined by the possibility of readers being overwhelmed by "the greater affective power of fiction" (145). Of course, as Ferris discusses in relation to the reception of *Old Mortality*, Scott's incorporation of history into the novel was not universally embraced. Many reviewers' "critique[s] of Scott's novel [were] sparked not just by resentment at what they saw as a wrongheaded history of the period but also by the way in which the success of the Author of Waverley signaled the rapidly expanding cultural power of a dubious genre" (144). And, indeed, the very acts of reading and writing carried gendered connotations; Pearson explores how "[r]eading was seen as 'passive' (and hence feminised), compared to the 'active art of writing', and whereas writing was taught as a vocational skill by male experts, reading tended to be taught within the home by the mother or at an elementary dame school, thereby adding another layer of feminisation" (16–7). At the same time, feminized reading practices were not necessarily passive; Richard de Ritter's *Imagining Women Readers, 1789–1820* shows how authors encouraged active reading practices in order to "[promote] an ideal of domestic femininity founded in ideas of privacy, interiority and inner depths" (10).

Robinsons, and Henry Colburn reflects the aims of their respective firms, I argue the regularization of title page design during the 1790s and following decades contributed to a literary marketplace in which texts were coded according to overlapping categories such as publisher, genre, and gender. In particular, the use of genre and gendered design strategies made visible the stratifications of the marketplace, in which contextual information such as the gender of anticipated readers is communicated implicitly through the peritext. However, because being able to identify this gendering strategy requires additional contextual knowledge, this strategy does not wholly belong to either the peritext or the epitext. Identifying and contextualizing these marketing strategies demonstrates the robustness of the early nineteenth-century paratextual apparatus and how the particular strategies of different publishers had the power to shape fiction. The marketing strategies identified in this chapter inform the rest of my dissertation, which examines how individual authors shaped their fiction around readers alert to the intersections of paratextual and narrative conventions.

In the second chapter, I focus on one of the paratextual elements frequently conveyed by the title page—the genre designation—to explore how the peritext and epitext draw on each other to produce textual meaning. Taking Maria Edgeworth as a case study, this chapter considers how Edgeworth uses the genre designation “moral tale” to engage with the epitextual material, social, and ethical conditions of text production. Through the examination of three works first printed in 1801—*Belinda*, “Forester,” and “Angelina, or, L’Amie Inconnue”—this chapter argues that one of the primary and overlooked concerns of Edgeworth’s project is the desire to teach readers about the importance of the relationship between text and paratext by making visible both peritextual genre designation and the more amorphous, epitextual genre. Each of the works considered uses the popular and politically fraught quixote plot to engage with a different paratextual element: *Belinda* illustrates the importance of recognizing different genres, “Forester” represents the behind-the-scenes concerns of the printer’s house, and “Angelina” draws attention to the potential gap between the signed author on a title page and the individual who has in fact written a novel. By linking the “moral” of each of these tales to questions of book production and reception, Edgeworth identifies the print

marketplace as a social and cultural structure that it is essential for individuals to understand in order to be effective actors in the world.

The third and fourth chapters take as case studies two authors who make use of their readers' paratextual expectations to experiment with narrative and to resist familiar textual and paratextual structures to show how engaging with the paratextual apparatus can become a form of political resistance. The third chapter investigates how Jane Austen relates the popular discourse of the picturesque to the structure of the codex book as a way of commenting on her own narrative practice. Building on criticism in Austen studies that explores the relationship between picturesque landscapes and narrative structure, the way that Austen invokes the material feature of the codex book in her novels, and the readership Austen's novels seem to anticipate, this chapter argues that Austen's use of landscape description simultaneously comments on the reader's position within the narrative and the reader's position within the codex book. This use of landscape encourages readers to speculate beyond the boundaries of a novel's conclusion and the covers of the bound book, inviting them to imagine possibilities beyond the marriage plot.

The fourth and final chapter explores how an author might seek to use her reputation in order to induce readers to accept challenging formal experiments. To illustrate this, I draw on Frances Burney's final two novels, arguing that her declining reputation was, in part, due to narrative experiments in her final two novels that challenged readers' expectations of what constituted a sympathetic heroine. While Burney's contemporaries—and some modern scholars—framed *Camilla* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814) as cynical and repetitive attempts to cash in on her reputation, this chapter argues that Burney tried to leverage her authorial credit to challenge conservative strictures governing who could be considered objects of sympathy. However, her choice to rewrite the plots of her earlier successes *Evelina* (1777) and *Cecilia* (1782) without the narrative structures that ensure sympathy provided hostile reviewers with the grounds to attack her, *ad hominem*, for a lack of ingenuity, a reception that had long-lasting repercussions for her literary reputation. By attempting to use her reputation to challenge her readers' expectations about what a sympathetic character looks like, Burney

ultimately allows her readers to rewrite their expectations of what a novel by Frances Burney is, to her detriment.

Concluding with Burney, who is often figured as a prelude to the Romantic-era novel, means concluding with an author whose novels form an essential context for fiction in the period. Many of the conventions that Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen and numerous other novelists' in the period responded to have their origins in Burney's novels. By seeking to reshape the epitextual conventions she contributed to, Burney brings the narrative of this dissertation full circle.

## Chapter 1.

# The Silence of the Leaves: Title Page Design and the Marketing of the Romantic-era Novel

### Introduction

In April 2015, I held a fellowship at Chawton House Library, where I divided my time between preliminary research for my dissertation and assisting my supervisor, Michelle Levy, with entering titles and bibliographical information into the *Women's Print History Project, 1750–1836*, a database that aims to provide a comprehensive bibliographical record of women's involvement in print during a long Romantic period. Entering this data required that we spend time in the stacks of the library vault, so that we could work methodically through as many titles as possible in the time available. Over the course of the three-week fellowship, I handled hundreds of books in Chawton House Library's collection—mostly fiction—and grew increasingly attuned to the subtle distinctions signaled by their peritextual features, especially the layouts of the title pages from which we collected most of the data. Although I had begun the fellowship interested in tracing the marketing strategies of publishers, the speed with which I developed a sense for how books used the peritext to convey their genre and literary qualities by briefly handling them was surprising, especially given the relatively minor details on which these identifications hinged. Despite the fact that bindings were chosen by purchasers and could vary widely, details like title pages, page layout, font size, paper quality, and even the height and thickness of volumes worked together to reflect how a particular novel was positioned by its publisher in relation to the numerous other volumes available to readers of the early nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The way that readers encountered books before selecting them varied depending on their social status and the location of the bookseller or circulating library that they frequented (if they were purchasing or borrowing the book commercially), among other factors. In general, there is a lack of direct evidence about the selection process of the purchasers and borrowers of fiction; John Brewer's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997) offers the most thorough account of what potential readers could expect when entering a bookseller's shop or circulating library, but he relies largely on anecdotal evidence, such as prints (satirical and otherwise), which frequently reproduce eighteenth-century cultural assumptions and anxieties about reading matter.



Title pages offer a window into the kinds of sub-genres and stratifications that works of fiction in the Romantic period were subject to. Far from an indiscriminate mass of “trash with which the press now groans” (30), as Jane Austen, tongue-in-cheek, described the state of the English novel in *Northanger Abbey*, fiction in the early decades of the nineteenth century was organized into complex categories based on content, quality, and perceived audience, categories that were communicated to readers by the design elements of the codex book. While the classification of novels into these categories was made visible through an accumulation of different elements, this chapter focuses on title pages because they contain denotative features such as titles, author bylines, and imprints, which reference particular genres, authors, booksellers, alongside elements of visual design. In the General Introduction to *The English Novel, 1770–1829*, Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwerling identify as one of their major contributions that their bibliography is the first to capture all of the information included on the title page, except for mottos and epigraphs. However, they note, “Because it has been impossible to replicate exactly the original—and sometimes eccentric—mixture of uppercase, lowercase, small capitals, italic, black letter and other fonts, titles are reproduced in simple uppercase throughout, but with original punctuation retained” (9–10). While certainly a necessary editorial choice, the way the bibliography presents title page information privileges the content of the title page over the visual features that will determine what kinds of paratextual information can be identified.

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Nevertheless, he does establish some key differences between booksellers and libraries in urban centres as opposed to those in provincial settings. Provincial booksellers often carried minimal stock, but they could easily order from London booksellers according to a customer’s wishes, a practice that meant “a great many titles were requested by customers who had little knowledge of their contents,” but who had learned of the books through newspaper advertisements or reviews (Brewer 176). By contrast, the circulating libraries in London and larger towns were “comfortable, spacious surroundings in which the customers could gossip, flirt, browse, examine newspapers and reviews, and choose from a selection of every kind of book” (Brewer 176). On the library shelves, books were arranged by genre, and within a genre could be subject to even further classifications. For example, Michael Gamer describes how, “Minerva books not only were represented in these years as a separate kind of literature, but also often were accorded a separate space on library shelves, grouped alone or with other ‘mysteries’ and ‘tales’ published by similar booksellers” (66), a practice that reinforced the kinds of distinctions made on title pages and made it easier for readers to browse according to their particular interests. However, readers did not have to browse the shelves; many circulating libraries printed catalogues for prospective and current clients to rely on, and Jan Fergus has described how the Midlands bookseller John Clay loaned “what was probably a manuscript catalogue of his stock to selected customers” (21–22). Therefore, although there was no guarantee that any given reader would scrutinize a novel’s title page, there were often opportunities to do so, especially in busy urban centres and the fashionable spa towns that the wealthy visited in the off-season.

At the same time, by drawing attention to the visual features that have been lost in their transcriptions, Garside et al. point implicitly to their importance: decisions relating to font and layout play an important role in weighting certain words and components of the title page with greater importance at the expense of others. This chapter examines how these visual cues interact with the content of the title pages of fiction during the Romantic period, especially how three major publishers' design strategies at the turn of the nineteenth century responded to the overwhelming presence of the Minerva Press, a circulating library publisher responsible for over a quarter of all new fiction published during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, by coding their publications to emphasize particular genres, particular publishers, and even particular novels. By focusing on the first two decades of the nineteenth century, this chapter takes as its starting point the explosive 1790s, when the production of new fiction went from 405 new titles in the 1780s to 701 new titles, in order to explore more thoroughly the moment when the production of new titles was, if not entirely stable, no longer in a state of dramatic growth.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the first decade of the nineteenth century saw 773 new titles published and the 1810s only 662; production increased again to 830 in the 1820s. However, this appearance of stability on a larger scale masks a number of smaller fluctuations on a smaller scale, which Anthony Mandal accounts for through reference to the political shifts of the early nineteenth century: for example, he links “[t]he deflated production of the 1801–2 seasons” to “the vehement Anti-Jacobin reaction of 1796–1801” (18) and “[t]he erosion in production” between 1808 and 1817 to “the Evangelical influence” of authors such as Hannah More, Mary Brunton, and Barbara Hofland, who wrote against popular trends such as the gothic and scandal fiction that proliferated at the turn of the nineteenth century (19).

These and other commercial and political shifts are visible on the title pages of the period; studying them highlights marketplace pressures, the social and political contexts

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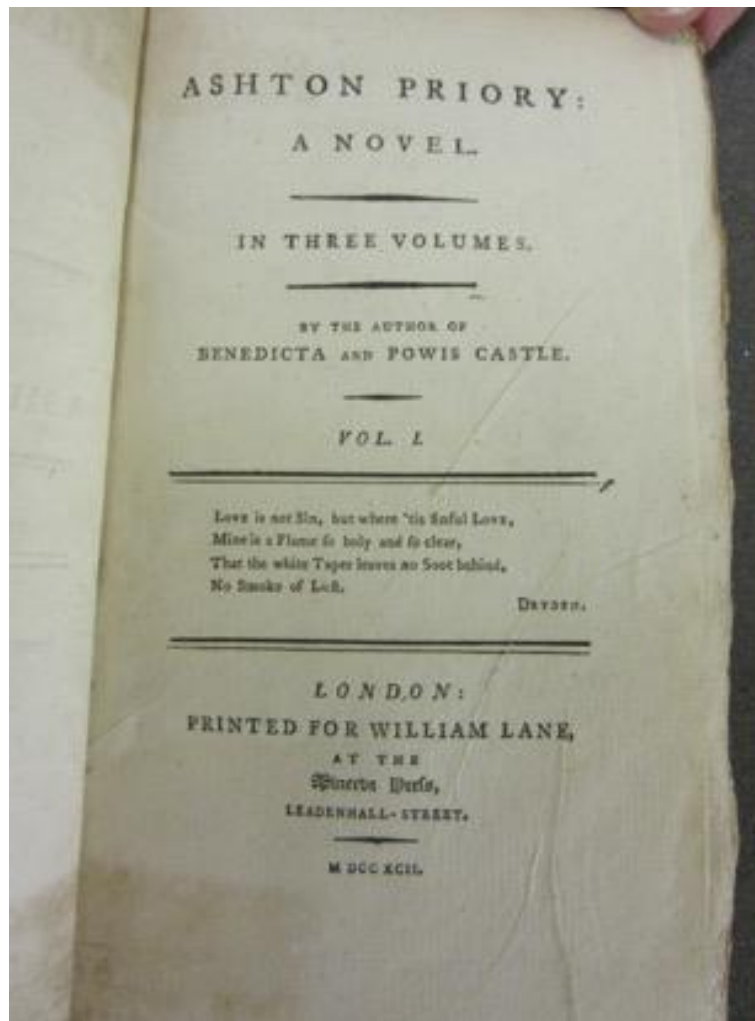
<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all numbers are taken from Garside et al. While between 1780 and 1784, the number of new titles per year was between 22 and 24, the first substantial increase occurred in 1785, when the number of new titles increased to 47 (Raven, “The Novel Comes of Age” 32). While not every subsequent year saw an increase in the number of new titles published, the general trend was upward; the total number of new titles published in the 1790s is roughly equal to the total number of new titles in the 1770s (315) and the 1780s (405) combined.

that contributed to them, and the strategies that the print industry developed in response to these pressures by providing insight into how publishers categorized and marketed their books, showing how epitextual, or contextual, elements can be subtly communicated by the peritext. In particular, this chapter is interested in how different publishers respond to each other's marketing tactics in order to differentiate themselves and their publications from each other. Careful analysis of title page design, therefore, does not only indicate how particular texts or genres were marketed, but can contribute to understanding the larger print ecology of the Romantic period, including how titles, authors, and publishers interact with each other. I argue that the conventions and expectations developed in the 1790s by popular circulating library publishers, most notably William Lane, provided a baseline that other publishers of fiction defined themselves in relation to in the following two decades. Lane's Minerva Press was a successful firm that became a shorthand for cheaply produced, derivative fiction during the period. With their visually unique imprint and standard title page layout (no doubt made more regular by the use of their in-house printer, J. Darling and Co.), the Minerva Press developed visual branding earlier and more consistently than any of the other publishers operating during this period (see Figure 1 for an example of a standard Minerva Press title page).<sup>13</sup> As a result, other publishers used visual cues to either link their novels to the expectations surrounding the Minerva Press by mimicking the small flourishes that the Minerva Press used or reject them, relying instead on stark block fonts and white space in order to distance themselves from the decorative strategies of less

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<sup>13</sup> The Minerva Press was not initially universally derided, and individual novels published by the press did receive positive reviews; however, by the first decade of the nineteenth century reviewers of various stripes regularly invoked it as a term of dismissal. For example, an 1804 review of the play *The Soldier's Daughter* in *The Monthly Visitor* complains, "The plot of this Comedy contains nothing very striking, new, or interesting; it is rather the plot of one of the productions of the Minerva Press, than the fable of a regular drama" (192), and a *Critical Review* article from 1808 comments on how readers would benefit from transferring to the instructional genre of history "the time which they now waste on the productions of the Minerva Press" (450). Of Catherine Cuthbertson's 1817 novel, *Rosabella*, published by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, a review in the *British Critic* remarked, "It is in vain to lament the sad disregard of grammar and common sense, too frequently displayed in the effusions of the Minerva Press" (96). Alternately described as "productions" and "effusions," the language employed to refer to the publications of the Minerva Press—often when reviewing the works of other publishers—identifies, on the one hand, a mechanistic process in which novels are not "written" or "printed" but "produced," and, on the other, emotional excess and lack of restraint. This reputation carried past the end of the Romantic period; Dorothy Blakey opens her study of the Minerva Press with a series of remarks by Victorians referencing how "closely identified with cheap fiction" the Minerva Press was (1).

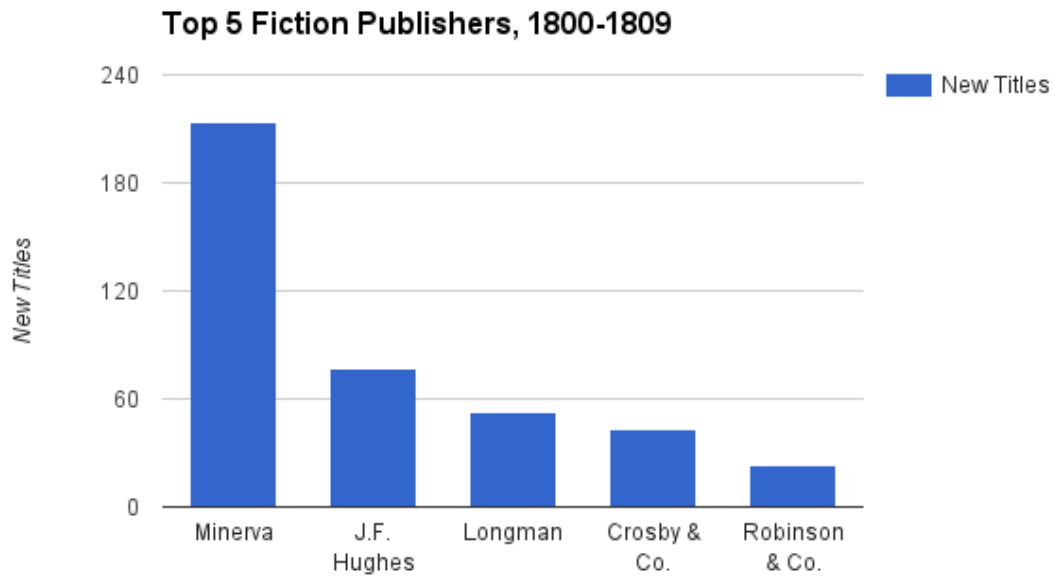
prestigious firms. Whether or not the quality of actual content differed, these shifts in title page design across publishers highlight the terms by which the early nineteenth-century marketplace for fiction was stratified according to genre and publisher, and the extent to which particular publishers' associations with particular genres were reflected in their design practices.



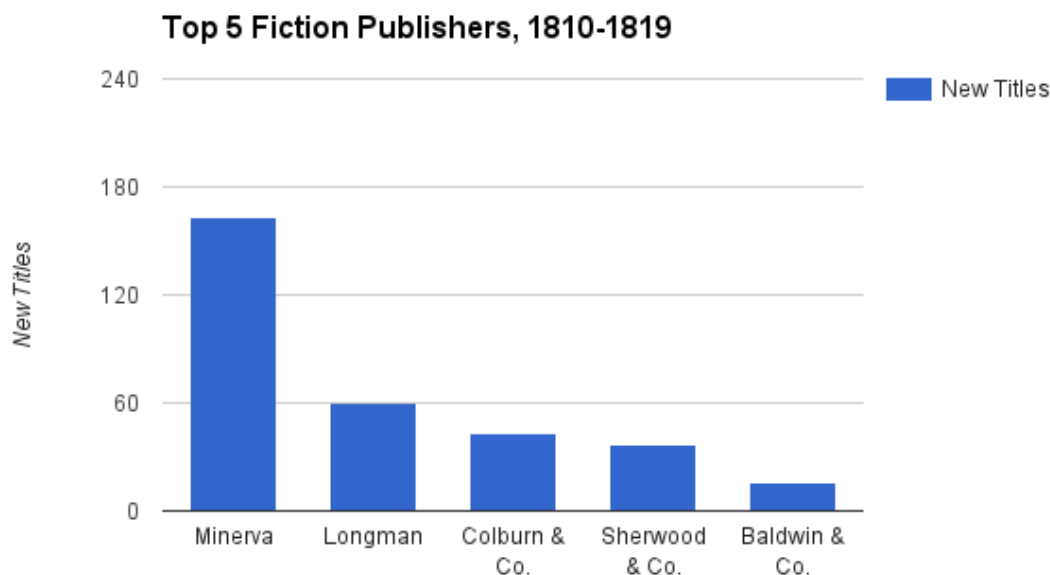
**Figure 1: Title Page for Ashton Priory (1792), Chawton House Library.**

In addition to those of the Minerva Press, this chapter establishes the title page design strategies of three of the major publishers of fiction—Longmans, Robinsons, and Henry Colburn—in order to demonstrate how, encoded within the appearance of transparently simple designs, title pages contain markers of genre and supposed literary quality. The differences in house styles, based almost entirely on typography and layout, are subtle and, in order to be legible, require a readership attuned to contemporary literary

trends, the reputations of various booksellers, and the limited range of design possibilities available to printers. By taking a wide approach to early nineteenth-century title pages, this chapter begins the work of recovering the ways early nineteenth century readers were invited to read the subtleties of title pages, especially how their design responds to broader cultural assumptions about the value of fiction.



**Figure 2:** The five most prolific publishers of fiction between 1800–1809. Data taken from Garside et al.



**Figure 3: The five most prolific publishers of fiction between 1810 and 1819. Data taken from Garside et al.**

These publishers have been selected not only for the prominent role each played in shaping Romantic-era fiction, but also because they represent different approaches to publishing and marketing fiction that are visible on their title pages. In terms of sheer numbers, the graphs in Figures 2 and 3 show the top five publishers of new fiction titles in 1800–1809 and 1810–1819, respectively. As these graphs indicate, these four publishers account for over forty percent, or 581 out of 1,435, of the new titles published in these two decades. Of these, the Minerva Press published 377 new titles, or roughly twenty-six percent, Longmans published 113, Robinsons 32, and Colburn 59. While the Minerva Press published more than twice as many new novels as any other single firm in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Longmans steadily produced fiction throughout the period, remaining consistent even when other publishers, like Robinsons, dramatically decreased their output. Henry Colburn did not begin publishing until the first decade of the nineteenth century, but, thanks to his aggressive marketing practices, he quickly became one of the major publishers of fiction within fifteen years of first opening his circulating library on Conduit Street. More than just serving as the publishers of a critical mass of fiction, these four publishers represent a range of different strategies and cultural associations. The prolific Minerva Press has long been understood as the precursor to mass market fiction, while Longmans sought to cultivate a genteel reputation

by maintaining a consistent list of respectable authors; Robinsons continued a policy of producing prestigious gothic fiction following their success with Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, and Colburn made his name with gossipy fiction about fashionable society that complemented his aggressive new marketing tactics, which included puffing and the circulation of rumours.<sup>14</sup> Between 1790 and 1820, each of these firms developed distinct features used in title page design, which amount to ongoing attempts at branding their fiction through details like font choice, authorial information, and layout. First, a brief survey of the general practices of typography and design during the Romantic period is necessary in order to understand the significance of the choices that particular publishers made.

## Early Nineteenth-Century Title Page Design

Title page design in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century books has been underexplored. Janine Barchas justifies her focus on the more obviously experimental graphic design of earlier novels, contrasting them with the plain design used for novels towards the end of the eighteenth century:

Tracking the novel historically, the genre's most active period of formal experimentation reaches a crescendo in the 1750s. Starting in the early 1760s, the novel begins a slow striptease of its graphic attire—its author portraits, cacophonous title pages, and graphic embellishments. It is the bare narrative form of the novel, adorned only by the figleaf of attendant

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<sup>14</sup> For general information about the Romantic-era marketplace for fiction, as well as overviews of these four publishers, see Garside et al., Franz Potter's *History of Gothic Publishing, 1800–1835: Exhuming the Trade*, James Raven's *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450–1850*, and Anthony Mandal's *Jane Austen and Popular Fiction*. Elizabeth Neiman's work provides a much-needed update to Dorothy Blakey's 1939 book, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820*. The fact that the two most substantial works on Longmans, Philip Wallis's *At the Sign of the Ship: Notes on the House of Longman* and Asa Briggs's *History of Longmans and their Books, 1724–1990: Longevity in Publishing* present almost entirely uncritical views of the firm, which has placed emphasis on the firm's successful strategies, rather than scrutinizing the implications of their business practices. By contrast, the other prominent and longstanding London bookseller with whom this chapter deals is not the subject of any full-length study; Robinsons strong association with Ann Radcliffe and the gothic novel means that scholarship on the firm has been relegated to discussions of its relation to particular authors, rather than its more general publication practices. Scholarship on Henry Colburn seeks to capitalize on or justify, as much as possible, his unscrupulous practices; the most substantial treatment of which are in John Sutherland and Veronica Melynck's *Rogue Publisher, The "Prince of Puffers": The Life and Works of the Publisher Henry Colburn* (2018).

illustration, that enters the next century, where as a printed book it dons the new costumes of serialization and machine printing. (18)

Barchas goes on to attribute the decline of graphic experimentation to “the easy familiarity of the novel as a genre” after its early development (18). It is that evidence of “easy familiarity,” however, that I argue makes these title pages of interest; far from presenting a naked or unadorned text, they provide visual clues that point to what kinds of information producers of fiction expected their readers to be attuned to, including well known novels and authors, popular genres, and particular publishers. In ignoring the influence of these paratextual markers, we underestimate the richness of the Romantic-era textual economy, especially the extent to which prospective readers were assumed to be familiar with tropes, subgenres, and the hierarchy of booksellers, and, accordingly, were expected to recognize and respond to subtle rather than explicit and ornate cues, including the presentation of the title, authorial information, epigraphs, and imprint.

Information about who designed a particular title page is largely unrecoverable, but surviving publishers’ records suggest an interplay of publisher, printer, and author. Although final decisions about title page design were ultimately in the hands of booksellers and the printers they contracted, authors frequently expressed opinions about the contents and layout of their title pages in their correspondence, with varying degrees of specificity. In an 1809 letter to the booksellers Vernor, Hood, & Sharpe discussing the proofs of *A Poetical Picture of America*, first-time author Ann Ritson references an enclosed paper which she describes as, “what I wish for the title Page instead of the one I had tack’d to it,” suggesting that authors not only paid attention to how their works were printed, but used mock-ups to dictate their design and layout preferences.<sup>15</sup> In Ritson’s

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<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the mock-up Ritson enclosed does not seem to have survived. Authors’ attention to the particulars of book design was not limited to the title page. Ritson’s letter also contains a detailed commentary on the visual layout of the poem, indicating that she was,

not at all pleas’d, with the manner in which the notes are plac’d, or printed, they are too near the poem, and in nearly the same size, they ought to be nearer the bottom of the Page and in very small print. I request it may be attended too, also the Alteration of the Title, which I wish made; as I am not used to printing, I suppose they have done it right, but it is not as I had wrote it, and only sixteen lines on a page, I am particularly anxious it should look neat, and be correct, which you promis’d should be attended to.

Although a first-time author, Ritson’s attention to the spacing of notes and the number of lines per page is reminiscent of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s negotiations with Joseph Cottle around the first printing of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), suggesting that some of the requests about margins and line spacing were perhaps less exceptional than they seem.



case, the work was printed by subscription, meaning that she likely had more input in the design than authors who sold the copyrights to their works outright. Of course, just because an author made a request, did not mean that it would be granted. Writing to G. G. and J. Robinson in 1794 about *The Royal Captives* (1795), Ann Yearsley requests that “on the title page the Words “Copied from an old MSS” to be erased.” Her letter seems to have gone unheeded; the title page reads, “The Royal Captives: A Fragment of a Secret History. Copied from an Old Manuscript, by Ann Yearsley.” Nevertheless, Ritson and Yearsley’s letters indicate their awareness of the stakes of title page design in the period, the sense that providing a text with a fitting paratextual frame was a vital part of guiding readers towards first choosing the book, and then towards a desired way of reading it, whatever that way might be. Authors may have been more alert to the implications of their books’ paratexts than a casual reader, but their ability to recognise how certain design features would situate a book within the wider literary marketplace demonstrates their attentiveness to the details of book design and layout. More to the point, the fact that a complex network of different agents was responsible for designing books means that when a body of texts achieve visual unity, it is the product of communication and worth scrutiny.

While most title pages from this period rely on relatively simple design, the way that some publishers made use of small decorative touches is particularly telling. Almost all title pages relied primarily on clean, modern roman fonts to some degree, but gothic or black letter and italic fonts also appear frequently, creating emphasis and drawing attention to certain words by visually distinguishing them. However, as Nicolas Barker points out, font choice often had particular historical resonances; black letter, for instance,

persisted in four uses [through the seventeenth century]: the ‘Authorized Version’ of the Bible (As distinct from the roman type of the Geneva version); the Book of Common Prayer (last printed in black letter in 1706) and its occasional supplements; Acts of Parliament, other statutory instruments and a few other legal texts; and as a display type, to distinguish a key-word in title pages and drop-head titles. (250)

By the early nineteenth century, all of these except the last had fallen out of use, but the choice of gothic font as a “display type” on a title page nevertheless invoked a kind of political and religious authority that hearkened back to pre-print manuscripts. While italic fonts had fewer associations with historical texts, their common use for words in other languages, including Latin, meant that the emphasis they created had the potential to hint at something foreign, and, depending on the context, potentially erudite, exotic, or fashionable. Beyond font, decorations during the period were mostly limited to ruled lines used to separate different categories of text from each other. For example, double ruled lines of varying lengths frequently appear above imprints, creating a visual border between the information about a particular text and the printers, publishers and booksellers involved in producing it. Similarly, authorial information is often separated from the title with ruled lines, a choice that creates emphasis, especially when the author was already well known. These ruled lines offered an opportunity for small flourishes. Sometimes a solid black line tapers on each end into the elongated diamond shape known as a swelled rule; at other times, the line might be wavy or shorter than others. Very rarely, a publisher might deploy fleurons or other decorative touches, but by and large those were relics of the earlier eighteenth century, from before print became as regularized.<sup>16</sup>

How and to what extent different publishers drew on these decorative possibilities reveals how their publishing strategies played out in visual design. However, at times attempts to invoke particular texts or to maintain a style of design for a particular author across publishers meant that a particular house style could be flexible. Regardless, by using title pages to signal their strategies to prospective readers, these publishers assumed that these readers would have the contextual knowledge of the literary marketplace required to make informed choices based on visual codes. At the same time, the stratification of the marketplace that these publishers’ design choices drew on and reinforced invited readers to use their knowledge in order to categorize themselves as particular kinds of readers and consumers. Just as more prestigious publishers carefully

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<sup>16</sup> For an example, many of these elements can be seen in Figure 1: double-ruled lines surround the epigraph, and different lengths of swelled rule break up information in the title, byline, and imprint.

reinforced their differences from circulating library publishers through visual cues, readers could choose to resist the obvious marketing of the Minerva Press in favour of the relative plainness of other publishers, thereby distinguishing themselves from the kinds of novel readers that sought out the “trash” decried by Romantic-era reviewing culture.

## **William Lane’s Minerva Press, Genre Fiction, and Corporate Identity**

The Minerva Press is the publisher most frequently invoked by contemporary commenters and modern scholarship as simultaneously representative of the Romantic-era novel and the point of reference to which fiction recognised for its literary value could be compared. Edward Copeland has identified the stratification of fiction during the Romantic period into what he terms the “Minerva gothic,” marketed towards the middle class, that consisted largely of repetitive, recognizable plots, and the genteel gothic of authors like Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith.<sup>17</sup> In this configuration, the Minerva Press serves as a baseline against which other fiction can be compared, in order to elevate or dismiss it accordingly. At the same time, the Minerva Press has been widely understood as imitative, recycling the plots and conventions of more prestigious novels without retaining their more literary qualities.

Although William Lane had been working as a publisher under his own name since 1784, the Minerva Press was not officially founded until 1790. Their publishing lists were advertised to the proprietors of circulating libraries, who were able to purchase titles printed for the Minerva Press wholesale. By the end of the 1790s, the Minerva Press had become synonymous with cheap, mass-produced fiction, and reviewers frequently referenced it as shorthand for the dismal state of a literary marketplace overrun by novelists. For example, an 1809 review of *The Bristol Heiress*, a novel attributed to Mrs. Heath and published by the Minerva Press, opens by complaining, “This is one of those numerous publications which issue almost daily from the press, striving, seemingly in

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<sup>17</sup> Copeland is not the only scholar to draw this distinction. Franz Potter makes a similar claim when he points out how “for critics there were ‘art’ books and there were ‘trade’ books, and both of these categories were Gothic” (2).

vain, to sate the appetite of the public for novels and romances” (97). Such remarks were not confined to works actually published by the Minerva Press. In his review of Frances Burney’s last novel, *The Wanderer*, John Wilson Croker says, it “cannot, in our judgment, claim any very decided superiority over the thousand-and-one volumes with which the Minerva Press inundates the shelves of circulating libraries, and increases, instead of diverting, the ennui of the loungers at watering-places” (124). Similarly, an 1824 review of Maturin’s *Albigenses* elevates it through comparison to “the thousand and one stillborn children of the Minerva Press” (209). Such remarks indicate the importance of the Minerva Press to the literary scene; by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the imprint of the Minerva Press represented a standard to the readers that meant a passing reference in a review of a novel published by another firm could establish its literary merits.

The Minerva Press’s association with circulating libraries contributed to its reputation for publishing repetitive and poorly written novels, even though, as Deborah Anne MacLeod demonstrates, it published a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, and the quality of those publications varied widely. The particular ire directed at it by Romantic-era reviewing culture was the result of a more general disdain for circulating library publishers; despite the prominence of Lane’s press in the popular imagination, the association between cheap, unoriginal fiction and novels published by the proprietors of circulating libraries predates the establishment of the Minerva Press by several decades. Edward Jacobs has argued that relying on unknown, novice authors allowed circulating library publishers to compete with “the dynastic publishing houses who since the 1740’s had monopolized ‘the novel’” (604), a strategy that both contributed to and depended on “the widespread devaluation of female writing” (615). That is, because circulating library publishers relied primarily on first-time female novelists who were willing to accept lower payment in order to compete with larger publishers, the fiction that they published was perceived to be of lesser quality.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This feminization of circulating library authors is linked to the circulating library as a feminized, and therefore inferior, space in general; although recent scholarship by Jan Fergus and William St. Clair has suggested otherwise, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators general assumed that the readers who frequented circulating libraries (and read the fiction they produced and distributed) were primarily women.

Jacobs further claims that this devaluation contributed to the repetitive plots of circulating library fiction: “the construction of its form as reproductive encouraged the development of any singularly successful new work into a successful new *genre*” (615). Arranging works of fiction into different subsets or genres presented new economic opportunities based on an imagined readership able to identify genres and their relationship to the novels that spawned them. Michael Gamer identifies the implications for readers when he describes how “genre can become a means of reaching particular audiences, whether comprised of ‘real’ readers or imagined *strata*” (47). He goes on to argue that targeting particular communities of readers had implications for book design: “With their distinctive bindings and predictable subject matter, Minerva books not only were represented in these years as a separate kind of literature, but also often were accorded a separate space on library shelves, grouped alone or with other ‘mysteries’ and ‘tales’ published by similar booksellers” (Gamer 66). The correlation between the text and paratexts of Minerva productions has been frequently evoked; for example, Ann Engar’s entry for the Minerva Press in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1995) describes them as “quickly but not carefully made,” adding, “Even later volumes, produced when the business was successful, were printed on coarse, yellowish or gray, machine-made paper, using a small type. Most are full of typographical errors” (192). Engar does not remark on production quality in their entries for any other publishers of this period; that she makes a point of doing so here reinforces assumptions about the relationship between material and literary quality that undergird many claims made about the Minerva Press, without providing comparable information about other publishers that would enable readers to assess its veracity.

The proliferation of different genres meant that publishers of fiction, a popular, feminized genre often figured as profligate regardless of who published it, could either draw on these feminized and formulaic associations to heighten the appeal of their novels or seek to distance them from the kinds of assumptions that accompanied a circulating library imprint. The Minerva Press fell into the former category, readily identifying itself as the kind of popular fiction that would attract readers without concerning itself about critical approval. Lane seems to have been aware of the benefits of making the Minerva Press a readily identifiable brand from early on in the venture, taking advantage of the

title page to cultivate a particular aesthetic for his novels. Figure 4 shows a title page of Anna Maria Johnson's *Monmouth* (1790), which predates the founding of the Minerva Press, while Figures 1 and 5 show the title pages of two works published in 1792, the anonymous *Ashton Priory* and Susannah Gunning's *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*, both of which bear the Minerva imprint. Already the simplification of title pages is apparent. Whereas *Monmouth*'s title page is cramped, filled with information about both the author (Anna Maria Johnson, author of *Calista, A Novel, &c.*) and the dedicatee of the work (His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch) in type nearly as large as the title, both title pages from 1792 convey a similar amount of information with more white space, including author attributions and, in the case of *Ashton Priory*, an epigraph from Dryden. The increase in white space is achieved by inscribing the title in a larger font but reducing the font size of all other elements, especially the line communicating authorial information, which results in an emphasis on the title and genre identifier (in these examples, "novel") at the expense of the authorial information, which is compressed into a small font on the title page of *Ashton Priory* and moved to the bottom of *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family*'s title page. On the latter, Susannah Gunning's status as an established and popular author is signaled by the way that her name is set off by the double lines above and below, while the anonymity of *Ashton Priory* means that no space for authorial information is required.

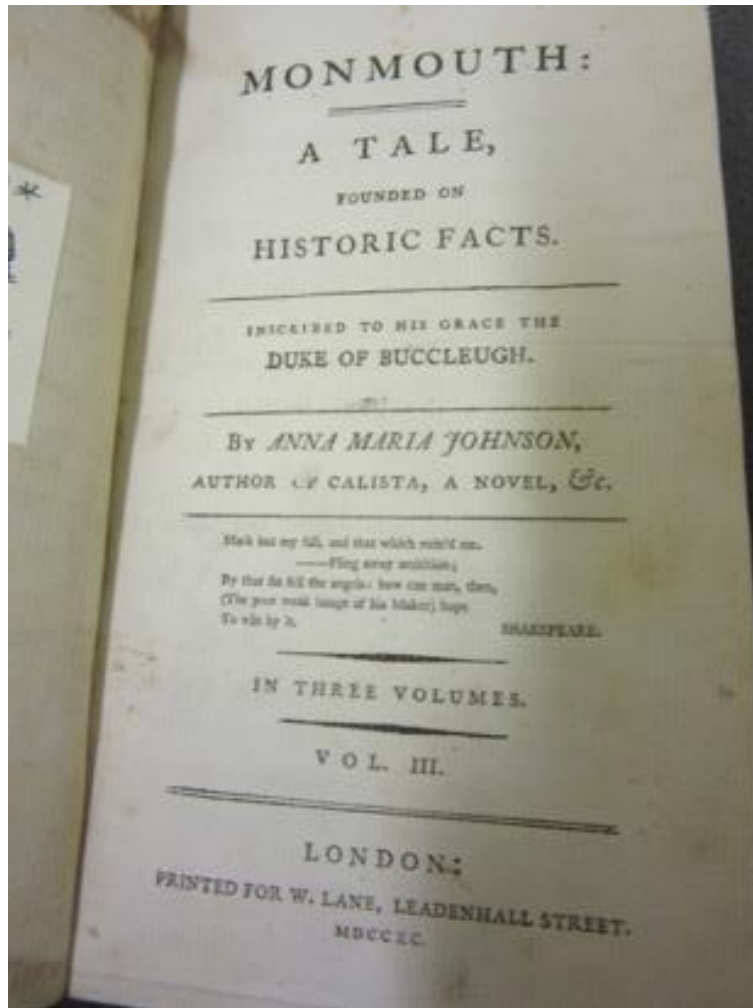
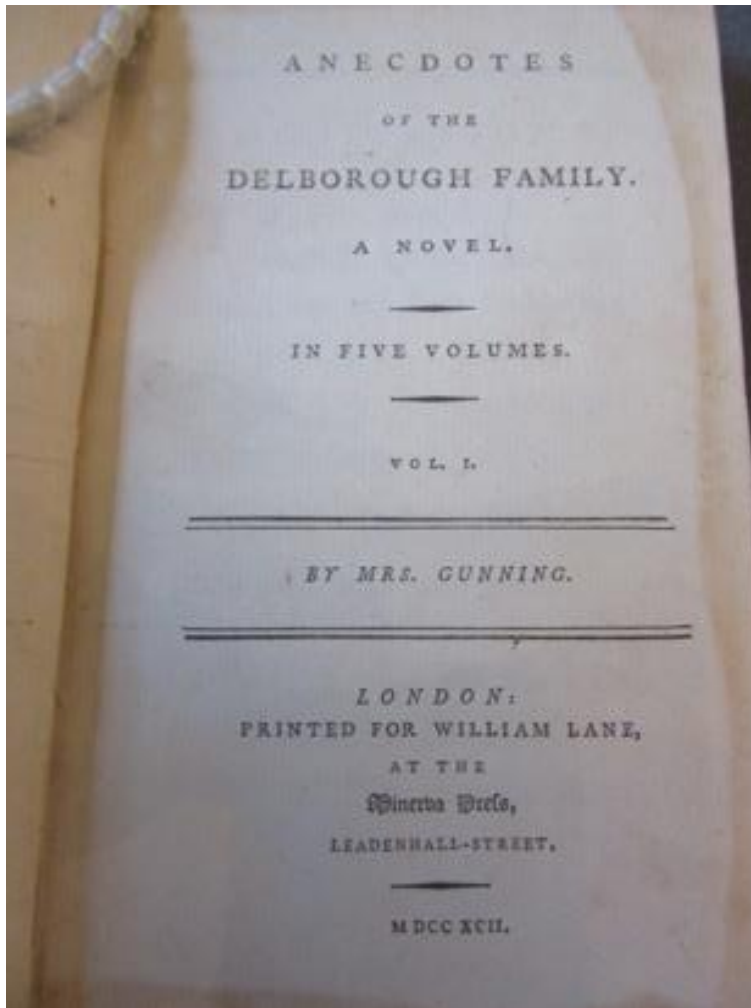


Figure 4: Title page for Volume 3 of Anna Maria Johnson's *Monmouth* (1790), Chawton House Library



**Figure 5:** Title page for Susannah Gunning's *Anecdotes of the Delborough Family* (1792), Chawton House Library

Most strikingly, in the two examples from 1792 the imprint has evolved from the single line of block roman font that read, “Printed for W. Lane, Leadenhall Street,” to the more visually striking and brand-oriented, “Printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, Leadenhall-Street,” which features an interplay of block roman and gothic fonts broken into four lines of text, emphasizing the interplay of individual and corporate identities. This imprint remained relatively static until Lane’s successor, A. K. Newman, dropped “Minerva Press” late in the 1810s. The imprint’s component parts are crucial to the ways in which the line between William Lane as an individual and the Minerva Press as a publishing endeavour are blurred. Both the block lettering in “Printed for William Lane” and the gothic font reserved for the words “Minerva Press” serve as brand identifiers, but in different ways: the name of the press and its distinctive lettering



suggest uniformity across texts, while the inclusion of Lane as the proprietor of the press suggests a unifying personality behind the press. On the one hand, the moniker “Minerva Press” stands out from the other printers, publishers, and booksellers at work in London during the 1790s, whose imprints and colophons are mostly comprised of the names of partners in the firms. At the same time, the press remains tied to an individual: William Lane. Elizabeth Neiman’s observation that “Minerva’s authorial model is *generic* . . . [in] that writers deemphasize personality by linking their work to the codes and conventions of formula (and indeed many publish anonymously)” (“A New Perspective on the Minerva Press’s ‘Derivative’ Novels” 634) suggests that Lane’s name takes the place of the author function, creating a sense of unity for the fiction of a diverse set of authors both named and anonymous. By naming his press but also incorporating his name into the imprint, Lane created a stable brand that unified the texts his firm published, while simultaneously identifying himself as the unifying force behind them, effectively becoming a kind of co-author.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lane even became manifest within the novels he published; Neiman’s article goes on to explore how fictionalized representations of Lane negotiating with female authors in two novels of the 1790s which present him “as a discerning gentleman publisher” (640) who balances kindness to his prospective authors with a professional standard that the works he publishes must adhere to, which the stamp of his imprint guarantees. Elsewhere, Neiman has further drawn out the link between the imprint and the stamp that acted as a guarantor through an analysis of Thomas Carlyle’s comparison of the Minerva Press’s fiction to “copper currency.” According to Neiman, “If an apt metaphor for the transaction of purportedly dog-eared and water-stained novels, Carlyle’s imagery also summons middle-to-upper class concerns about contemporary changes in the money market: namely, the potentially leveling effects of a credit economy and the Bank of England’s increased reliance on repaying its promissory notes with paper money instead of silver or gold” (“The Female Authors of the Minerva Press and ‘Copper Currency’” 276). Carlyle’s metaphor implies that all literature has been devalued by the Minerva Press brand, which “adulterates the category of the literary, whether because it introduces less elements, such as Parsons’s not-so-immaculate exemplary heroines, or because it simply mimics the valuable, introducing . . . an influx of worthless currency” (289). As Neiman points out, linking the state of the literary marketplace to Britain’s devalued currency had particular resonance in the early nineteenth century, which was marked by rapid inflation and anxieties about the use of paper currency, which was becoming increasingly detached from the bullion it was meant to represent.

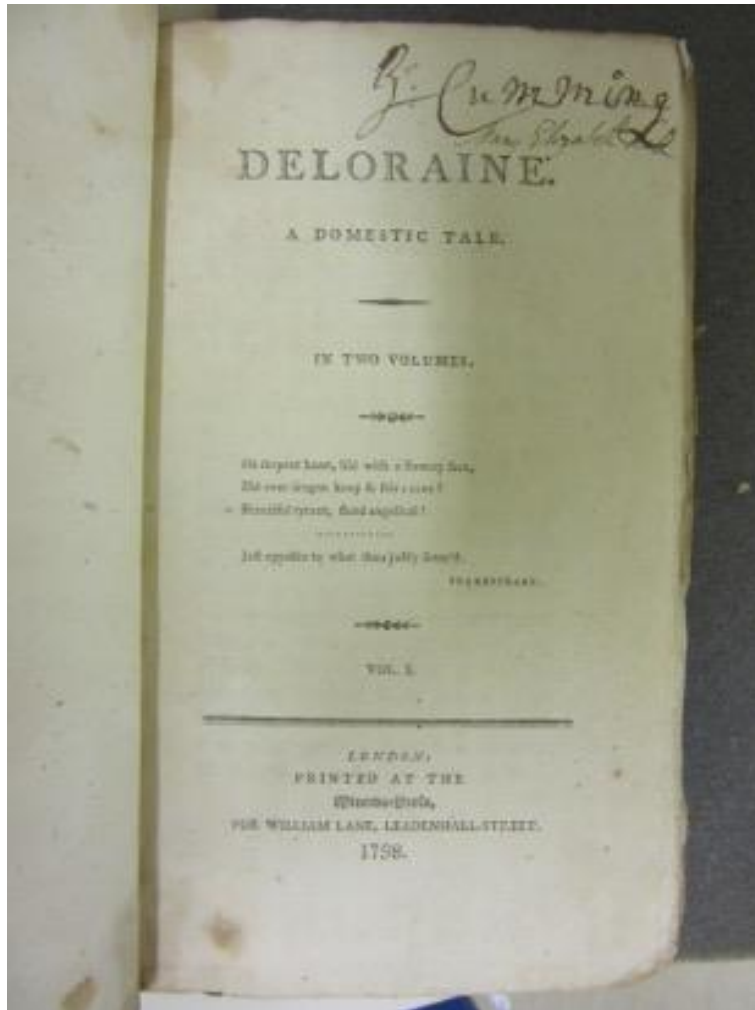
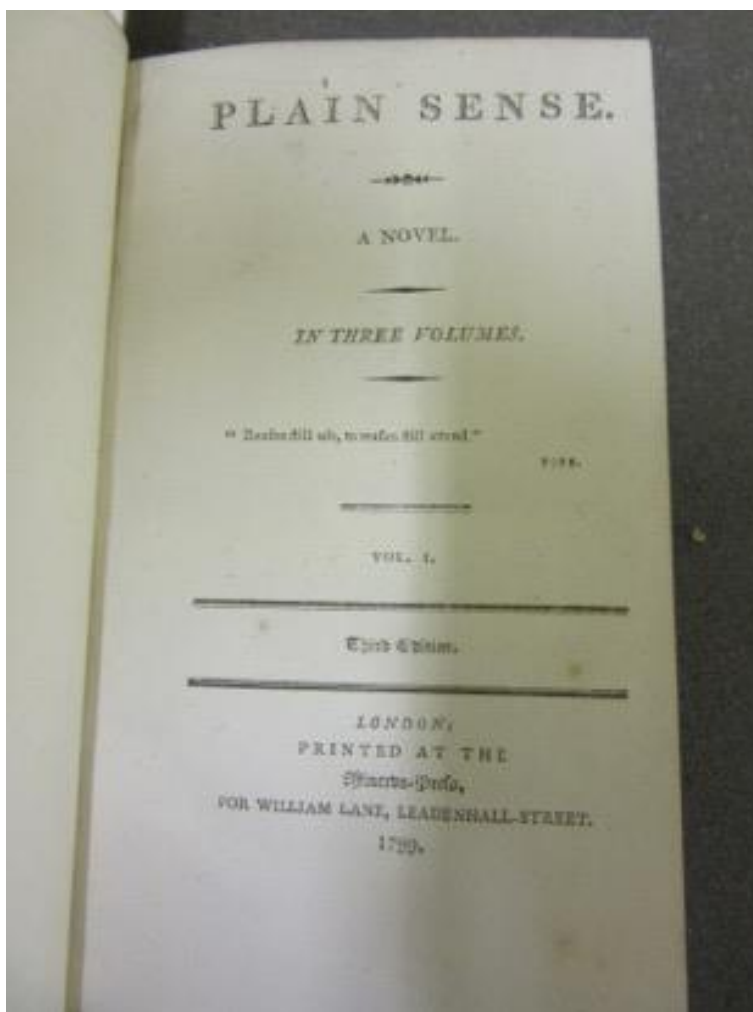


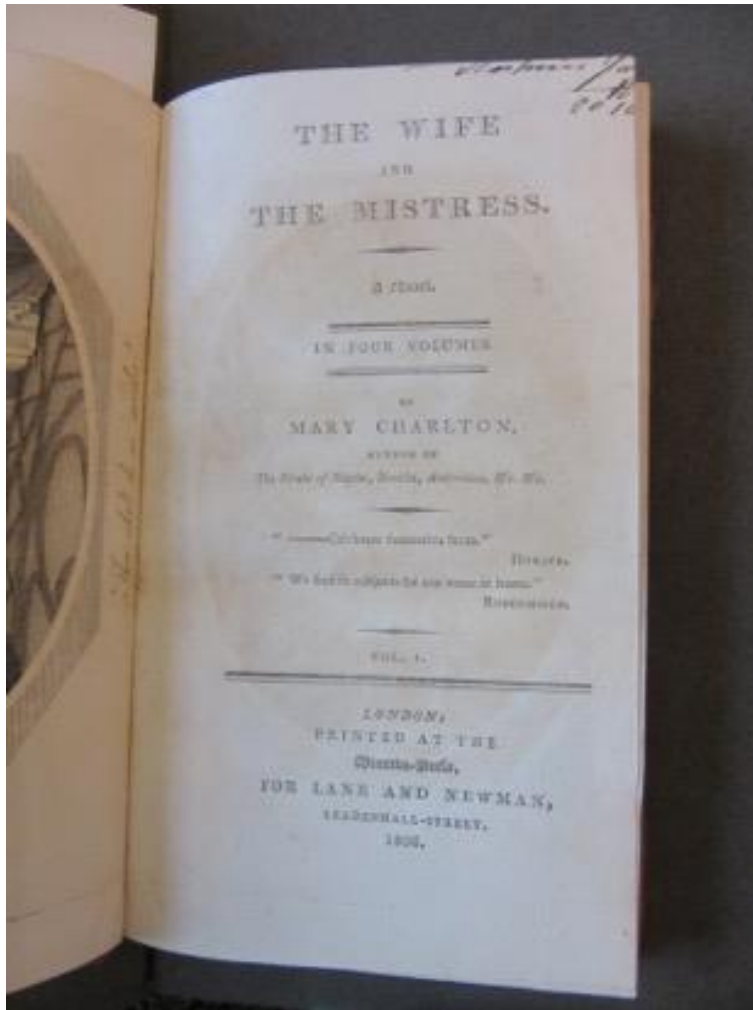
Figure 6: Title Page for Mrs. Martin's *Deloraine* (1798), Chawton House Library



**Figure 7:** Title page for the third edition of Frances Jacson's *Plain Sense* (1799, first published 1795), Chawton House Library

The Minerva title pages of the later 1790s display even greater consistency, although some minor variations remain. For example, authorial information continued to be either printed in much smaller fonts or effaced entirely, such as in Figures 6 and 7, on the title page of *The Beggar Girl* (1797, Figure 8) Anna Maria Bennett's name appears in block letters, marking her out as a best-selling author worth highlighting. This consistency of design continued into the first decade of the nineteenth century, with one noteworthy modification: the genre indication began to be printed in a more ornate gothic font, similar to that used in the imprint (see Figures 9, 10, and 11). While this variation occasionally appears on the title pages of novels from the 1790s, its increased use in the first decade of the nineteenth century links the Minerva Press and the genres of fiction that it published ("A Novel," "A German Tale," etc.) through a distinct visual cue. The





**Figure 9:** Title Page for Mary Charlton's *The Wife and the Mistress* (1802), Chawton House Library

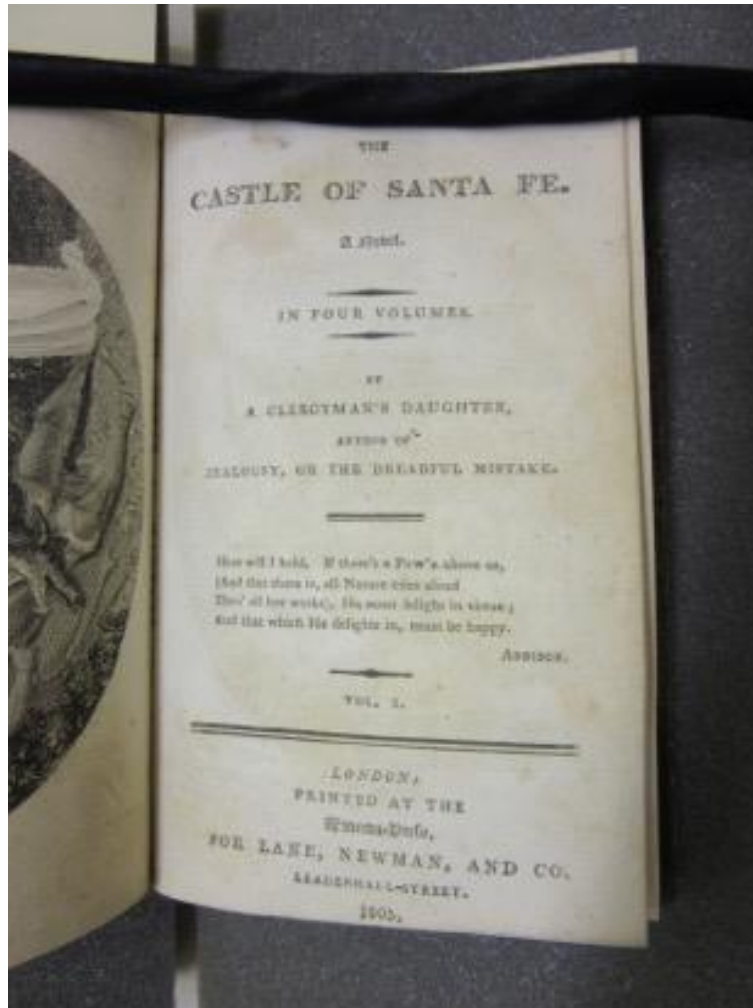
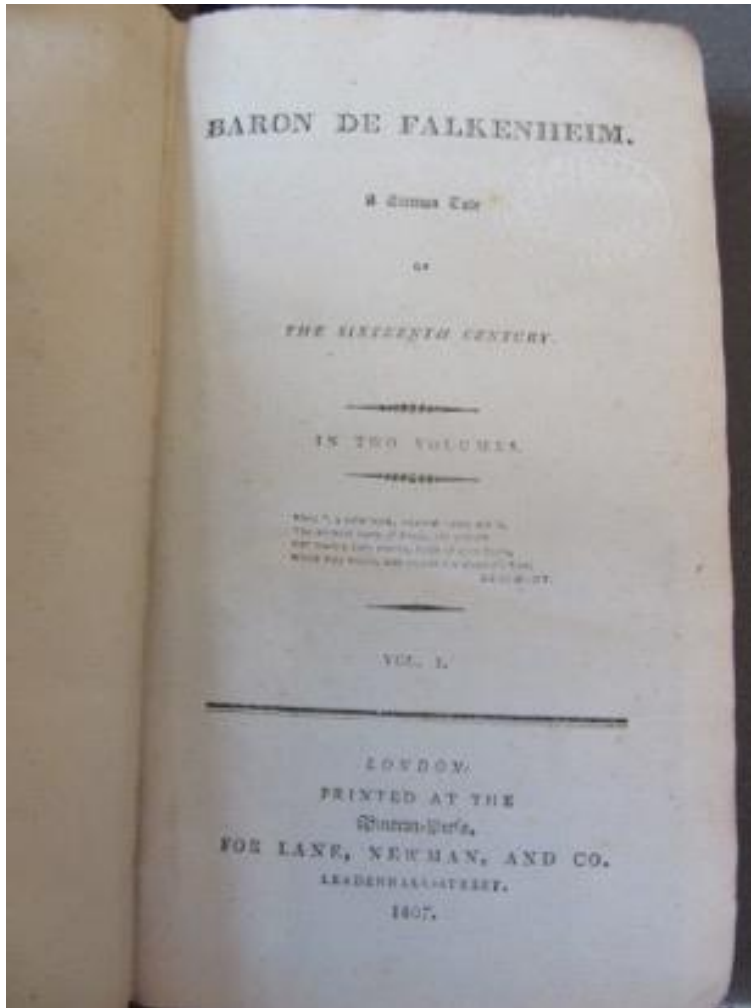


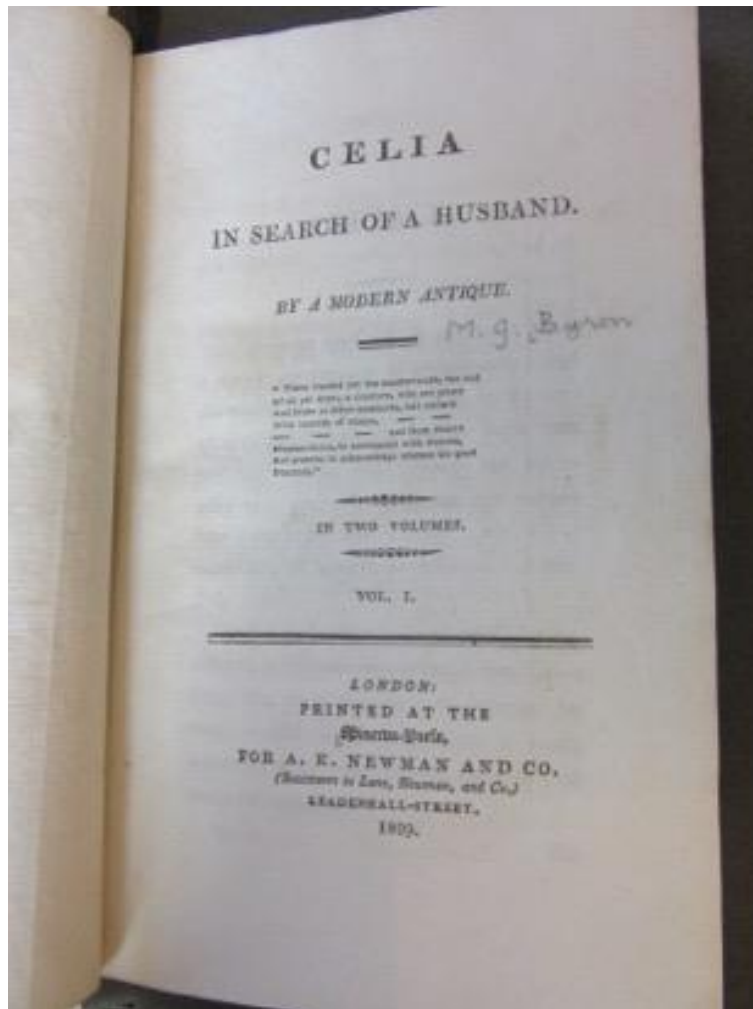
Figure 10: Title page for *The Castle of Santa Fe* (1805), Chawton House Library



**Figure 11:** Title page for Elisabeth Guénard's *Baron de Falkenheim* (1807), Chawton House Library

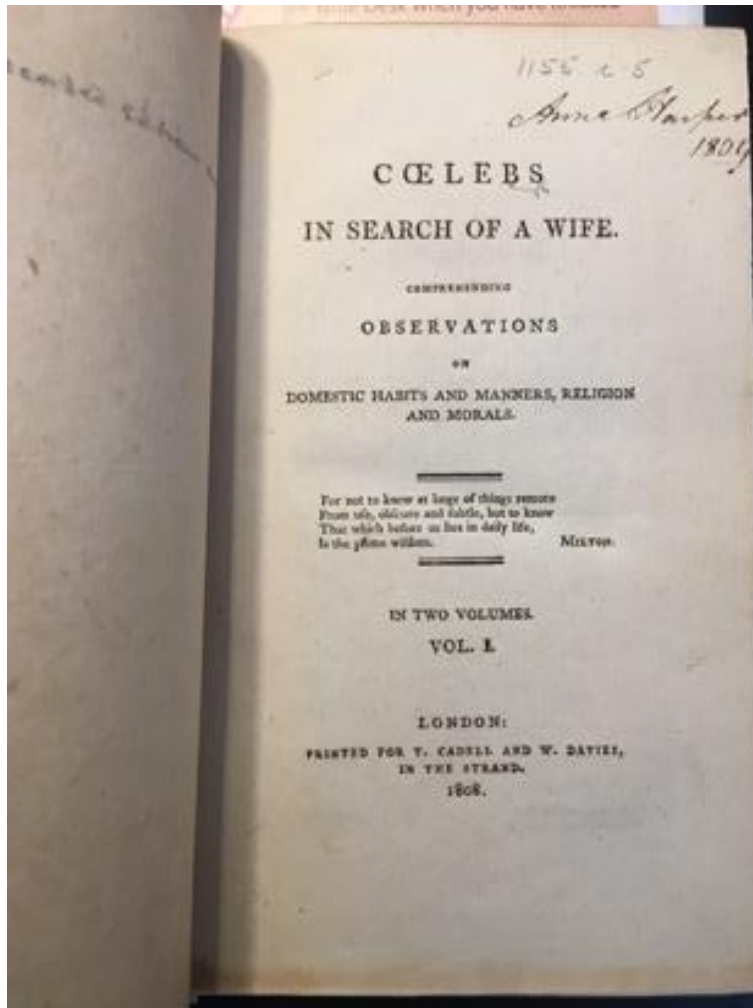
At the same time, such recognizable branding was often disposed of strategically. For example, Figure 12 shows the title page of Medora Gordon Byron's novel, *Celia in Search of a Husband* (1809), which was written in response to the evangelical writer Hannah More's runaway success, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, first published the previous year by Cadell and Davies (see Figure 13). Not only was More's novel published by a much more prestigious firm than Byron's; it was also printed in the larger (and therefore more expensive) octavo format. Nevertheless, a side-by-side comparison of the two title pages reveals the ways in which the Minerva Press sought to invoke the original work through plainer-than-usual title page design: like *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, *Celia in Search of a Husband* eschews embellishments like the gothic font that appear on most of the other Minerva title pages from this period in favour of plain block font. The title page

for Byron's novel also responds to More's in its choice of epigraph; both are excerpted from Book VII of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Linking Byron's novel to More's through the design of its title page reinforces the conversation being set up by *Celia in Search of a Husband's* title. In this case, Byron's novel implies a direct call and response instead of the recycling of plot across multiple texts to produce a genre. In revising the story of a man searching for the perfect wife into the story of a woman searching for a husband, Byron questions More's commentary on the frivolity of women. The repetition of visual cues reinforces Byron's engagement with More, but the use of the Minerva imprint contributes to the inversion of the title, reinforcing the feminized title with the gendered associations of the Minerva Press.



**Figure 12:** Title page for Medora Gordon Byron's *Celia in Search of a Husband* (1809), Chawton House Library





**Figure 13:** Title page for Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), British Library

By imitating the plainness of More's title page, *Celia in Search of a Husband* follows the general trend of more prestigious publishers for minimalist design that distinguished their fiction from the more decorative title pages of the Minerva Press. However, the model of genre-based title page design that circulating libraries pioneered would be adopted by other publishers in the second half of the 1810s, when the explosive popularity of Walter Scott's Waverley novels redefined the literary marketplace, an event that re-stratified the novel into masculine and feminine subgenres, instead of fiction produced by circulating library publishers and fiction produced by more reputable

publishers.<sup>20</sup> In turning to Longmans, the next section explores a publisher whose title pages emphasised the individual author over a corporate identity, a strategy that allowed a prolific publisher of fiction to avoid the accusations of repetitiveness that plagued circulating library publishers.

## **Longmans and the marketing of a middle ground**

Longmans' numbers are small in comparison to those of the Minerva Press (53 titles vs. 214 between 1800 and 1809 and 60 vs. 163 between 1810 and 1819). Nevertheless, they account for a substantial number of new titles, even though, as Anthony Mandal notes, "it was not until the nineteenth century that they embarked on a systematic policy of fiction production" (Mandal 35–36). In addition to ensuring that Longmans was a consistent purveyor of new novels, this "systematic policy" brought with it a degree of stability that smaller, newer, or generally less established firms did not enjoy. Fostering a reputation for high quality books across different genres allowed the firm to weather the whims of the market—it continued to publish fiction at a steady rate, even during years when other firms cut back on new fiction titles substantially, and some ceased to publish in the genre almost entirely—but it also highlights the perceived link between output and quality: by keeping the number of new titles to a respectable and regular number, Longmans could not be accused of forcing onto readers a deluge of new titles in the way that the Minerva Press was.<sup>21</sup> Their title pages reflect these aims; not as consistent as those of the Minerva Press, Longmans' title pages nevertheless indicate a general preference for simplicity, with clearly displayed title and authorial information and very little decorative font. Within these constraints, variations allowed the specifics of titles to be highlighted, whether by creating a unified appearance for titles by the same author or by mirroring the content of the title in their layout.

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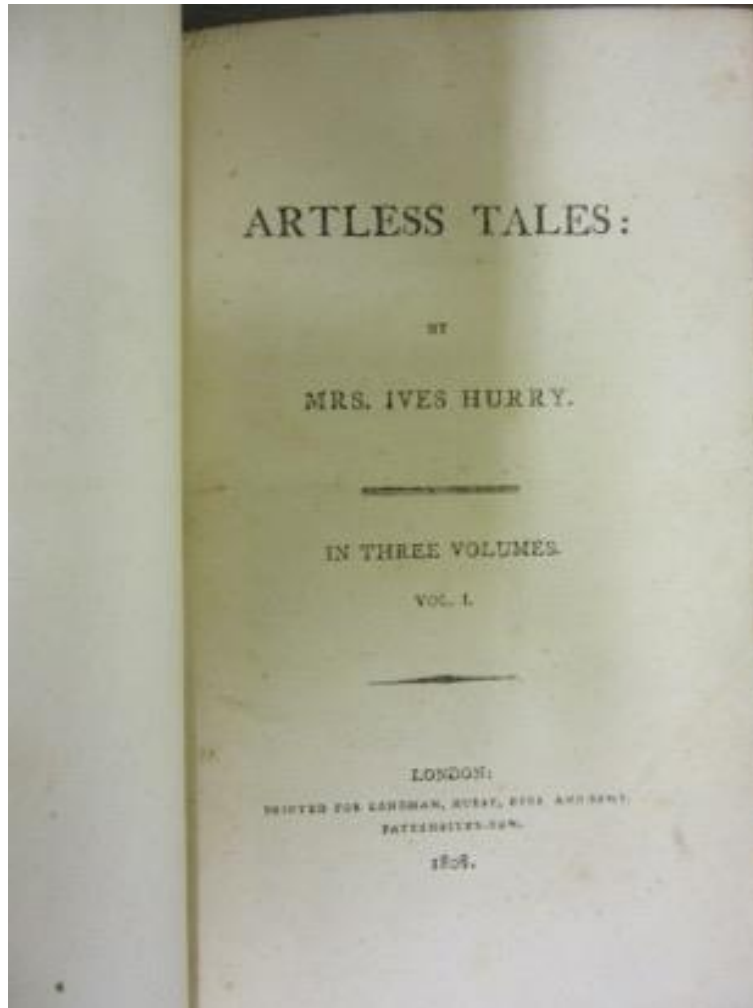
<sup>20</sup> For a thorough account of how Scott's *Waverley* novels redefined the novel's position within the Romantic-era literary hierarchy, see Ina Ferris's *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (1991).

<sup>21</sup> For a complete, if somewhat biased, history of the Longman firm, see Philip Wallis's *At the Sign of the Ship 1724–1974* (1974) and Asa Briggs's *A History of Longmans and Their Books 1725–1990: Longevity in Publishing* (2008).

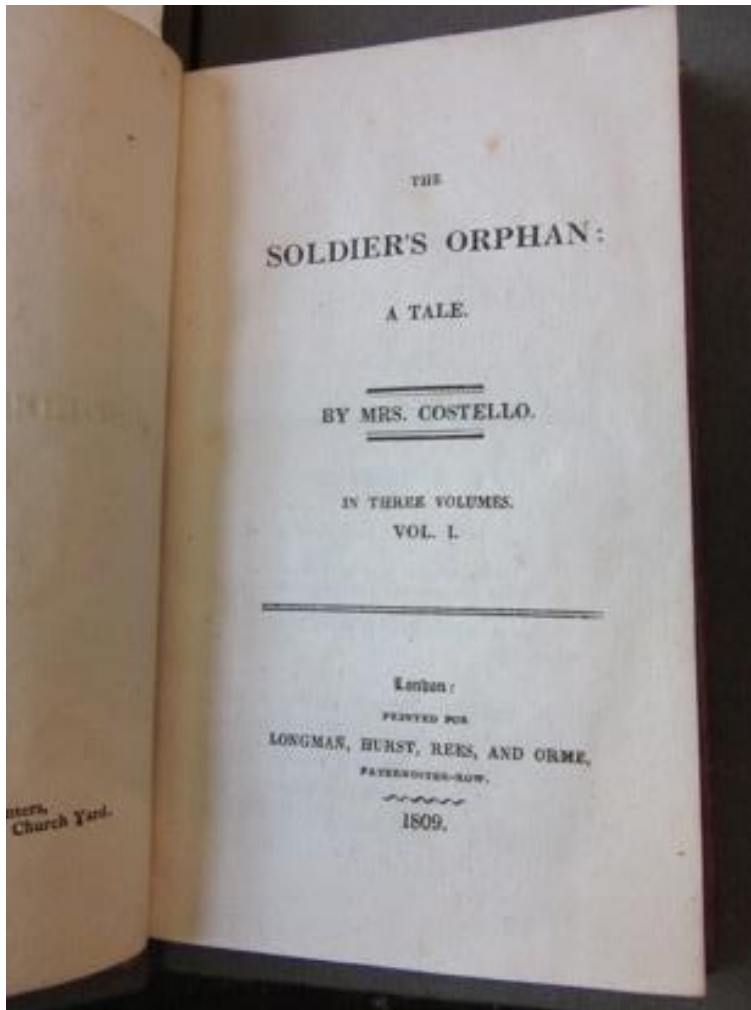
Whereas the Minerva Press emphasized its corporate and generic identities, Longmans emphasized the individual author, even for anonymous or unknown writers. This commitment to authorship fed Longmans' narrative about the fair treatment of individual authors that has been traced from the firm's beginnings in 1724; it was also a key feature of their branding strategy for fiction, allowing them to avoid the genre affiliations associated with circulating library publishers. Peter Garside describes Longmans as a firm that relied on "a group of regular (mainly female) authors, with literary credentials noticeably higher than their Minerva counterparts, and to whom Longmans remained creditably loyal—at least as far as commercial considerations allowed" (87). Although the overall percentage of fiction authored by male, female, and unknown writers published in the early nineteenth century was mirrored by Longmans, many of their most popular fiction authors were women, including Jane West, Amelia Opie, and Anna Maria Porter, whose greater respectability was a matter of subject and genre. Even before the general turn towards evangelical fiction during the 1810s, most of Longmans' fiction belonged to one of the two categories that Anthony Mandal terms "national–historical or moral–domestic narratives" (36). Unlike the "romances" and "mysteries" of the Minerva Press, which often carried with them promiscuous connotations, subgenres like the "tale" (or, even better, "moral tale") allowed authors to position themselves as conveyors of national and moral virtue, subjects in which women were allowed to claim expertise without challenging the social order.

Even those titles that did not conform to a straightforward moral–domestic plot tended to emphasize relatively conservative national values, avoiding the gothic elements of most romances in favour of historical detail. For example, the sisters Jane and Anna Maria Porter each published a number of historical romances, but rather than drawing on Italian, French, or Spanish locations, their works often featured Eastern European settings, like Poland (in Jane Porter's 1803 work, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*) and Hungary (in Anna Maria Porter's 1807 *The Hungarian Brothers*), or less far-flung settings, as in Jane Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810). Nor were Longmans' authors restricted to just one of these possibilities: Jane West, a regular of long standing in the Longmans lists, shifted over the course of her lengthy career from writing moral–domestic works with contemporary settings to historical tales that contained varying degrees of romance. Like

Anna Maria Porter, West's fiction career began with circulating library publishers in the late eighteenth century. She published *The Advantages of Education* (1793) with the Minerva Press, before beginning her association with Longmans with *A Gossip's Story and a Legendary Tale* in 1796. While she continued to publish didactic and domestic tales alongside poetry and educational works for children, beginning in 1812 she shifted dramatically, publishing two works that constituted a significant break from her previous novels: *The Loyalists* (1812), a work of historical fiction about the American revolution that drew on historical records in an attempt to present its subject matter accurately, and *Alicia de Lacy* (1814), an historical romance set in the time of Edward II. However, despite the shift in subject matter, West maintained a consistent position about the potentially damaging effects of fiction generally and a hope that her own productions were of a superior and moral quality; she opened *The Loyalists* with the statement, "It is only those to those who have a relish for stern virtue and grave reflection that I would recommend the following pages" (2), and prefaced *Alicia de Lacy* with a comment on "the much dry reading, which has, perhaps, operated as a check upon the imagination" that she undertook in composing the story (vi). These references to serious reading practices and attention to historical detail that West uses to elevate her own work in comparison to fiction generally is representative of Longmans marketing strategy as a whole; rather than trying to present its fiction as innovative or fundamentally different from other fiction being published, it simply sought to position its publications as a more respectable version of what was already available.



**Figure 14:** Title page for Margaret Ives Hurry Mitchell's *Artless Tales* (1808), Chawton House Library



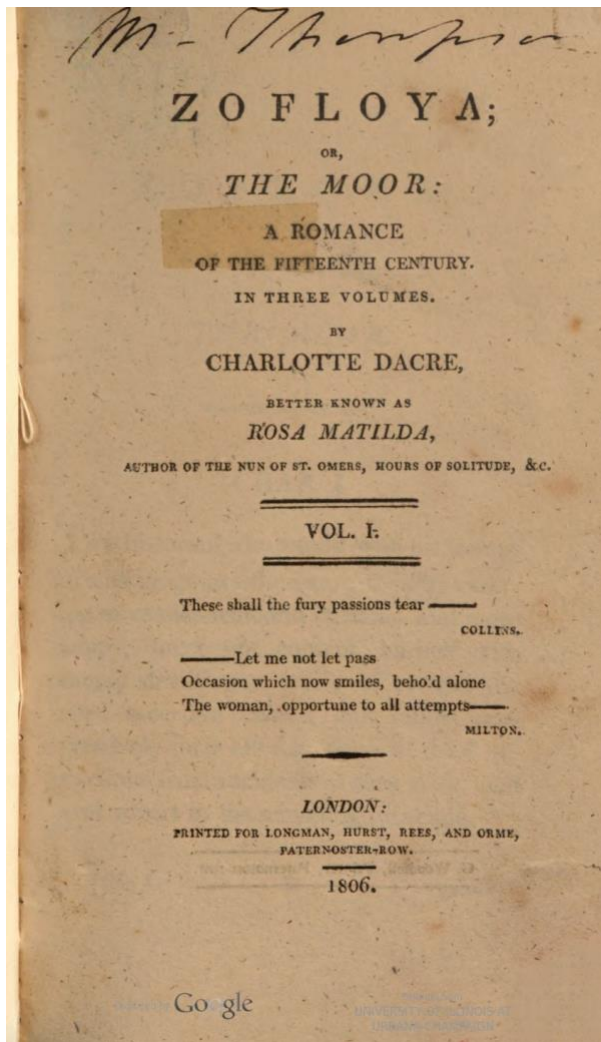
**Figure 15:** Title page for Louisa Stuart Costello's *The Soldier's Orphan* (1809), Chawton House Library

Longmans' attempt to situate itself in relation to other fiction is visible in the design of its title pages, which generally eschewed decorative embellishment in favour of simple block text of varying sizes. The minimal decoration that does appear tends to emphasize authorial information, which usually appears immediately below the title. Figures 14 and 15 show Longmans' title pages from the first decade of the nineteenth century; while there are considerable differences between the two, both emphasize Longmans' priorities through their lack of ornamentation and prominent display of the author's name below the title. Fittingly, *Artless Tales* by Mrs. Ives Hurry (1808) is sparse, placing its artlessness on display by relying entirely on block fonts of varying sizes broken up by two short horizontal lines sectioning the volume information off from the title and imprint. The combination of a large, plain font communicating only the

essential information (the title and author's name, but no titles of previous books or epigraph) surrounded by empty white space cultivates a seemingly truthful simplicity that implies the text and its author have no need for the artful excesses of the circulating library's branding techniques. In this case, the title of the work combines with the title page design to emphasize both the artlessness of the work and the bookseller's brand more generally. By contrast, Mrs. Costello's *The Soldier's Orphan: A Tale* (1809) represents a compromise between the minimalism of Longmans' design and the kinds of ornamentation available. While this title page does have some small decorative touches, most notably the gothic font for the location and a wavy line in the imprint, it uses most of that scant ornamentation to emphasize the authorial information, surrounding the author's name with double horizontal lines that draw attention to it even though the font is smaller than that used for the title. By drawing attention to the author, these title pages offer an alternative to the genre- and imprint-focused design of the Minerva Press, suggesting that the texts' merits lie in their particularities, not in their adherence to an established genre.

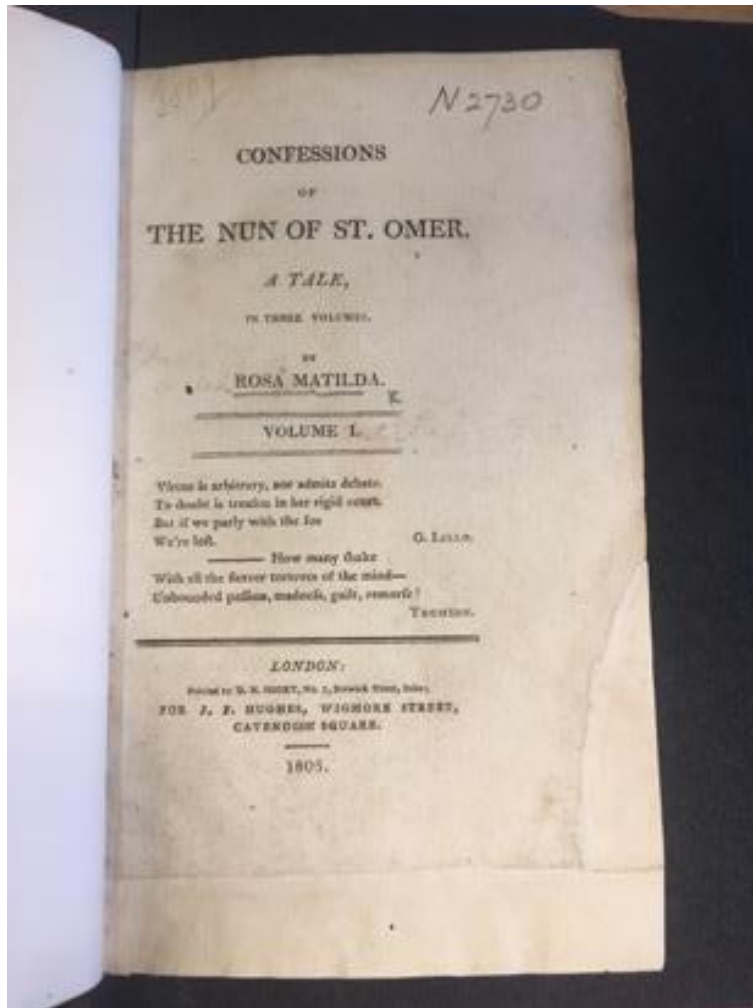
Along these lines, Mandal's account of the fiction Longmans published overlooks a number of remarkable titles that challenge the national–historical and moral–domestic rubric. Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), shown in Figure 16, is a particularly remarkable exception to Longmans' general strategy. A gothic romance in the vein of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, this work contains depictions of adultery, rape, and murder awkwardly folded into a didactic frame. It was also the only work of Dacre's to be published by Longmans; her earlier works, *Hours of Solitude* (1805) and *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805; Figure 17), were published by J. F. Hughes, a prolific publisher of standard gothic fiction, while her subsequent works were published by Cadell and Davies. Dacre's movement between publishers shows a steady climb through increasingly selective firms; however, despite the change in publishers, her title pages remain remarkably similar throughout her career. Busier than many of Longmans' title pages during this period, the title, subtitle, and authorial information of *Zofloya* are conveyed over several lines in block and italic fonts of varying size, with less space between lines than other title pages and lengthier epigraphs. The density of the information is visually overwhelming; Dacre's status as an exception to the modes of

fiction Longmans usually published plays out on the title page, where the design creates a visual link between *Zofloya* and *The Nun of St. Omer*, indicating another way in which Longmans' branding strategies were linked to authorship rather than their own imprint. At the same time, by visually differentiating Dacre's more salacious work from other Longmans titles, those titles are somewhat insulated from the association.



**Figure 16:** Title page for Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1806), Courtesy of the Hathi Trust

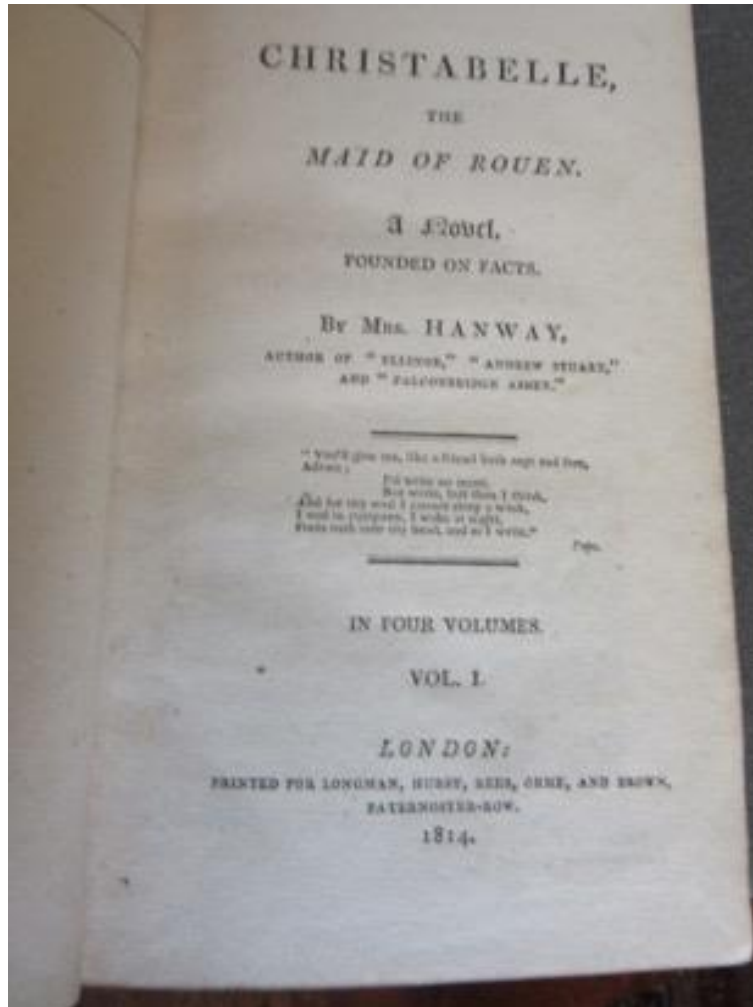




**Figure 17:** Title page for Charlotte Dacre's *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805), British Library

The 1810s saw a shift in title page design for Longmans and others, if not in general priorities. Although authorial information continued to be given pride of place immediately below the title, the small embellishments common to the Minerva Press's title pages began to appear on those of other concerns, including Longmans, which increasingly adopted the convention of using decorative gothic fonts for the subtitles and including slightly more ornate decorative bars to break up the text. Figures 18, 19, and 20 illustrate how Longmans' title pages from this decade incorporate more decorative detail and information: epigraphs of varying length frequently appear below the authorial information. Overall, the effect is that Longmans' title pages become increasingly similar to the template first adopted by the Minerva Press in the 1790s and used by it throughout the first two decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, the movement away from visual

simplicity and towards more decoration occurred alongside two concurrent shifts in the production of fiction: an overall decrease in the number of new titles being produced, and a generic shift, from gothic romance, which had remained popular throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century, to evangelical fiction and the historical fiction that Walter Scott popularized. In this changing—and more challenging—climate, Longmans had to adjust, and its title pages reveal clues about the nature of those changes.



**Figure 18:** Title page for Mary Ann Hanway's *Christabelle, the Maid of Rouen* (1814), Chawton House Library

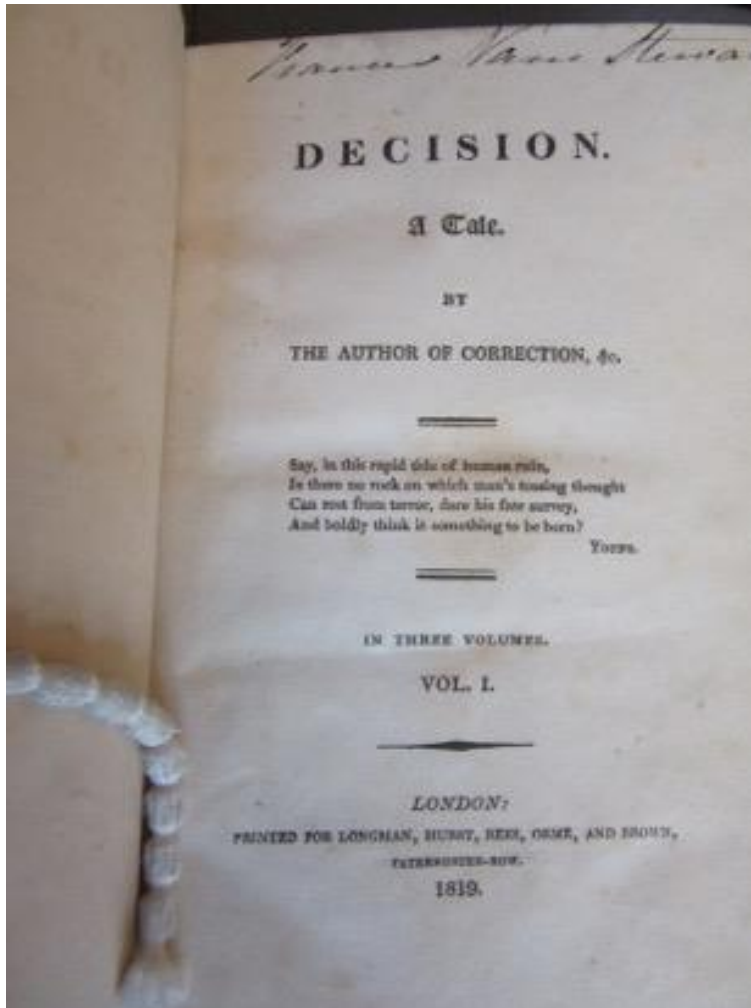
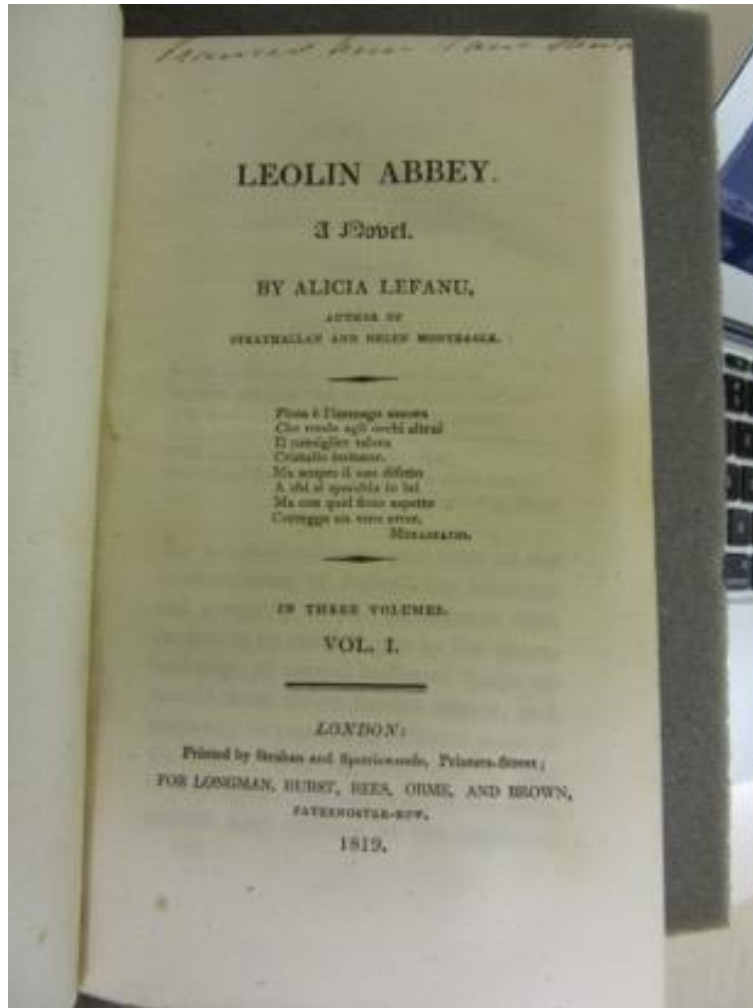


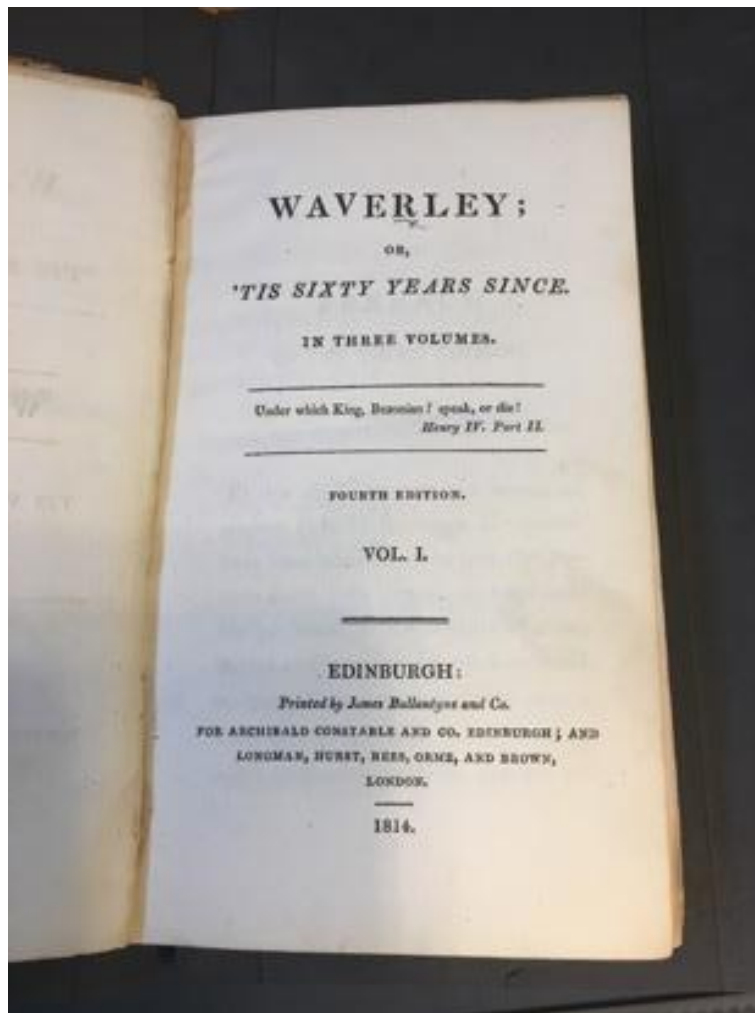
Figure 19: Title page for Anne Raikes Harding's *Decision* (1819), Chawton House Library



**Figure 20:** Title page for Alicia LeFanu's *Leolin Abbey* (1819), Chawton House Library

The generic shift in fiction that followed the publication of *Waverley* (1814; Figure 21) offers necessary context for understanding the shift in Longmans' publishing practices. Scott's runaway success was largely beneficial to Longmans, which was involved in publishing a number of his early novels, beginning with *Waverley*, in partnership with the Edinburgh firm Archibald Constable and Co. However, Scott's emergence also complicated the long-term commitment to female authors that had formed the staple of Longmans' lists in the previous decades. This complication can be seen in the title pages from this decade: while those of Scott's novels rely on the simple layout and design of Longmans' earlier novels, other titles were frequently slightly more decorated, mainly by the use of gothic lettering for a novel's genre designation. The effect is gendered: large block lettering indicates the active, masculine style of fiction that

Scott produced, and decorative fonts indicate a feminine brand of fiction, whether domestic or historical. Whereas before fiction was typically gendered feminine, regardless of who was actually writing or reading it, now, in Longmans' publications, a split had occurred, both in relation to authorship and perceived audience. Instead of using simple design to distinguish quality novels from the supposedly commercial and derivative works published by circulating libraries, simple design came to signify masculine over feminine.



**Figure 21:** Title page for the fourth edition of Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), British Library

That fiction distinguished by its feminine qualities was assigned the visual flourishes associated with the circulating library novel in earlier decades created a new hierarchy, using the visual techniques of an older one based on publisher and genre rather

than gender. However, this shift reveals retroactively the gendered implications of Longmans' strategy throughout the period: the desire to appeal to a less feminized audience than that of the circulating library publishers. Regardless of the gender of a particular author, the quality that Longmans sought to convey through the branding of their fiction avoided the feminizing features that branded circulating library fiction, supposedly written and consumed by women. Through this logic, "quality" becomes a rejection of overtly feminine characteristics, and, when the more masculine fiction of Walter Scott came onto the market, it provided a new benchmark for that less feminine quality. By assigning Scott's novels and their imitators the kind of minimalist title page design that had formerly been associated with Longmans in general and using more decorative title page design for novels that focused on more typically feminine concerns, Longmans created an internal hierarchy for their own texts that depended on imitating the publishers from which they had previously sought to distance themselves, meaning that female authors were explicitly feminized in a way that they had not been previously.

## **Robinsons, Radcliffe, and gothic prestige**

Emphasizing the particular title and author of a text was not the only way for a firm to differentiate itself from circulating library publishers. Specializing in a particular genre, rather than genre fiction in general, offered another alternative to the more corporate strategy of the Minerva Press. For example, Robinsons, a publishing house known more for political and travel writing than fiction, became closely linked to the Radcliffean gothic in the popular imagination after paying Ann Radcliffe £500 for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).<sup>22</sup> Radcliffe, whose novels were some of the most successful of the 1790s, had a dramatic effect on the literary marketplace: her romances spearheaded a vogue for the gothic that continued well into the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> However, while

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<sup>22</sup> Between 1790 and 1820, the official name of the Robinson firm changed several times as various family members died and retired: from G. G. J. and J. Robinson to G. G. and J. Robinson in 1794, to G. and J. Robinson in 1802, to George Robinson in 1806, to G. and S. Robinson in 1814, to, finally, Samuel Robinson in 1817. As with Longmans, I will simply refer to the firm as "Robinsons" throughout. A complete history of the firm can be found in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>23</sup> Radcliffe's first three works of fiction, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), were published by the circulating library publishers, Hookham and Carpenter. After the runaway success of *The Romance of the Forest*, she ascended to

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* (and Radcliffe's fiction generally) became established as legitimate, part of its legitimacy came from Radcliffe's movement from Hookham and Carpenter to Robinsons: JoEllen DeLucia describes it "as elevating Radcliffe's work above the novels and tales written by the poorly compensated and primarily female authors who worked with circulating library publishers, particularly Thomas Hookham and William Lane, his more famous counterpart" (289). In DeLucia's account, Radcliffe's elevation resulted not only in her fiction acquiring a higher value, both financially and culturally, but also in Radcliffe's affiliation with the radical political community that included writers like William Godwin and Helen Maria Williams being reinforced by her association with their publisher.

Although the imprint and publisher are important paratexts to consider when situating a text within its historical context, a sufficiently momentous text or author could also reflect back onto the firms associated with it. The effects of Radcliffe's relationship with Robinsons did not solely impact her career: the commercial and critical success of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also had implications for the way that Robinsons situated the fiction it published in subsequent years. While Robinsons continued to publish in its usual genres, including political and travel writings, a new one was added to its roster: romances that clearly signaled their debts to Radcliffe. Of the 39 fiction titles Robinsons published between 1800 and 1820, at least 13, or one third, invoke the Radcliffean gothic. In particular, the firm's decade-long relationship with the now largely forgotten novelist Catherine Cuthbertson, whose titles invoke the landscapes of the Radcliffean mode, testifies to the impact that Radcliffe had on Robinsons publishing practices and the potential for success attached to those practices.

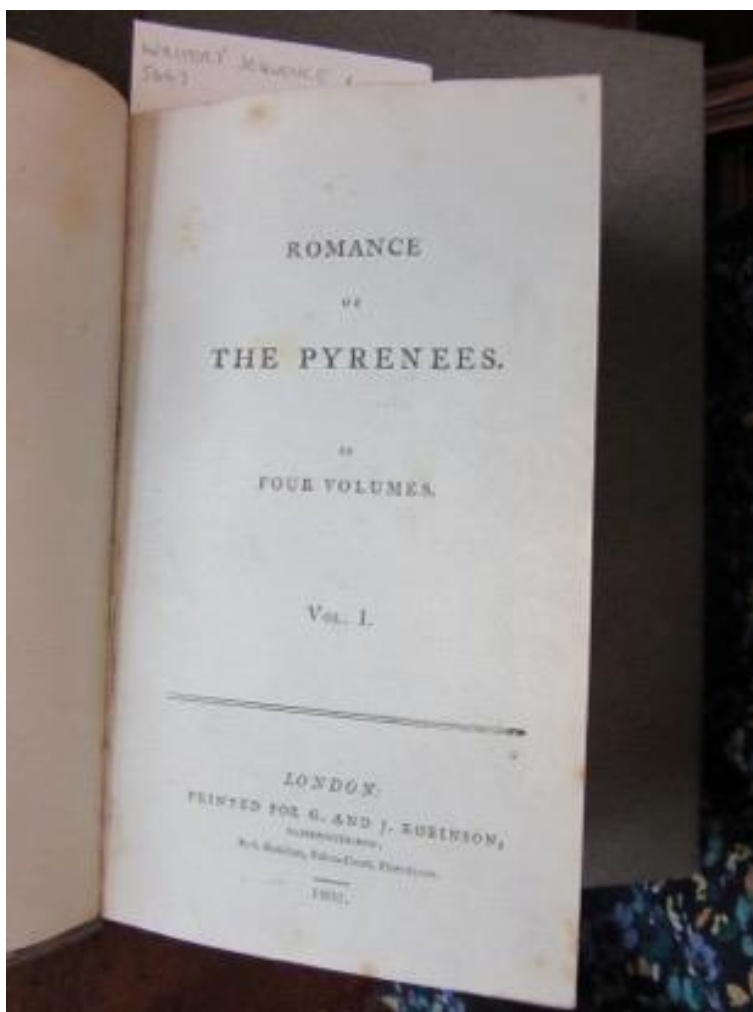
Radcliffe's influence is apparent in the title of Cuthbertson's first novel, *The Romance of the Pyrenees* (1803), with its evocation of the landscape described in detail in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. These resonances are muted but still present in the titles of

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Robinsons with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794. However, her association with Robinsons was relatively brief, and she only published one more work with the firm: the travel narrative, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the western frontier of Germany* (1795). *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), the last of her works to be published during her lifetime, was handled by Cadell and Davies, the publisher associated with other major novelists during this decade, including Charlotte Smith and Frances Burney.

Cuthbertson's next two novels, *Santo Sebastiano* (1806) and *The Forest of Montalbano* (1810), where Italianate names and locations are invoked, indicating how Robinsons sought to capitalize on its connection to Radcliffe's most iconic novel. Cuthbertson's strategy that seems to have succeeded, considering that *Romance of the Pyrenées* went into its fourth edition within ten years, and that *Santo Sebastiano* went into four editions by 1820 during a period when fiction rarely went beyond a first edition and when Robinsons in particular was scaling back its production of new fiction. The commercial success of Cuthbertson's novels depends on a readership familiar with both Radcliffe's fiction and Radcliffe's publishers: although certainly as derivative as anything published by the Minerva Press, their imprints—which implied that they were printed for the publisher of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*—acted as a guarantee of quality not to be found in the productions of circulating library publishers. Therefore, even though Cuthbertson's fiction clearly echoed Radcliffe's, Robinsons' imprint granted the text the authenticity that meant it could resist the “derivative” label applied to similar novels printed for less prestigious publishers.

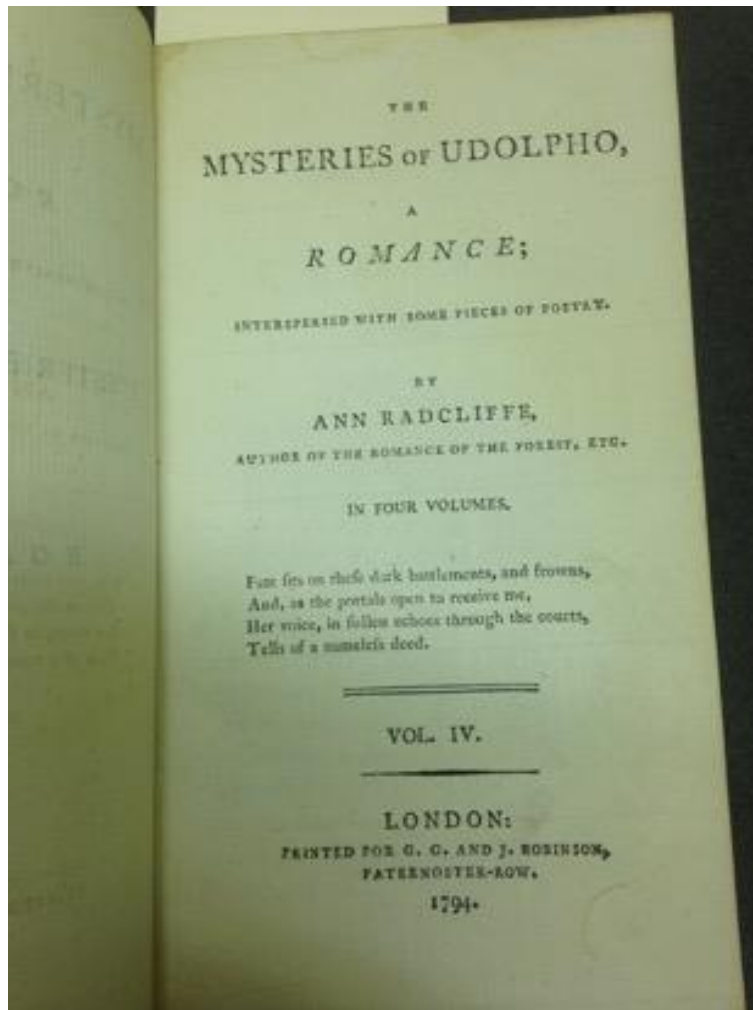




**Figure 22:** Title Page of the first edition of Catherine Cuthbertson's *Romance of the Pyrenées* (1803), Chawton House Library

The first edition of *Romance of the Pyrenées*'s title page (Figure 22) communicates its indebtedness to the Radcliffean gothic primarily through the title, which appears in large block font, followed only by the volume information and the imprint. However, whereas a Minerva Press title page might mimic the title page of the work it was derived from, as was the case with Medora Gordon Byron's *Celia in Search of a Husband*, the title page of *Romance of the Pyrenées* did not rely on visual features to evoke *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Fig. 23). The title page of Radcliffe's work, while plain, includes her name and emphasizes her identity as a poet by including the subtitle "Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry" and an epigraph composed by Radcliffe; *Romance of the Pyrenées* relies on the title and imprint almost exclusively. The simplicity of the design of *Romance of the Pyrenées* is more striking, even, than that of Longmans

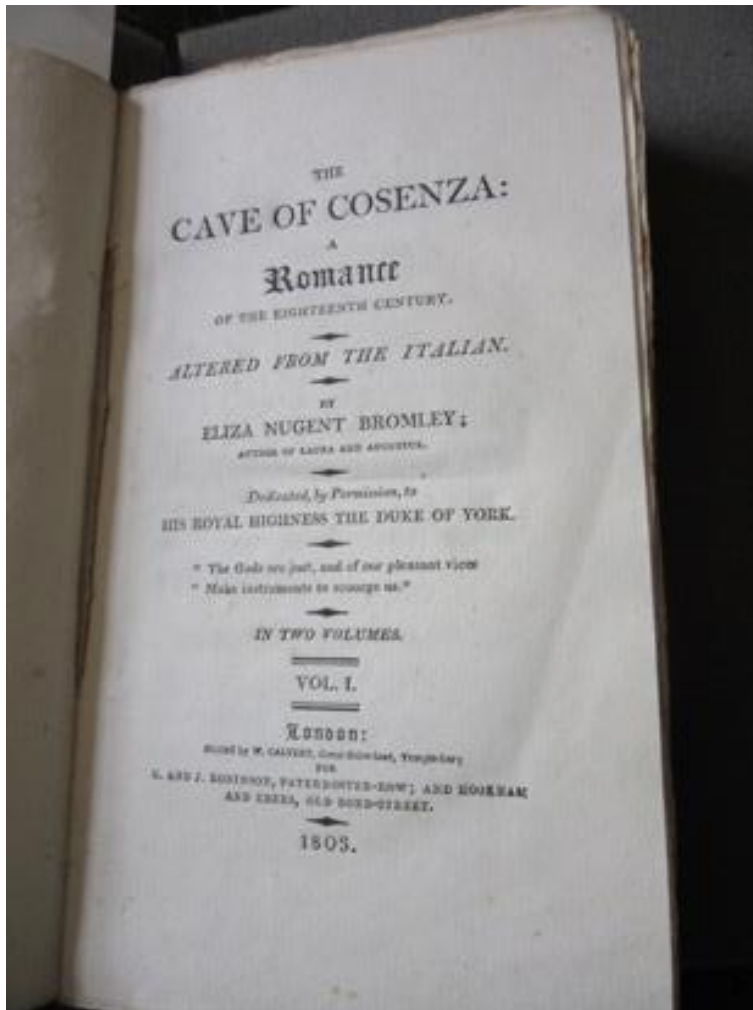
during the same decade: no authorial information whatsoever is included. Instead, varying font sizes, the use of italics for the location of printing, and a double rule border sectioning the imprint off from the title are the only visual cues. In this case, font size is of particular importance: the first line reads “Romance” in medium-sized block lettering, and the third reads “The Pyrenees” in large block lettering, placing emphasis on first the genre and then the location being invoked. For readers familiar with Radcliffe, the allusion to the mountain range that is the subject of lengthy descriptive passages throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho* will be the most eye-catching feature, regardless of any other design elements that the title page incorporates. The clearly displayed title draws a potential reader’s attention to the text through its allusion to Radcliffe, after which point the more discerning reader could take note of the firm named in the imprint, strengthening the association despite the absence of visual similarities.



**Figure 23:** Title page of the first edition of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Chawton House Library

The extreme simplicity of the title page design for *Romance of the Pyrenées* forms a striking contrast with another Robinsons title from 1803 that also invokes the gothic, Eliza Nugent Bromley's *Cave of Cosenza: A Romance of the Eighteenth Century* (Fig. 24). This title was co-published with a new iteration of Radcliffe's former circulating library publisher, Hookham and Ebers, and it contains a dizzying array of fonts and information, including title, genre, author, dedication, and epigraph. On this title page, the genre information, "Romance," appears in black letter font the same size as the title, which is printed in a roman font; by giving these two elements equal weight, the title page suggests that both will be of equal interest to potential readers. The title page information is otherwise provided in much smaller fonts, some of which can be deciphered from a distance, but many of which would require closer scrutiny to become

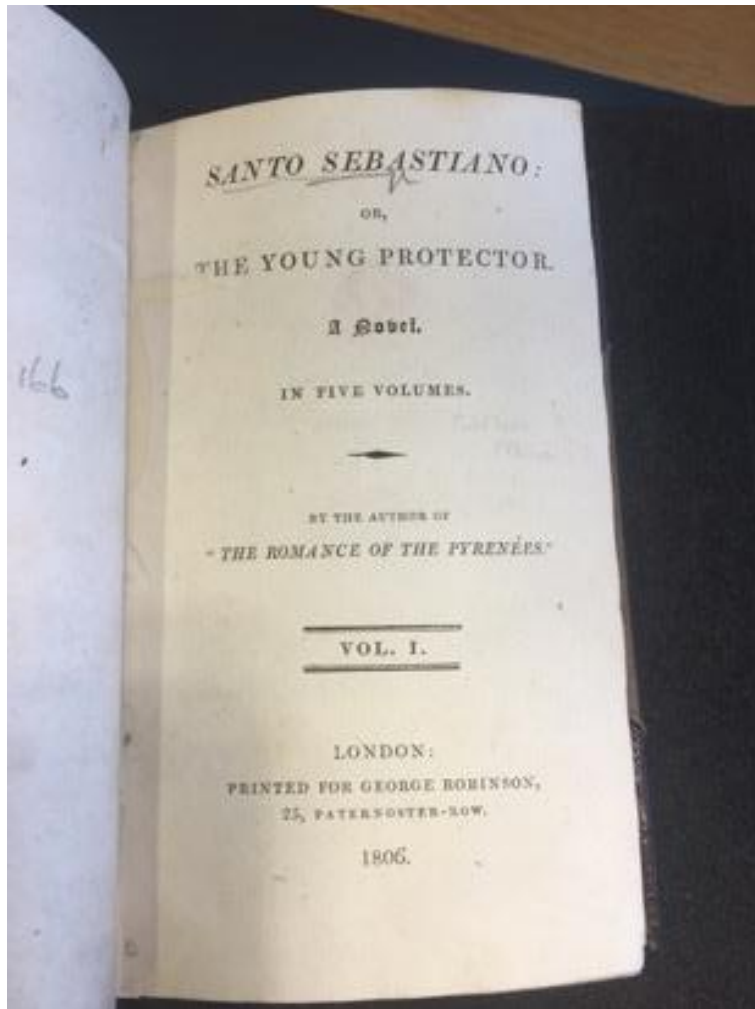
visible. Lines such as, “Altered from the Italian,” “Eliza Nugent Bromley,” and “His Royal Highness the Duke of York” are all large enough to be visible, while the small font used for the epigraph and to indicate that the Duke of York is the work’s dedicatee is less likely to draw the viewer’s eye immediately. Although on first glance, the amount of information contained on *The Cave of Cosenza*’s title page is comparatively overwhelming, the interplay of font sizes and styles, broken up by swelled rules, means that different amounts of information will be conveyed to readers at different stages of perusal. The casual observer may only note the title and genre, but the reader whose attention has been captured by those features may be drawn in further by familiarity with the author’s previous novel or the evocative quote from King Lear that hints at divine retribution.



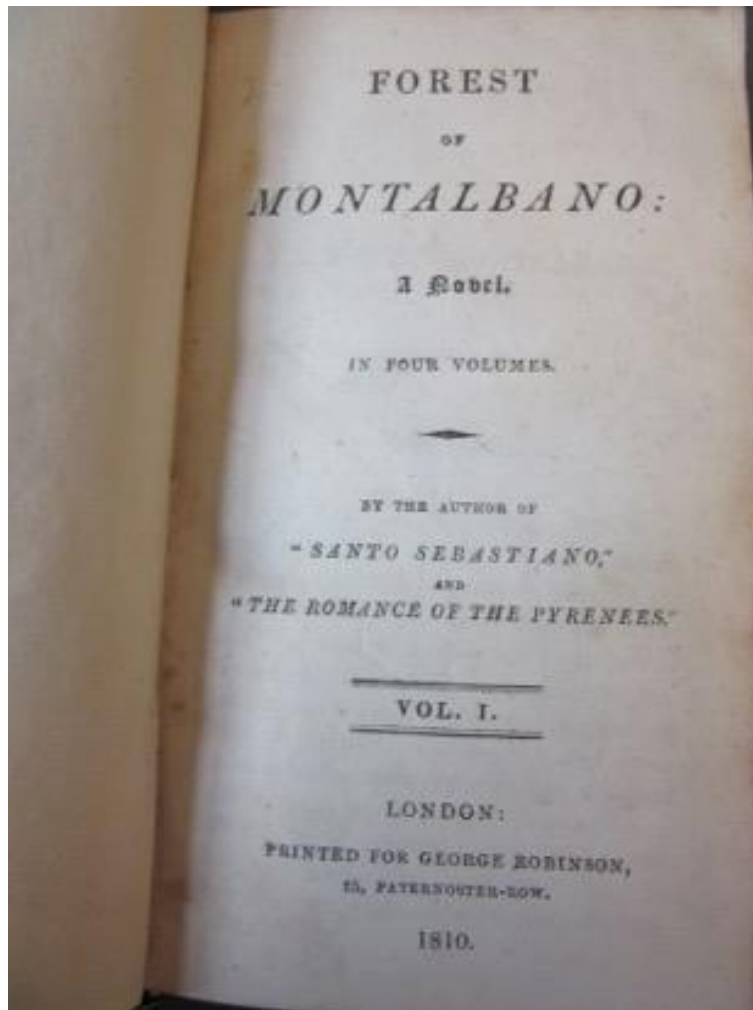
**Figure 24:** Title page of Eliza Nugent Bromley's *The Cave of Cosenza* (1803), Chawton House Library

The strikingly different design strategies used for two title pages invoking the same genre that were printed in the same year speaks to the general lack of consistency Robinsons displayed in publishing fiction. Even though the firm was the fifth-most prolific publisher of fiction during the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was only involved in publishing 29 new titles—and only 23 as the single publisher—between 1800 and 1809, slightly more than half the number of Longmans and less than a sixth the number of the Minerva Press. From year to year, the number of fiction titles could vary from two to six, and none at all were published in 1807. After 1809, Robinsons only published one or two new titles a year until 1815, with the exception of 1811 and 1814, when no new titles were published, and 1813, when five new titles were published, two of which in partnership with other firms. After 1815, Robinsons abandoned publishing

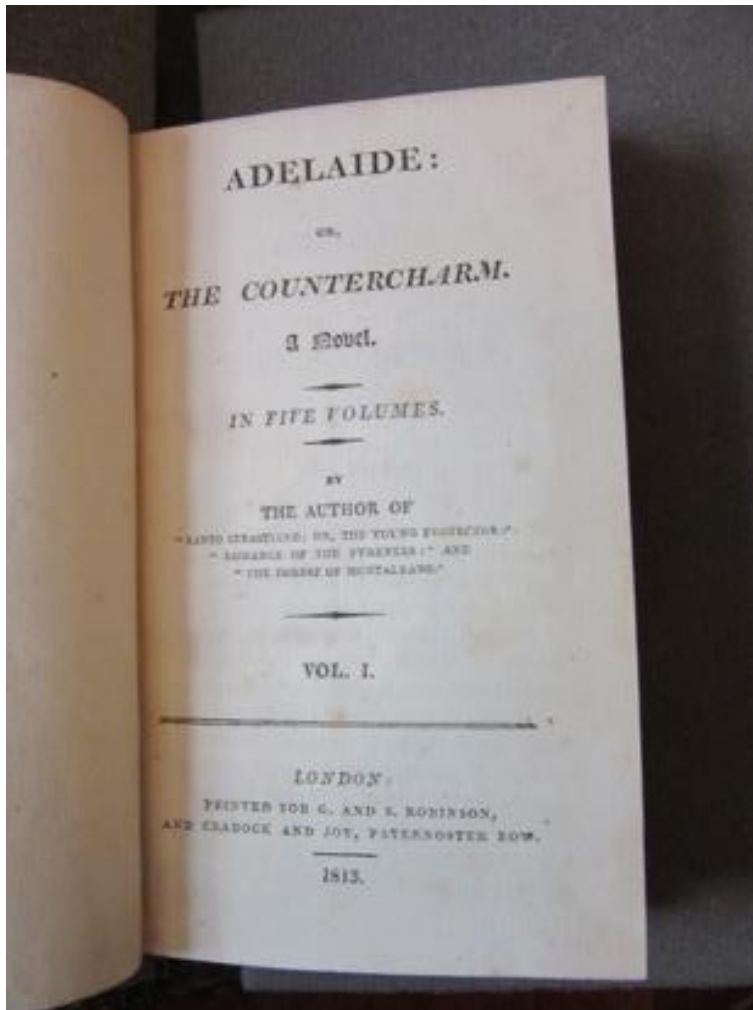
new fiction, with the exception of two titles in 1821. Unlike Longmans and the Minerva Press, which had consistently deployed strategies around the publication of new fiction, Robinsons relied on a targeted strategy that drew on the success of a leading author, and when that strategy was no longer effective it abandoned the genre rather than trying to reinvigorate it.



**Figure 25:** Title page for Catherine Cuthbertson's *Santo Sebastiano; or, the Young Protector* (1806), British Library



**Figure 26:** Title Page of Catherine Cuthbertson's *Forest of Montalbano* (1810), Chawton House Library

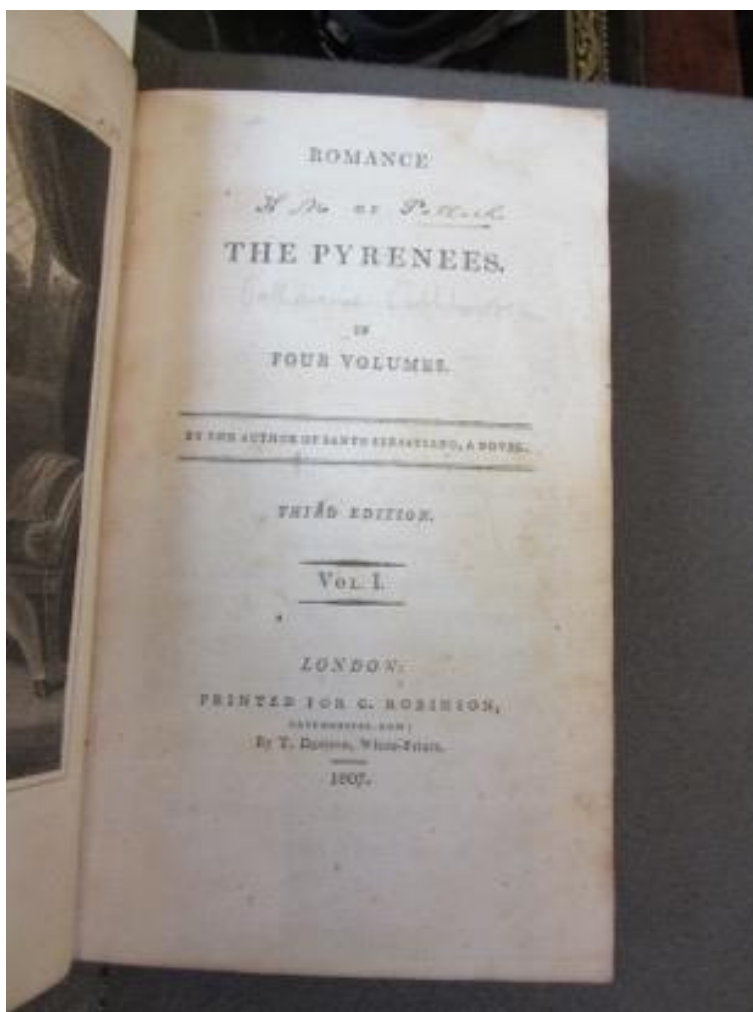


**Figure 27:** Title page of Catherine Cuthbertson's *Adelaide; or, The Countercharm* (1813), Chawton House Library

While the differences between the title pages of *Romance of the Pyrenees* and *The Cave of Cosenza* could, in part, be due to the shares another firm held in the latter's publication, even titles with the same author could have significant differences. Cuthbertson's three subsequent titles published with Robinsons had title pages that were less starkly plain, yet consistent among themselves. The title pages of *Santo Sebastiano* (Fig. 25), *The Forest of Montalbano* (Fig. 26), and *Adelaide: or, the Countercharm* (Fig. 27) are strikingly similar in layout, font, and decoration; *Santo Sebastiano* and *The Forest of Montalbano* have almost identical layouts that are suggestive of the layouts typical of the Minerva Press, with one word of the font in roman and one word in italic fonts, the gothic font for the genre designation, "A Novel," the swelled rule separating title from author information, and the short double rules before and after the volume number.



Although *Adelaide*'s title page has some slight differences, in that it uses three swelled rules instead of one and the imprint is separated from the rest of the title page by a double rule that spans the width of the page, this attempt to create a visually unified look for Cuthbertson's novels followed the success of *Romance of the Pyrenees*, suggesting an attempt to link the works of a successful author to one another. Curiously, though, subsequent editions of *Romance of the Pyrenees* did not adopt this uniform look; instead, the third edition published in 1807 (Fig. 28) maintains the roman font of the first edition, but with the added authorial information of "By the author of *Santo Sebastiano*" in small block roman font surrounded by double rules above and below and the volume number surrounded by two swelled rules. The imprint, too, which includes the printer information and a single rule above the date, is distinct. As a result, subsequent editions of *Romance of the Pyrenees* remain distinct from Cuthbertson's subsequent novels, suggesting that it was, in some way, an exception within Cuthbertson's oeuvre.



**Figure 28:** Title page of the third edition of Cuthbertson's *Romance of the Pyrenées* (1807), Chawton House Library

The fact that *Romance of the Pyrenees* went into five editions in total, the last of which was a joint issue by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, and A. K. Newman and Co. (the successor to the Minerva Press) in 1822, is perhaps reason enough for it to stand out. It is also a testament to how effective Robinsons strategy of maintaining an association with a famous author proved to be. However, the success of this strategy had its limits. Following *Romance of the Pyrenees* and *Santo Sebastiano*, Cuthbertson's subsequent works of fiction, beginning with *The Forest of Montalbano*, all failed to move beyond a first edition, which spelled the end of Cuthbertson's thus-far exclusive relationship with Robinsons: her fourth novel, *Adelaide; or, the Counter-Charms* was published jointly with Cradock and Joy, who would publish her fifth novel, *Rosabella; or, A Mother's Marriage* (1817). Cuthbertson's more subdued success after 1810 is part of a general trend: the

number of new novels published overall in the 1810s was substantially lower than in the two decades previous, and gothic romance had gone out of vogue. Accordingly, Cuthbertson's titles no longer openly referenced the Radcliffean gothic, instead focusing on a single heroine. During this decade when Robinsons ceased to publish new fiction almost entirely, two of its nine titles were Cuthbertson's. Whether Robinsons' new direction was due most immediately to the shifting partners in the firm, the shifting trends of the marketplace, or some combination of factors, it signals the problems that a firm too much associated with one author or genre of fiction faced in a dynamic textual economy when that genre's vogue had passed.

Robinsons' title pages were directed at a specific kind of reader who not only wanted a particular genre—in this case, a gothic romance—but was also attentive to those elements that distinguished some gothic romance from others, namely the atmospheric elements of Radcliffe's fiction tied to landscape and travel writing. This audience was not only able to identify the difference in purported quality of both the content of the book and its material components between a regular bookseller and a circulating library publisher, but to know which firms had published noteworthy fiction, and therefore would recognize Robinsons' association with Radcliffe. Doubtless, many of the readers who picked up Cuthbertson's novels were drawn to them because of their associations with the genre or the title alone, but the additional appeal of a derivative work selected by Radcliffe's publisher surely drew in more discerning readers. At the same time, the visibility of the relationship between publisher and allusive title had a time stamp. Although knowledgeable readers might have been reasonably familiar with Radcliffe's publishing history in 1803, only eight years after *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was first printed, by the time of *The Forest of Montalbano*'s publication in 1810, Radcliffe had not published a new title with Robinsons in fifteen years, or a new work at all in thirteen. Asking readers to recall an increasingly dated reference was no longer viable.

## **Henry Colburn's Ostentation Silence**

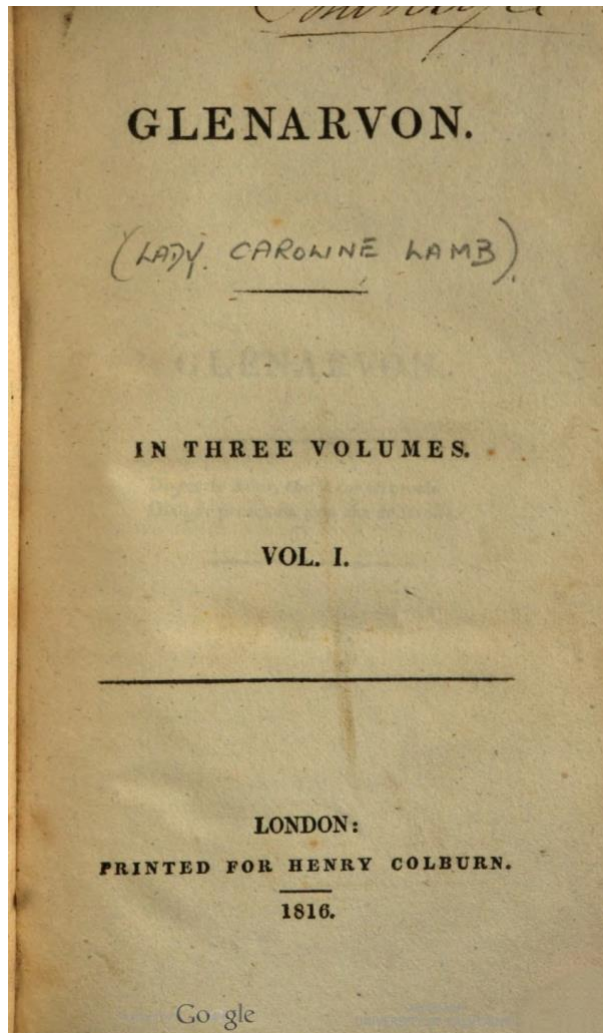
As Robinsons sharp decline in new titles suggests, coping with the shifts in the literary marketplace for fiction could prove difficult for publishers without an established

and consistent strategy. While the Minerva Press, which changed its name to A. K. Newman and Co. around 1818, and Longmans were already well established and able to weather the more challenging market of the 1810s, the rise to prominence of Henry Colburn as a publisher during this decade represents a triumph of new marketing strategies. Known for an association with scandal and unscrupulous business practices, including “aggressively buying up literary journals for the expressed purpose of guaranteeing positive reviews of his books” (Mason 125), Colburn represented a new style of publisher that revolutionized the industry through strategic use of advertising. Colburn, who was rumoured to be the illegitimate son of the Duke of York, began his career as an independent publisher in 1806 at the “British and Foreign Library, 50 Conduit Street and New Bond Street.”<sup>24</sup> Many of the early works that he published were translations from German and French, including works by Madame de Genlis, Germaine de Staël, and Sophie Cottin, but during the 1810s he turned to fiction more generally, eventually specialising in a genre known as the “silver fork novel.” Indeed, many of his business choices aimed to emphasise his rumoured connections to high life, including his long association with the best-selling author Lady Morgan, whom John Sutherland describes as, “a glamorous, somewhat notorious, titled woman, with Liberal politics, who could turn out fashionable fiction, memoirs and books of travel as fast as he could publish them” (67). Colburn’s preference for aristocratic authors was supplemented by the speculation around his own origins and the gossip generated by his extravagant business practices, which included offering his authors outrageous sums that frequently placed him in debt.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For a full history of Henry Colburn’s life and involvement in the book trade, see John Sutherland, “Henry Colburn: Publisher,” *Publishing History* 19 (1986): 59–84. In this article, Sutherland makes a case for reconsidering Colburn’s notorious career in light of his contributions to publicity strategies, rather than chastising him for unscrupulous business practices, as previous literary historians including Michael Sadleir and Matthew W. Rosa have done.

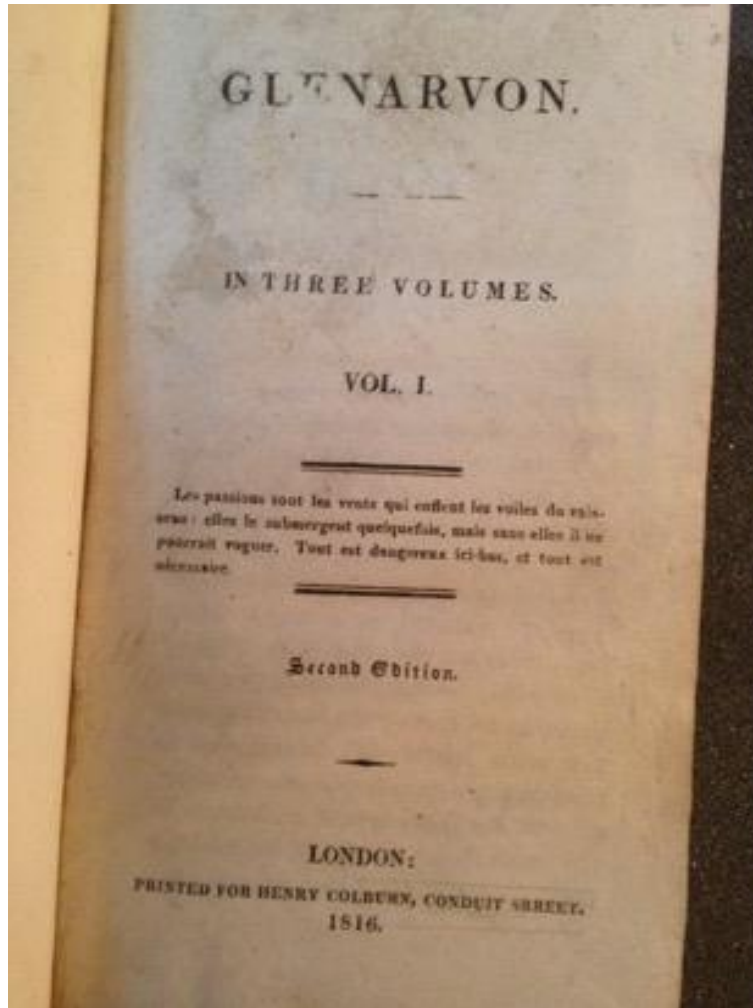
<sup>25</sup> According to Sutherland, Colburn paid Lady Morgan £550 for *O’Donnel* (1814), £1,000 for *France* (1817), £1,200 for *Florence McCarthy* (1818), and £2,000 for *Italy* (1821) (67). Similarly, He paid Theodore Edward Hook £600 for the three-volume novel *Sayings and Doings* (1824), a move that Sutherland speculates was politically motivated rather than based on Colburn’s belief in the novel’s ability to sell.



**Figure 29:** Title page of the first edition of Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), Courtesy of the Hathi Trust

In turning to Colburn, then, the final section of this chapter briefly considers how the simplicity of design common to title pages in the early nineteenth century could also be used to create paratextual silences that depended on alternate channels of communication to be filled, such as gossip or one of the many periodicals that Colburn relied on to puff his publications. As Sutherland discusses, Colburn's strategy relied on mystery as much as disclosure: "The name of an author, or the amount paid, might be publicized (or ostentatiously withheld, if the author were—or could be suspected to be—noble, notorious or a high official)" (62). This strategy informed his publication of Lady Caroline Lamb's *roman à clef*, *Glenarvon* (1816), which offered readers a tantalizing, fictionalized, and intimate representation of her affair with Lord Byron, one of the most

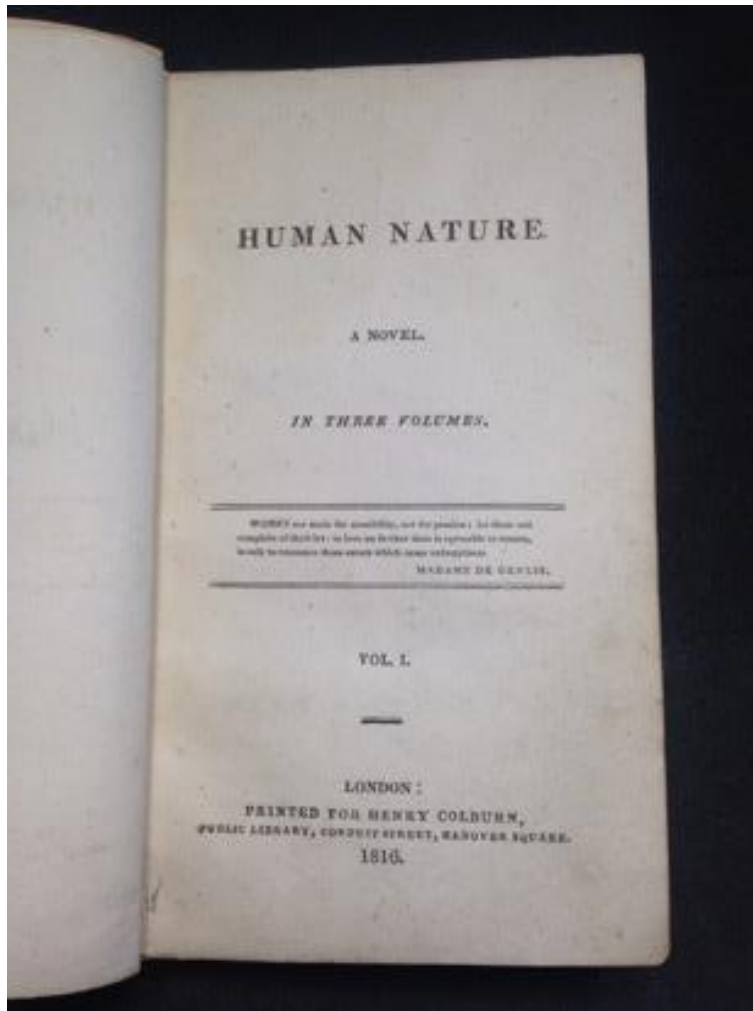
notable literary celebrities of the age. The first edition of *Glenarvon*'s title page (Fig. 29) enacts this refusal to disclose, including nothing more than title, volume information and imprint, with two single rules separating title from volume information and volume information from imprint. Yet despite the absence of information, as Peter Graham explains, "its earliest readers purchased, perused, and condemned it not for fictions but for supposed truths—truths about Whig society, about the author and her husband, most especially about Byron" (Graham 54). Instead of revealing the novel's real-life referents on the cover of the text itself, Colburn's strategy assumes that his audience is keyed into the gossip that circulated through word of mouth and manuscript, but also in various print media, including the society columns of newspapers and Byron's own poetry. Once the secret of the work had become common knowledge, the need to withhold information was less pressing; the title page to the second edition does not fully replicate the stark silence of the first, instead including an unattributed French epigraph describing the consequences of passion (Fig. 30).



**Figure 30:** Title page of the second edition of Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), British Library

Instead of undermining Colburn's strategy, however, the unreliability of gossip as a means of circulating information played a central role in it. Just as not all gossip reached all readers, not all of Colburn's titles had clearly established sources; accordingly, the interplay of knowing and not knowing and maybe not knowing was vital to his marketing strategy. Colburn's use of the gossip that surrounded celebrity figures such as Lord Byron to generate interest in his publications meant that even when there was no real-life equivalent of a character in a given novel, these silences tantalize readers with a hidden truth waiting to be decoded. Figures 31 and 32 show similarly sparse title pages from 1816, taken from novels that are not, as far as we know, about Byron, and which are only visually distinguished from *Glenarvon* in minor ways: for *Human Nature*, a genre indication and epigraph, with double rules instead of single; for *Adolphe*, an

author attribution cunningly disguised as an editorship. The title page of Lamb's later novel, *Graham Hamilton* (Figure 33) contains a similar absence of information, an unusual decision given the continued public interest in Byron and the commercial success of her previous work. But limiting the amount of information made explicit on the title pages of fictionalized accounts of real people meant that *all* of the works Colburn published were open to speculation about their source materials, as long as the title pages did not indicate otherwise.



**Figure 31:** Title page of Cordelia Cordova's *Human Nature* (1816), British Library



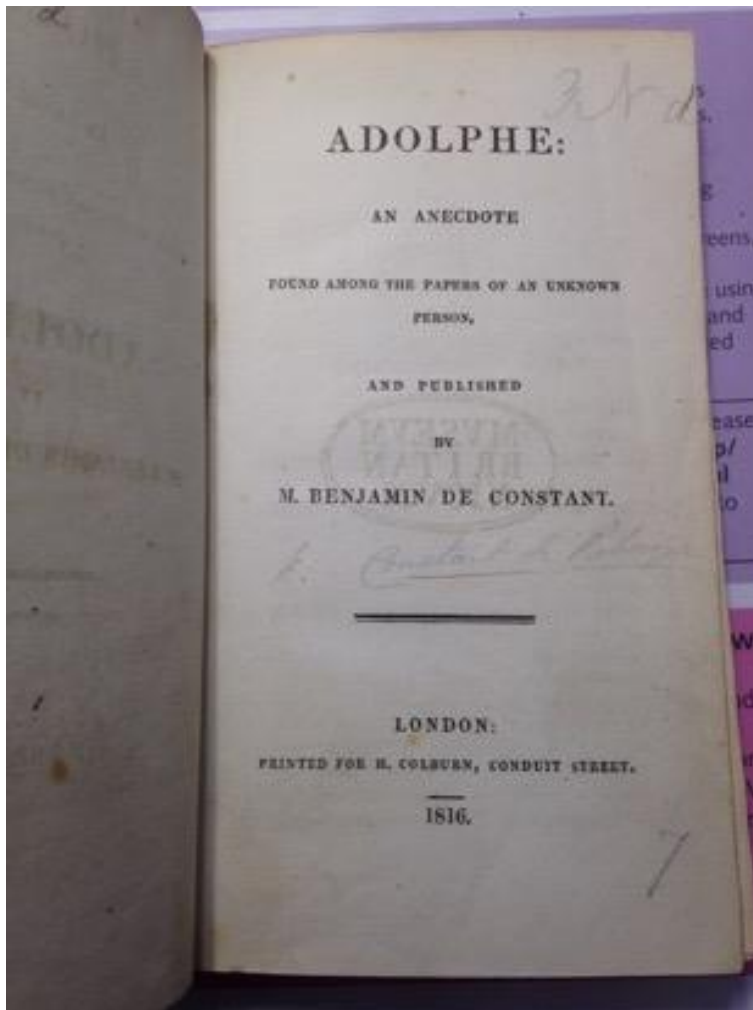
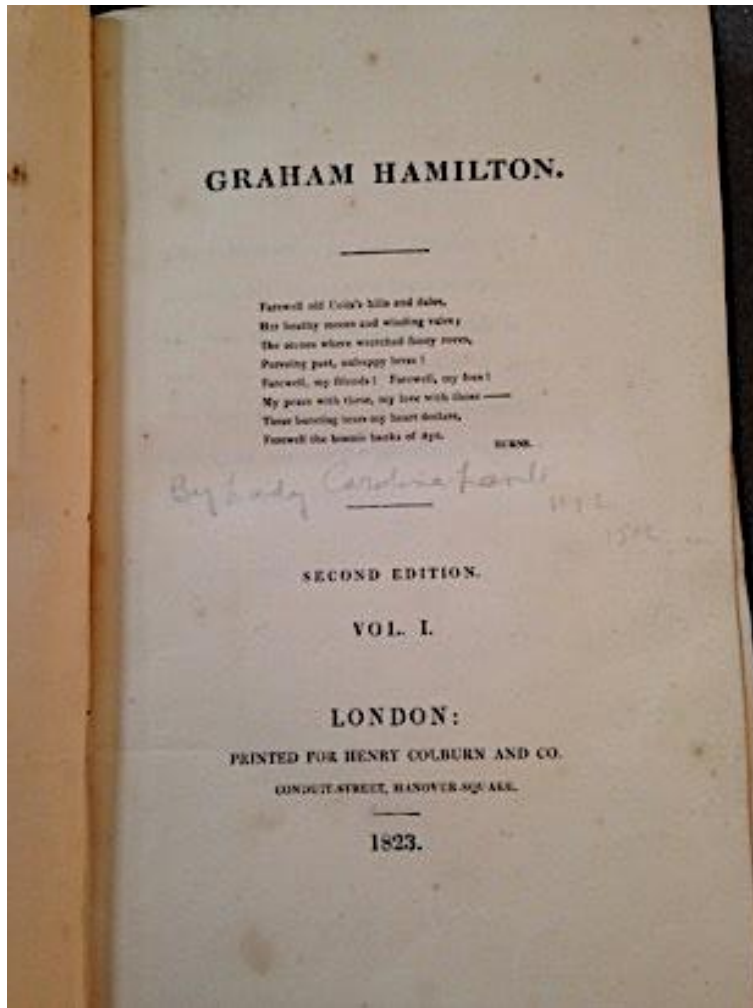


Figure 32: Title page of Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* (1816), British Library



**Figure 33:** Title page of Lady Caroline Lamb's *Graham Hamilton* (1823), British Library

The possibility of discovering secret truths in Colburn's novels fuelled the generic shift that he led towards the silver fork novel, a genre which, in the words of Edward Copeland, provides "a fictional *back story* for all those bits in the newspapers that everybody was reading about at the breakfast table or the coffee house: the stock market, bankruptcies, the occasional 'matrimonial fracas' in high life, political speeches and, not least, classified advertisements, estate sales and auctions" (*The Silver Fork Novel* 16). However, the possibility that those backstories were not necessarily fictional offers an additional layer of excitement for readers of the silver fork novel, especially given that *Glenarvon* was far from the only *roman á clef*, or the only *roman á clef* about Byron, or

even the only *roman á clef* about Byron published by Henry Colburn, in circulation.<sup>26</sup> In this context, then, what used to indicate literary value—visual simplicity—takes on new connotations, suggesting the possibility of aristocratic gossip and scandals in high life. Colburn’s strategy points towards a cultural shift into a mode of publishing in which advertising was increasingly relegated to print sources adjacent to but not contained within the book itself; in order to read a text and its paratexts correctly, readers were increasingly expected to look to outside sources, to be conversant in the different strata of print media, and to be able to read between the lines.

## Conclusion

Even before the advent of Colburn’s network of publicity, close examinations of title pages reveal that readers were expected to draw on detailed epitextual knowledge of literary trends, including popular texts, well-known authors, and the cultural associations of different publishers and booksellers, in order to choose their reading matter. While the Minerva Press clearly represented their contents as the kinds of emulative texts that reviewers condemned but readers nevertheless sought out, others sought out ways to define themselves against such texts through the information and design of their title pages as much as through the contents of their books. Carefully coded title pages offered readers the opportunity to class themselves, then, or to identify themselves as particular kinds of readers with tastes that were linked to visual cues.

In an expanding literary marketplace where it was increasingly difficult to keep informed about all new books being published, the ability to make quick and accurate judgements about the merits of a text was a valuable skill. In order to consider the implications that the visual stratification that occurred on title pages had for narrative, the next chapter will turn to Maria Edgeworth, whose educational fiction directly addresses

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<sup>26</sup> See Lauren McCoy, “Literary Gossip: Caroline Lamb’s *Glenarvon* and the *roman á clef*” in *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 27.1 (2014): 127–150. In addition to *Glenarvon*, she lists Eaton Stannard Barrett’s *Six Weeks at Long’s* (1817), the anonymous *Three Weeks at Fladon’s* (1817), Thomas Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), John Harman Bedford’s *Wanderings of Childe Harold* (1825), Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826) and *Lodore* (1835), and Benjamin Disraeli’s *Venetia, or the Poet’s Daughter* (1837). Shelley’s *The Last Man* was also published by Colburn, and *Lodore* by Colburn’s former business partner, Richard Bentley.

the importance of interpreting peritextual information in evaluating a text. In particular, her quixote tales deal with the dangers of failing to read correctly and the ways in which proper attention to paratextual information is an essential element of developing effective reading practices. As we shall see, Edgeworth's attention to the paratextual matter of her own books, including genre designations, prefaces, and even pagination, is integral to how her quixote tales teach her readers to engage with texts.

## Chapter 2.

### Maria Edgeworth's Paratextual Pedagogy

#### Introduction

Maria Edgeworth first entered print in 1795, with *Letters for Literary Ladies*. The single-volume work combined a mélange of genres—instructional letters, epistolary fiction, and satirical essays—to intervene in contemporary debates about female education. In 1799 a second edition was published, which opened with an “Advertisement” explaining both the oddities of the first and Edgeworth’s decision to retain some of those oddities in the second, despite the fact that the text had been, as the title page announces, “corrected”:

The two first Letters upon Female Literature, the Letters to Julia, and the Art of Self-Justification were printed and paged separately: the publisher afterwards thought proper to join them in one volume under the title of “Letters for Literary Ladies;” which is applicable only to the two first letters.—The author, however, has thought it better to continue the former name, than to hazard the imputation of publishing an old work under a new title. (iii–iv)

The corrections made to the second edition, including the new prefatory information, are a direct response to contemporary reviewers’ unfavourable response to the argument for what she terms “the female right to literature” (iv). The second edition’s “Advertisement” locates the source of these misreadings in the paratextual irregularities of the first, particularly the publisher’s decision to combine three short works that had been “printed and paged separately” into a single volume under a potentially misleading title. By identifying the first edition’s title and pagination as problematic to the point of destabilizing meaning, Edgeworth displays an awareness of the role that the arrangement of a text within a volume plays in producing meaning, especially how readers’ familiarity with the usual structure of the book informs how they interpret texts.

Although one of these changes, that which made the pagination continuous, between the first and second editions of *Letters for Literary Ladies* may seem minor, it

gestures towards Edgeworth's desire to manage how readers engaged with her texts and, more generally, her interest in how readers read, an issue with which the contents of the book engage explicitly. In it, Edgeworth develops an argument for educational reform that hinges on teaching women how to think critically, about both their reading material and the world. She develops this argument over the course of a single volume divided into three parts: first, in an exchange between men on the subject of female education, "Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend, upon the Birth of a Daughter: With the Answer"; then in "Letters of Julia and Caroline," which traces the quixotic Julia's downward trajectory as the result of her disordered reading practices; and finally, in the "Essay on the Noble Art of Self-Justification," a satirical tract that purports to instruct women how to win arguments through the strategic deployment of logical fallacies. The letters between the two gentlemen lay out the problem of female education (can women benefit from rational education?) while "Letters of Julia and Caroline" and the "Essay" illustrate two possible consequences of failing to educate women rationally (they will either fall victim to sentimental excess or become petty tyrants, unable to engage in rational debate). This tripartite structure requires its readers to perform the comparatively complex interpretive work of parataxis by considering the text of each work in relation to the others; in order to interpret "Letters of Julia and Caroline" and "Essay on the Noble Art of Self-Justification" correctly, they must be read within the context of the argument of "Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend," which, in turn, will be modified by the two subsequent texts. As a result, each text functions as a vital paratext for the others, stabilizing meaning by allowing all three to culminate in a coherent argument.

Accordingly, although Edgeworth states that she opted to keep the title, the altered pagination clarifies the relationship of the three works to each other: where the absence of any explicit guidance in the first edition meant that the three texts could just as easily be read independently as a sort of *Sammelband* assembled by the bookseller, the continuous pagination of the second indicates a sequential relationship. The paratextual elements of the volume's first edition thus are in tension with each other: the arrangement of the texts in the volume invites a chronological reading practice, while the individually paginated works more readily imply that each can be read in isolation. Edgeworth's first appearance in print is thus a lesson in the importance of providing both explicit and

implicit guidance to readers through paratextual information, including seemingly inconsequential features like pagination. By framing most of her subsequent works with prefaces, sometimes composed by her and sometimes by her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, she provided that guidance in order to correct for the loss of authorial control and potential interpretive chaos provoked by publicly disseminating her works in print.

Yet the relationship between Edgeworth's texts and their paratexts goes beyond her desire to control interpretation; she was also concerned with reading, in general, and the role that interpreting paratextual information played in evaluating texts. This concern with how paratextual information frames texts led her to use the paratextual possibilities of her own texts, including prefaces and advertisements, to guide her readers' interpretations. In addition, she brought the paratextual elements into her didactic fiction where she represents fictional readers learning how to interpret them. As the previous chapter highlighted, publishers at the turn of the nineteenth century relied on an implicit and complex set of signs to position texts within the literary marketplace, signalling genre, literary quality, and engagement with current events through the visual design of title pages; in turning to Maria Edgeworth, this chapter engages with an author aware of the necessity of taking the paratextual, including material and contextual, features of a text into account when evaluating its meaning. In order to account fully for Edgeworth's engagement with genre, Genette's distinction between peritext and epitext is particularly useful: as we shall see, the explicit, peritextual genre distinction on the title page or in the prefatory material does not always align easily with her readers' more abstract, epitextual knowledge of genre, despite her attempts to use the genre designation to guide reading practices.

Edgeworth's use of genre offers rich possibilities for understanding how the relationship between peritext and epitext determines reading. In the works this chapter considers, genre operates on two levels: a peritextual, or explicit, genre, which is clearly identified on the title page or in the prefatory information, and an epitextual, or implicit, genre, which invokes popular tropes within the body of the text in order to guide readers through them. Edgeworth combines explicit genres with implicit genres in two works first published in 1801: the three-volume work, *Belinda*, and the five-volume collection

of shorter tales, *Moral Tales for Young People*. Both of these works explicitly invoke the “moral tale,” an oft-used alternative designation to the more frivolous “novel,” alongside the more implicit quixote plot, a popular narrative that represents the consequences of naïve misreading. Edgeworth’s own use of paratexts reinforces her representation of them in her quixote fictions. Retelling quixote narratives allows Edgeworth to draw attention to the paratexts of the books and letters that her quixotes read, inviting her readers to consider the text they are reading in a similar way, with particular attention to what is signalled by its material qualities, its author, and its stated and implicit genres.

Through a sustained reading of the quixote narratives that populate her published works, I argue that Edgeworth mobilizes the genre of the moral tale alongside the trope of the quixotic reader to encourage her own readers to reflect on the role that paratexts play in the creation of meaning within a work of fiction. Through the representation of characters who misinterpret paratextual cues, Edgeworth’s fiction cultivates a sophisticated understanding of the kind of paratextual information that enabled authors, publishers, and booksellers to market their publications. In the stories themselves, this knowledge allows her characters to navigate their interactions with both texts and other people effectively. By incorporating a knowledge of paratexts into her didactic project of training critical readers, Edgeworth encourages them to develop a systematic understanding of the print marketplace, in which reading is not just conceived of as an act between an individual reader and a single text, but as that reader’s ongoing engagement with print as a systematic practice across a vast and complex literary marketplace. Paying attention to how Edgeworth’s fiction links an inability to interpret paratexts to quixotic reading practices contributes to scholarly discussions about her educational project, including how she managed her oft-remarked upon “anxiety about her position of authority” (Fauske and Kaufman 12). The formula of the quixote narrative, in which an uneducated reader either learns how to read critically or suffers the consequences of misinterpretation, offered an opportunity to address these anxieties directly through a transparently didactic plot structure in which interpretive guidance is embedded in the narrative; that interpretive guidance includes inviting readers to reflect on the features of the book that they are handling.



The Romantic-era quixote plot was a contested mode, used by conservative and radical writers alike to comment on women's reading practices, often through tragic plots that represent the consequences of unmonitored reading and faulty education practices. Edgeworth first drew on this narrative in *Letters for Literary Ladies*, where she used it to illustrate the failures of female education practices; she returned to it multiple times during the subsequent decade, most notably in 1801, when she published her novel-length work, *Belinda*, and the multi-volume *Moral Tales for Young People*, which contained the quixote tales "Forester" and "Angelina." In each of these 1801 reworkings, Edgeworth locates the cure for quixotic error in a sophisticated understanding of paratextual information, especially genre, authorship, and the text as a material object. *Belinda's* Clarence Hervey must learn to recognise a hierarchy of genre that ranks novels above romances, Forester must learn to understand texts as material products of human labour, and Angelina must learn to distinguish between authors and their heroines. These lessons are also staged for readers in the paratexts of Edgeworth's own texts—*Belinda* opens with an "Advertisement" that at once defends its choice of genre and invites readers to question it, while "Forester" and "Angelina" continually remind readers that they have been commercially produced by an author and the employees of a printing house. Drawing attention to the material production of texts—their peritexts—gestures towards the wider contexts—the epitext—that produced them; understanding this paratextual framework teaches readers to understand the relationship between the texts they read and the world they experience, and the ways that they inform each other.

In her quixote fictions of 1801, Edgeworth offers a more positive possibility, shifting her focus away from the negative consequences of female misreading towards the dangers posed by faultily educated men, and the ways in which misreading, for women, can be empowering as well as perilous. Rather than advocating for restricted access to texts, Edgeworth represents how encountering a variety of texts in different formats can form the basis for this education, suggesting that encounters with texts can stand in for the more dangerous worldly experience that her heroes and heroines acquire first-hand. The world that Edgeworth's quixotes encounter is one in which an abundance of texts—including books and letters—circulate, and a key element of each character's reform comes through his or her ability to understand how a text's paratext provides essential

interpretive clues to understanding its location within the textual economy. The relationship between peritext and epitext that Edgeworth represents, in which careful scrutiny of the peritext can lead to a more sophisticated knowledge of the epitext, also applies to the relationship between the fictional world she represents and the world that her readers inhabit; the boundary between fiction and real life becomes blurred by Edgeworth's expectation that her readers apply the knowledge gained from their encounters with her fiction to real-life scenarios.

## **Genres of Fiction in the Romantic Period**

The previous chapter touched on the role genre designation played in title page design, especially how it interacted with choices about fonts and layout to indicate how the work should be categorized; in turning to Edgeworth, it is important to establish a more concrete sense of how genre designations for fiction were defined during the period to understand how she negotiates the demarcations between genres for educational purposes. These smaller, often overlapping categories for fiction included the romance, the novel, and the tale, each of which brought with it a particular history and cultural associations that had implications for the texts to which they were affixed. The linked genres of "romance" and "novel" have been most explicitly theorized, most notably by Michael McKeon, who traces the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century out of the seventeenth-century prose narratives termed "romances." In *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740*, he explores first how romance emerged out of the need to differentiate between fact and fiction due to "the verifying potential of print" (46), especially how "[m]edieval romance, in which the antecedents of our 'history' and 'romance' coexist in fluid suspension, becomes 'medieval romance,' the product of an earlier period and increasingly the locus of strictly 'romance' elements" (45). Similarly, McKeon shows how the novel was the product of the resultant "tension between individual life and overarching pattern" (91). By the end of the eighteenth century, romance continued to refer to improbable works set in a medieval past, while the novel connoted something at once more akin to what contemporary commentators called "real life," as well as fiction in general, and in the 1790s romance developed a more self-referential connotation with Ann Radcliffe's use of the term, which Ian Duncan describes

as “the first English prose fiction to call itself ‘romance’ with a certain generic intention, distinguishing itself from the novel and the representation of contemporary life” (12–13).

Both genres were subject to critique by commentators throughout the eighteenth century for their potential to mislead readers, the romance because of its distance from the experiences of its readers and the novel because it could so closely resemble those experiences.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Ferris traces the emergence of what she terms the “proper novel,” an alternative mode of fiction “which was widely perceived as possessing a kind of realism and a social utility that the ordinary novel so conspicuously lacked” (54). Yet, laying claim to Ferris’s category of “proper novel” often meant rejecting “novel” as a label entirely; one of the ways that authors signalled their works’ superiority to the fraught genre of the novel was to find alternate genre designations, often “tale.” During this period, “tale” carried a similarly muddled set of possible meanings that were sometimes interchangeable with those of other forms of fiction and sometimes indicated a distinct genre. According to Anthony Jarrells,

Many novelists, for instance, called their works ‘tales’ in order to escape the novel’s associations with frivolity, exaggeration, political radicalism, and immorality. And a tale could refer very generally—as it still can—to a story or narrative: thus any novel could be a tale. But the word also gained several specific associations in the Romantic period, and these associations helped define the tale as a distinct genre even as they proved attractive to novelists. One of these was with the didactic—with ‘moral tales’ such as those written in the eighteenth century by Jean François Marmontel, or, later, by educational writers, including More and Maria Edgeworth. A

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<sup>27</sup> In *Rambler* No. 4 (1750), Samuel Johnson cautioned that authors of realistic fiction had to hold themselves to a higher moral standard because a believable character provided a model of behaviour to readers: “young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope by observing his behavior and success to regulate their own practices when they shall be engaged in the like part” (157). By the end of the eighteenth century, novels were coming under fire for many of the reasons that romances had fifty years earlier, largely because of the ways their composition and readership was gendered. Tracing the critical tropes that reviewers used to describe novels and their readers, Ina Ferris has identified the frequency with which metaphors of ingestion were used, pointing out, “The striking thing about the characterization of female reading is that it makes reading an act of the body rather than the mind. More specifically, it typifies it as a form of eating, hence as part of the material realm repudiated by the republic of letters as low and unlitrary” (37). By linking feminine reading practices with unruly appetites, reviewers developed an understanding of reading novels as “a form of sensuality” in which “the act of reading itself becomes identified with pleasuring the body, even with the working of sexual desire” (40). While Jacqueline Pearson has demonstrated the extent to which these anxieties about women’s reading practices extended beyond novels, the plot-driven novel, supposedly read for the excitement that its events produced, made readers particularly susceptible to this embodied, feminine mode of reading.

second association was with the oral, or with talk. In her 1832 preface to the Bentley Standard Novels edition of *Canterbury Tales* (1797–1805), Harriet Lee says that she and her sister and co-writer, Sophia, titled the work ‘merely in badinage . . . as being a proverbial phrase for gossiping long stories.’ (489)

Despite the flexibility of the “tale” designation, its increased use over the first decades of the nineteenth century suggests that it filled a role not covered by the more commonly understood “novel” or “romance,” even if no one could quite seem to agree on what that role was. Ultimately, Jarrells concludes, “The confusion in these early attempts to distinguish the tale points not only to the multitudinous character of eighteenth-century fiction, but also to a key marker of the genre’s identity: its unique mix of romance and novelistic features” (490). For Edgeworth, the hybrid form of the tale allows her to draw on both novel and romance as needed in order to teach her readers how to engage with the print marketplace. However, while Jarrells claims that the tale as it developed “remained open to the forms and content that surrounded it and in many cases made no attempt at synthesis” (491), synthesis is fundamental to how Edgeworth uses it. Within her tales, novel and romance conventions are set against each other, allowing her to comment on them directly and thereby reveal to her readers how they work; the tension between “romance” and “novel” generates a “moral tale.” The distance afforded from both novel and romance by the tale designation thus allows her to offer a metafictional commentary that demonstrates to her readers the stakes of being able to recognize genre.

Edgeworth’s blend of romance and novelistic features has often been remarked upon, most frequently in relation to her use of romance. Beginning with Mitzi Myers, scholars have challenged the long-held assumption that “the Edgeworthian moral tale seems a fiction of common sense . . . thoroughly rational and realistic, demonstrating through both its explicitly endorsed values and its narrative strategies bourgeois empiricist convictions of everyday experience as the source of knowledge” (Myers 102). Despite Edgeworth’s apparent commitment to rational empiricism, there has been a turn towards considering how Edgeworth relies on the tropes of romance to various effects, be they to rewrite her characters’ relationships to their parental figures (Myers), to better facilitate dissemination of a rational ideology (Sharon Murphy), or to offer a revision to women’s place in society (Grathwol). Linking these explorations of Edgeworth’s use of

romance to her engagement with genre in general further nuances these discussions by exploring the rationale behind her attempts to distance herself from romance. The tale, which simultaneously differentiates itself from and incorporates both romance and the novel, provides an opportunity to safely contain romance while also exposing readers to its pleasures and pitfalls. When Edgeworth includes romance in her didactic project, she identifies a knowledge of romance—and genre in general—as an important part of living in the world, establishing engagement with texts as reciprocal: just as context influences how readers read, reading informs how readers experience their context, or daily lives. By teaching her readers how to engage with romance, Edgeworth provides her readers with the knowledge that will allow them to exercise agency in their future encounters with the genre, but also suggests that this knowledge will enable them to shape the plot of their own lives.

This relationship between genre and lived experience is most apparent in Edgeworth's use of the quixote plot, a popular narrative mode that was one of Edgeworth's main strategies for engaging with the different genres she drew on in her fiction. Quixote figures were a staple throughout the eighteenth century, but their particulars changed dramatically as the novel became an established genre. Although Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) was a popular example of how British writers repurposed Cervantes' early novel *Don Quixote* (1605–15), quixote narratives about male characters, including Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Robert Graves's *The Spiritual Quixote* (1773), were common earlier in the century and tended to represent comic situations.<sup>28</sup> These earlier quixote narratives had drawn on what Catherine Gallagher has identified as the “usefulness of the quixotic tale” as “the pretext [it offers] for metafictional discourse,” especially, “the thematization of fiction without undermining that plausibility which the tale itself denominated the perfection of fiction” in order to theorise the emerging novel form by setting it against the romances popular earlier in the century (279).

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<sup>28</sup> For a full discussion of the influence of *Don Quixote* on British literary culture, see Wendy Motooka, *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (1998) and J. A. G Ardila, ed, *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain* (2009).

By contrast, the quixote narratives published immediately before and after the turn of the nineteenth century used Lennox's novel as a template to draw on the trope's metafictional qualities to address the individual and social effects of how and what women read, often in order to discipline their reading. As Jacqueline Pearson has noted, women's reading in general was a source of cultural anxiety, but women's reading of fiction was particularly fraught because of its perceived ability to absorb readers' attention in a way that was physically as well as intellectually stimulating. These anxieties shaped many of the conventions of fiction, and the built-in didacticism of the quixote plot allowed authors to walk a line between encouraging potentially dangerous absorptive reading practices that would allow their works to sell and avoiding accusations of immorality. Accordingly, Jodi L. Wyatt has described the quixote as a figure particularly useful to "writers who courted absorbed readers on the one hand while countering stereotypes about women's critical failings on the other" (261–62). In other words, the quixote plot was not always an avenue for reinforcing misogynistic commentary; it could also provide an avenue for female novelists to challenge assumptions about female reading practices.

The commentary that the quixote plot offered on women's reading practices was spurred by the political upheavals of the late eighteenth century. In *Mary: A Fiction* (1787) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft had used the quixote narrative to argue for women's rights, especially to education.<sup>29</sup> However, as the

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<sup>29</sup> Conservative and radical arguments about female education had considerable overlap. In *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810*, Harriet Guest brings together Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), two educational tracts from opposite ends of the political spectrum, remarking that, "what is common to them is the language, the discourse in which they characterize the corruptions of femininity" (275). Guest locates this misogynistic discourse of corrupt femininity in the paradoxical demands of a commercial society, in which the good domestic consumption that is necessary to the success of commerce is shadowed by "the vices of commerce [which] are embodied in the figure of immorally desirous femininity" (279).

For both Edgeworth and Wollstonecraft, the failure to adequately educate women divorces them from reality, making them vulnerable to sentimental excess; reading stories about quixotic errors can mitigate the effects of young women's education by teaching them how to identify and contain the expectations brought about by their reading practices. However, while Edgeworth's belief in the curative power of education results in a largely optimistic body of work, Wollstonecraft has a more fraught relationship to the possibility of effecting the "revolution in female manners" that she calls for in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (65). Wollstonecraft argues that such a revolution can only come about through systemic reform in women's education, but the means by which such reform can be achieved remains a point of tension. In the

1790s wore on, the political climate shifted, becoming increasingly hostile to the radical ideas that had flourished earlier in the decade, a shift which became evident in the fiction published. According to Jon Mee,

After 1795, a wave of anti-Jacobin novels operated as a form of cultural policing designed to counter the political principles of Godwin, but also aiming to curb what was more generally perceived as the feminization of culture widely identified with the novel itself. In these novels, the Jacobin romance plot that mapped politics on to Eros became a seduction plot, often ending in tragedy for the gullible girl who casts off traditional values in the name of ‘the new light’. (210)

In these anti-Jacobin novels, Wollstonecraft, who had once drawn on the quixote narrative in her arguments in favour of women’s rights and education in her own writing, was transformed into a quixote character herself: the “female philosopher” who populated novels such as Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), Amelia Alderson Opie’s *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), and Edgeworth’s *Leonora* (1806). The scandalous information revealed in Godwin’s biography of Wollstonecraft, published in 1798, provided her critics with material that allowed them to frame her as a writer whose philosophical arguments were the product of her immoral behaviour and sentimental excess, rather than of rational thought. Through the quixotic female philosopher, reactionary writers were able to refute Wollstonecraft’s arguments through *ad hominem* attacks that united sentimental reading practices with a commitment to what they viewed as her irrationally radical politics.<sup>30</sup> The quixote plot as Edgeworth inherited it was therefore a simultaneously radical and conservative mode that drew on both radical calls for social and educational reform and the anti-Jacobin responses. Edgeworth’s use of it in *Belinda* and *Moral Tales for Young People* draws on this history, but offers an

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posthumously published fragment, *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria* (1798), whether or not the titular heroine can survive once her eyes have been opened to her own oppression is called into question by the existence of two drafted endings: one in which she commits suicide and one in which Jemima, the lower-class woman she befriends, convinces her to live for her daughter.

<sup>30</sup> This position was often communicated through references to popular texts that straddled the divide between sentimental fiction and radical philosophy, especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*, (1761), “one of the greatest international publishing sensations of the eighteenth century, with scores of editions.”<sup>30</sup> The popularity of this work was a particular source of anxiety, both because of what it contained (a young woman’s extramarital affair, represented as an impulse of virtue) and the intense sentimental responses it elicited from its readers; as a result, a passing reference to a volume of Rousseau’s novel is enough to mark a character out as either morally dangerous or vulnerable to quixotism.

empowering intervention in which readers can learn to interpret peritextual information in order to safely navigate the landscape of the print marketplace.

## **Recognizing Genre, or, Why is *Belinda* a Moral Tale?**

The small controversy surrounding the genre with which Edgeworth labelled her first novel-length work, *Belinda*, illustrates to the weightedness of the terms used to describe fiction at the turn of the nineteenth century. While *Belinda*'s title page did not contain a genre designation of any kind, Edgeworth's decision to proclaim in *Belinda*'s "Advertisement" that, "The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale—the author not wishing to acknowledge a novel" (5), participates in debates about novel reading, in which the genre was decried as frivolous at best and dangerous at worst. By explicitly distancing herself from the novel, Edgeworth reinforces a moral hierarchy of genres, in which a tale, particularly a "Moral Tale" ranks somewhere above a novel. Yet, while the "Advertisement" makes Edgeworth's choice of genre explicit, the title page avoids declaring a genre, simply reading, "Belinda. By Maria Edgeworth, in Three Volumes." This omission means that the casual peruser might not notice a generic distinction, suggesting that, despite the hierarchy that Edgeworth's "Advertisement" sets up, *Belinda*'s status as a "Moral Tale" may not contribute to its marketability. The interplay of *Belinda*'s evasive title page, its physical resemblance to a three-volume novel, and its explicit "Advertisement" thus establishes a question about the criteria that distinguish the different categories of fiction from each other. However, this question of how to determine genre is not only relegated to *Belinda*'s paratexts; Edgeworth engages with it in Clarence Hervey's narrative of quixotic reform, in which he must learn to distinguish between behaviour appropriate to a romance and behaviour appropriate to a novel. In representing the process by which Hervey learns to recognise genre, Edgeworth invites her own readers to reflect on the genre of the work that they are reading, thereby thematizing the claim she makes in the "Advertisement" that, "The public have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that is presented" (5). Here, the peritext invites readers to look to the text for answers, but also outwards, to their epitextual knowledge of what constitutes a "moral tale" as opposed to a "novel."



As it turned out, Edgeworth's public did not accept her classification; her decision to distance her work from the novel by calling it a "moral tale" was decried by reviewers, sometimes vehemently. The *Critical Review* devoted an entire page to their objections, arguing against Edgeworth's desire to reject novels wholesale on the basis that some of them lack merit by declaring, "Let a novelist publish his work under the title that best befits it; and the public will determine where is its proper classification" (235).<sup>31</sup> Yet, as both Edgeworth's contemporaries and recent scholarship have made clear, the "proper classification" of her writing is flexible and dependent upon the point a given critic is trying to make. For example, in the oft-cited defence of the novel from *Northanger Abbey*, Austen claims *Belinda* as one of the novels "in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language" (31). Likewise, the collected editions of Edgeworth's works that began to appear in the 1830s (and continued to be republished well into the mid-twentieth century) were titled "Tales and Novels," reinforcing the sense that Edgeworth's definition of the "tale" was not always consistent with the way her contemporaries understood it.<sup>32</sup>

This practice of ignoring the "tale" designation for some, but not all, of Edgeworth's fiction has not been limited to Edgeworth's contemporaries; more recent scholarship has also found fault with Edgeworth's chosen genre designations. In a footnote, Catherine Gallagher approves of the scholarly tendency to follow suit when she says, "Despite her rejection of the label, however, reviewers and critics continue, quite rightly, to assess Edgeworth's contribution to the English novel" (280). But thinking about Edgeworth in terms of her influence on the novel does not necessitate ignoring the distinctions between "novels," "romances," and "tales" during the period (to name a few of the possibilities available to fiction writers), and what those distinctions mean for

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<sup>31</sup> Edgeworth seems to have taken this review to heart: both the two-volume *Leonora* (1806) and the four-volume *Patronage* (1814) were published without genre designations on their title pages.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the individual works within these collections were not identified as either a "tale" or a "novel," reinforcing the simultaneous ambiguity about the distinction between the tale and the novel and sense that the distinction was self-evident.

Edgeworth's fiction in particular. Scholarly discussion has mainly focused on Edgeworth's use of the tale either in the context of her nationalist fiction or her children's fiction, but her flexible use of this genre designation has broader implications for her oeuvre. While labelling her works as "tales," may mean little to Edgeworth's younger or less experienced readers, it signals to her savvier readers that they should adjust their expectations accordingly. It also makes the absence of any genre designation on the longer standalone works *Leonora* and *Patronage* in particular more meaningful because they passively reject the "novel" label that reviewers insisted on assigning to *Belinda*.

But what does it mean to discuss *Belinda* as a "moral tale" instead of a novel? Jarrells's definition of the tale as a mixed genre, at once "a loose designation" used by novelists "in order to escape the novel's associations with frivolity, exaggeration, political radicalism, and immorality. . . [and] a genre in its own right" (489), one that sets novel and romance side by side, provides a starting point. The uncertainty as to whether—and to what extent—the tale was, indeed, distinct from the novel is captured by Edgeworth herself in the preface to *Belinda*. Although Edgeworth does "not [wish] to acknowledge a novel," that does not necessarily mean that she has not written one; as she herself acknowledges, readers are free to disagree with her chosen classification. In trying to claim that her literary production is not a novel, she invokes the possibility that it is. While reviewers objected to Edgeworth's rejection of the novel label in favour of a safer form, they did not necessarily offer a clear definition of what a "tale" or, more specifically, a "moral tale," actually was. By contrast, Edgeworth's "Advertisement" plays with this negative definition of "moral tale" as "not a novel," while developing a more concrete definition within the text itself of "moral tale" as a self-reflexive form: if a "tale" contains an unsynthesized blend of romance and novel, a "moral tale" offers the opportunity for critical engagement with both.

Central to this reading is acknowledging that *Belinda* does not actually reject the novel as a genre: instead, it self-consciously pits the romance against the novel throughout, in scenes inflected with varying degrees of irony—for example, how Hervey "cautioned Mrs. Ormond against putting common novels into her [Virginia's] hands, but he made no objection to romances" (III: 132), or when the worldly Lady Delacour asks,

in *Belinda*'s final pages, "shall I finish the novel for you?" (III: 355). Drawing attention to fictional genres in this way allows Edgeworth to theorise the differences between them and teach her readers to recognise the different tropes associated with the romance and with the novel, in which the features of romance are generally more improbable than those of the novel. Accordingly, Edgeworth cautions her readers against characters most strongly associated with the romance—namely, Belinda's other suitor, the West Indian planter Mr. Vincent, and Clarence Hervey's ward and intended wife, Virginia—setting those doomed courtships against the ultimately successful and novelistic courtship of Belinda and Hervey. However, while Mr. Vincent disappears from the narrative after the extent of his gambling debts are revealed, Virginia, who is the victim of Hervey's quixotic enthusiasms, remains an uncomfortable presence until the final pages, when Lady Delacour finishes the romance as well by conjuring up an improbable—and therefore appropriately romantic—match for her.

Thus, *Belinda* contains within it plots appropriate to both a romance and a novel, meaning that the work overall cannot be classified as either genre. Instead, it places the romance and the novel in conversation in order to sidestep the central paradox of the quixote narrative, that the version of "real life" that readers encounter is still a fiction, albeit one that seeks to limit its appearance as such. Olivia Murphy has commented on the internal contradiction of the quixote plot, saying, "this rationalizing, disciplinary effect is inevitably undermined by both the compelling nature of the delusion, and by the entire process being acted out in fiction. All that the quixote figure can learn is, after all, to behave like a character in a novel, rather than one in a romance" (35). Rather than instructing readers in the difference between fiction and real life, the quixote plot merely teaches readers how to adjust their narrative expectations from those appropriate to romance to those appropriate to the novel; in *Belinda*, Edgeworth takes advantage of this feature of the quixote plot to teach her readers how to understand both genres in relation to each other, as a product of particular tropes and expectations of varying degrees of probability. Further, she suggests that a sophisticated knowledge of how both genres work gives readers the agency to shape their behaviour and, more broadly, the plots of their own lives.

*Belinda's* conclusion represents and resists these two generic possibilities, holding up the novel as a better model for behaviour than the romance, but ultimately rejecting both. By improbably procuring both Virginia's father and the subject of the portrait that Virginia has fallen in love with, Lady Delacour cements Hervey's freedom from further obligation to Virginia, thereby freeing him to marry Belinda. However, this conclusion also reinforces the contrast between first Belinda and Virginia's characters and then the conclusions of their respective plots: while Belinda's rational character leads her to find the rational happiness appropriate to the heroine of a novel, Virginia's education has produced a romance heroine, and her conclusion contains all of the sentimental excess that entails. Despite the ostensibly happy ending, Edgeworth does not shy away from the fact that Hervey has done Virginia irreparable harm: his failure to educate Virginia properly, and her resultant limited understanding of the world—formed mostly through reading romances—means that, in Edgeworth's terms, her happiness will always be limited. The conflict between the romance and the novel becomes explicit in Hervey's comparison of the two women, when he recognises that Belinda's worldly experience has made her superior:

In comparison with Belinda, Virginia appeared to him but an insipid, though innocent child: the one he found was his equal, the other his inferior; the one he saw could be a companion, a friend to him for life, the other would merely be his pupil, or his plaything. Belinda had cultivated taste, an active understanding, a knowledge of literature, the power and habit of conducting herself; Virginia was ignorant and indolent, she had few ideas, and no wish to extend her knowledge; she was so entirely unacquainted with the world, that it was absolutely impossible she could conduct herself with that discretion, which must be the combined result of reasoning and experience. (III: 129)

Virginia's secluded upbringing, first with her grandmother and later with Hervey, has prevented her from acquiring any knowledge about the world; by contrast, Belinda's principles and behaviour result from "reasoning and experience," which have led Hervey to value her as an "equal." However, the contrast that Hervey draws is not just about their different educations and characters; it sets up an opposition between how they interact with both the texts that they read and the world, reinforcing their generic associations. Where Belinda displays an "active understanding" linked to her "knowledge of

literature,” Virginia is “ignorant and indolent,” displaying a lack of both curiosity and critical thought, especially in the way that she consumes the romances that have formed the bulk of her education. Belinda’s rational method of reading links her to a restrained mode of fiction that more closely resembles the realistic novel, while Virginia’s reinforces her association with romance. In preferring Belinda over Virginia, then, Hervey chooses the rational restraint of the novel over the excess of the romance genre, thereby reforming his quixotism.

While this passage centres on Hervey’s realization that Virginia cannot be a suitable wife for him, it implicitly suggests that the education with which Hervey has provided her has also rendered her unsuitable for anyone else. In trying to dispel the idea that a perfectly innocent woman can make a perfect wife, Edgeworth seeks to capitalize on the positive value of realistic fiction for its readers: a form of second-hand experience that teaches them how to think sceptically, first about texts, and then the world. The virtues that Clarence identifies as belonging to Belinda are those that Edgeworth spends the work attempting to inculcate in her readers. Although Edgeworth cannot provide her readers with actual experience, her representation of Belinda’s movement through society allows readers to vicariously experience dissipation, and to be guided by Belinda’s ever-correct responses to it. As a part of this strategy, Edgeworth adopts elements of romance and brings them into the plot, where she can inoculate her readers against them through careful exposure. Virginia’s history, which reveals her to be the daughter of a secret marriage, raised by her grandmother in perfect seclusion and ignorance, marks her out as a heroine; however, instead of placing Virginia at the centre of the text, Edgeworth makes her history a digression that explains Hervey’s otherwise inexplicable behaviour.

Hervey’s movement from Virginia to Belinda mirrors his movement away from a romantic understanding of the world towards a rational one. The romantic absurdity of Virginia’s origins suits Hervey’s original, misguided understanding of female virtue; in transferring his affections from her to Belinda, Hervey indicates a shift in the way that he understands the way virtue is produced: not in isolation from the world, but through contact with it. But where Hervey’s trajectory takes him from romance to a more realistic, novelistic understanding of the world, Virginia remains within the realm of

romance, reunited with her wayward father and infatuated with a portrait—a condition that she seems unlikely to be cured of, in large part because none of the other characters seem willing to disillusion her. The conclusion that Lady Delacour contrives for Virginia highlights both the absurdity and the tragedy of her narrative in comparison to the happiness that Belinda can expect, by confirming her position as a sentimental romance heroine rather than the heroine of a novel.<sup>33</sup>

Hervey's narrative of quixotic reform as a movement from an infatuation with a romance heroine (Virginia) to rational love for a novel heroine (Belinda) thus turns *Belinda* into an allegory of genre, in which learning to prefer the realistic restraint of the novel to the idealistic passion of romance provides the key to domestic happiness. In Edgeworth's hands, the "moral tale" becomes a genre marked not just by its didactic structure, but also by its self-reflexivity, a feature further reinforced by Edgeworth's use of the quixote mode. Yet, although the novel heroine can be said to triumph over the romance heroine in the contest for Hervey's affections, a conclusion that seems to privilege the novel over the romance, that does not necessarily mean that *Belinda* can or should be described as a novel. The courtship plot between Belinda and Hervey may be the main focus of the work, but *Belinda* also contains within it a number of features better suited to romance, particularly in relation to how Edgeworth solves the problem of Virginia. Indeed, at the conclusion, Virginia's romance-inflected understanding of the world is not only allowed to stand but seems to be reinforced through the rapid series of contrivances that release Hervey from his obligations to her and fulfill "her vivid dreams, the fond wishes of her waking fancy" (III: 354). Even though *Belinda* does favour the more domestically inclined novel over romance, it does not discount romance completely by embracing the novel as a preferred genre; instead, it uses the contrast between Virginia and Belinda to teach readers about the different features of the two genres and the expectations they engender.

This critical distance from both the novel and the romance is maintained when, in *Belinda*'s closing pages, Lady Delacour offers to "finish the novel," provoking a debate

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<sup>33</sup> Edgeworth's preference for worldly experience over virtue through enforced innocence is also on display in the narrative of the dissipated Lady Delacour's reform into a model wife.

between the assembled characters about what constitutes a satisfactory ending. Belinda protests that “there is nothing in which novelists are so apt to err as in hurrying things toward the conclusion,” in response to which Lady Delacour first offers to “draw out the story to five volumes more” (III: 356), before countering with an offer to conclude with two lines of satirical verse. The result is a thoroughly theatrical conclusion that forgoes the naturalism of the novel and the sentimentalism of the romance in favour of a tableau staged by Lady Delacour and accompanied by a rhyming couplet: “Our *tale* contains a *moral*; and, no doubt, / You all have wit enough to find it out” (359). When she once again invokes the terminology of the “Advertisement” in the final lines, Edgeworth reinforces her choice of genre even as she, tongue-in-cheek, invites her readers to once again “accept or refuse the classification that is presented” in the light of the work itself. In this reading, the moral contained within the tale becomes about the importance of distinguishing between genres, particularly the different tropes and expectations associated with the different genres of fiction. In learning to identify himself as the hero of a novel rather than the hero of a romance, Hervey teaches readers how to assess a text’s relationship to the world through its genre; in reminding readers of her opening challenge in the “Advertisement,” Edgeworth tells her readers that the work they have read has readied them to make these assessments themselves.

### **Public Texts and Private Production *Moral Tales for Young People***

Unlike *Belinda*, *Moral Tales for Young People* leaves little room for ambiguity about how it should be classified, clearly indicating both its genre and its intended audience in the title. Whereas *Belinda* avoids including a genre indicator on the title page in lieu of a deliberate and provocative statement about its genre in the “Advertisement,” initiating a conversation about the boundaries between genres, the transparency of *Moral Tales for Young People* sets us a dramatically different relationship between text and paratext, in which the relationship the two seems transparent. However, by drawing attention to the peritextual features related to book production and the individual labour that the books themselves obscure, the text of *Moral Tales for Young People* suggests that the relationship between text and paratext—and especially between peritext and epitext—is not always so straightforward. In the two quixote tales contained within the

five-volume set, “Forester” and “Angelina,” Edgeworth develops an understanding of printed texts as the product of both material labour and intellectual invention, in the sense that they exist by virtue of both the labour involved in printing a book and the imaginative inventiveness of an individual author. Although printed texts are public documents, able to circulate through society physically as well as through debate and discussion, they are produced by private individuals of varying levels of visibility; readers’ access to these individuals is mediated by a codex book that may reveal their existence through an author attribution or colophon—or may conceal it through the absence of that information. In these quixote plots, Edgeworth represents the reform of her flawed readers as the result of learning about the ways the book mediates and controls this access and developing interpretive strategies that allow them to treat the paratext with the same skepticism as they treat the text.

Where *Belinda* seeks to draw attention to the nuanced distinctions between fiction and romance in order to foster an understanding of a particular text’s relationship to the genre conventions it draws on, *Moral Tales for Young People* is more interested in demystifying publicly circulating books by representing the hidden particulars of their production. In the quixote narratives contained in *Moral Tales for Young People*, the paratext acts as the space where readers can learn to recognize the links between the printed text as a public document open to general scrutiny and available to be consumed by readers, and as the product of individuals with their own, sometimes hidden, agendas. By linking the idea of “publicness” to circulating texts and “privateness” to the individuals who produce them, Edgeworth’s conception of public and private are closely related but not identical to Jürgen Habermas’s theory of the bourgeois public sphere, which he describes as “the sphere of private people come together as a public” (27). Instead, in *Moral Tales for Young People*, printed books and the ideas they contain *are* the place where “private people come together,” or, in Habermasian terms, the public sphere.

In this way, Edgeworth represents the public/private divide as analogous to the division between the peritext, which is physically attached to the text, and the epitext, which draws on readers’ additional contextual knowledge about the text, its author, and



the conditions of production, ultimately blurring peritext and epitext to collapse the boundaries of public and private. In talking about the epitext as “private,” I draw on Genette’s discussion of the “private epitext,” which consists of documents such as journals and letters which are not necessarily available to the reading public at the time of initial publication; however, I want to extend that category to include potentially unknowable information about the people and contexts involved in its production, such as an author’s identity or the people involved in typesetting. Just as public virtue can mask private vice, peritextual knowledge can disguise and belie the epitext; while not all contexts can be recovered, learning about the relationship between peritext and epitext, Edgeworth suggests, is essential to learning how to read critically. Moreover, by equating the world of print with the public sphere, Edgeworth highlights the stakes of critical reading by suggesting that successful engagement with print is the only way to adequately engage with public life.<sup>34</sup>

The ways that the printed book obscures the individuals involved in its production is illustrated in the first volume of *Moral Tales*, which opens with “Forester,” a narrative in many ways thematically at odds with much of Edgeworth’s oeuvre. Whereas many of Edgeworth’s other tales aim to instruct young readers in the virtues of good sense and hard work, “Forester” offers a caveat to Edgeworth’s usual moral by showing how even a love of rational industry can become a kind of quixotism, if taken too far. In Forester’s case, this quixotic embrace of manual labour comes about through an inadequately supervised reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, a text that Edgeworth represents as particularly dangerous to the minds of young men. Forester’s interpretation results in a disdain for social niceties that leads Forester to embarrass himself socially and, ultimately, leave his guardian’s house in order to pursue a life of honest labour. After moving through unsatisfyingly menial positions that teach him the value of those social niceties he had

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<sup>34</sup> The way that Edgeworth represents the public closely resembles Anne Mellor’s argument in *Mothers of the Nation: Women’s Political Writing in England, 1780–1830* (2000) that women participated in the discursive public sphere through print: “Their views were openly circulated not only through the economic institutions of print culture . . . but also through the public forms of debating societies and the theater” (3). However, where Mellor’s definition of the public sphere primarily differs from Habermas’s in the fact that she illuminates women’s involvement in it through their participation in a textual economy, Edgeworth represents the discursive public sphere as almost wholly textual.

earlier rejected, first as a gardener and then as a clerk, Forester finds himself employed in a printer's shop, where the cure for his quixotism is confirmed through exposure to a variety of texts and ideas. Accordingly, the printer's shop is not merely a place where books are produced and sold; it is a liminal space where public and private meet, in which the production of publicly circulating texts intersects with Forester's private, paid work and a community of students who gather to converse. In order to participate more fully in this community, Forester must learn to look and behave like a member of polite society; work in the printer's shop teaches him how to express his private virtues through his public, professional appearance.

Unlike most other quixote tales of this period, the form of romance that "Forester" represents as dangerous is based on an idea of rugged individualism that values (masculine) physical work over the less visible (and feminine) effort required to develop and maintain social graces. As a result, Forester initially fails to recognise anything that is not productive manual labour as work.<sup>35</sup> Forester's unwillingness to understand the value of social niceties is set against his guardian's son, Henry Campbell, whose ability to navigate fraught social situations repeatedly saves Forester from experiencing the full consequences of his actions. Mona Narain has located the source of the tension between Henry and Forester as one based in the ideology of the separate spheres, claiming, "A crucial reason for the success of Henry Campbell both socially as well as an effective reformer is that he understands the intermingling of the private and the public and denies their clear cut distinctions" (62). Such an argument locates Forester's over-commitment to manly active virtues as part of a more general misogynistic rejection of what he perceives to be feminine. Instead of refuting Henry's well-reasoned analysis of Forester's

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<sup>35</sup> Forester's mistaken understanding of what counts as work leads him to automatically and uncritically identify with a group of lower-class boys who goad him into playing a cruel prank on a dancing master. Only once the dancing master is laid up with a sprained ankle and a broken violin does Forester learn that the boys were more persecutors than persecuted and that, in allowing himself to be persuaded by them, he has compromised a precarious man's livelihood. In another instance, Forester's sympathy for a lower-class character is justified, but his insistence on direct action over polite and diplomatic intervention causes more harm than good. His attempt to help a young girl by accompanying her to the charity school that she attends and berating the school mistress results in the girl's expulsion; by contrast, his guardian's son Henry Campbell's private and well considered appeal to the society ladies who fund the charity school demonstrates the efficacy of a less direct course of action.

objections to what he terms “mean address” (I: 44), Forester accuses Henry of effeminacy because he grows tired on their walk.<sup>36</sup>

Following many of Forester’s well-intentioned mistakes, Henry Campbell’s timely intervention saves both Forester and other characters from the full consequences of Forester’s rash behaviour. However, even in the face of the repeated efficacy of Henry’s methods, Forester refuses to concede his position by drawing a sharp distinction between his own behaviour and the behaviour of his worldly rival, Archibald Mackenzie, with no room for a moderate middle ground; he entreats Henry to “[l]eave balls, and lady patronesses, and petty artifices, and supple address, to such people as Archibald Mackenzie” (I: 43). Despite the clear absurdity of the statement within the context of the tale, Edgeworth takes the time to refute it through logic, demonstrating that “Forester, in his definition of *mean address*, included all that attention to the feelings of others, all those honest arts of pleasing, which make society agreeable” (I: 44). By interrogating the terms by which Forester defines his code of behaviour, Edgeworth (by way of Henry) not only teaches her readers how to recognize his errors, but how to argue against them using logical strategies. Henry Campbell thus acts as a containment strategy, allowing her to play Forester’s problematic opinions off of his friend’s in order to intervene and guide her readers indirectly, a strategy that, combined with the narrative asides to readers, aims to prevent them from falling prey to the same mistakes as Forester.

However, more effective than Henry Campbell’s arguments are Forester’s first-hand experiences with employment. Following his humiliation at the hands of his rival, Archibald Mackenzie, Forester flees his guardian’s house in pursuit of a life where he can live off of the money he earns through his own industry. Engaging in actual employment, first as a gardener and later as a clerk, allows Forester to cure himself of his disdain for polite behaviour, by providing him with the opportunity to experience how pleasantries can lessen the indignities of work; at the same time, it teaches him not to inflate the

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<sup>36</sup> Richard de Ritter also discusses Edgeworth’s engagement with the separation of public and private spheres elsewhere in her oeuvre, arguing that her arguments in favour of female education provide a way for women to engage with public, civic life because, like that of aristocratic men, “women’s ‘wisdom’ derives specifically from their exemption from the demands of specialised forms of labour” (137).

virtues of those who must work for a living, simply because they work.<sup>37</sup> Forester's final position at a printing house completes his cure: there, he is finally able to both work with the industry and independence that he craves and practice his newfound appreciation for social interaction. In particular, it provides him with the opportunity to "read and converse," activities that when taken together, the narrator assures us, produce "a double chance of correcting . . . errors" (I: 137). Forester's newfound appreciation for the social niceties that he previously disdained is, therefore, an essential part of finalizing his cure, in that it allows him to converse with the young students who frequented the booksellers and to engage with their ideas.<sup>38</sup> This social contact exposes Forester to new ideas, some more worthy than others, and teaches him through that exposure how to weigh the merits of an argument. Whereas earlier he resorted to an *ad hominem* attack against Henry Campbell when he found his positions questioned, his encounters with the students in the booksellers teach him to evaluate different opinions through trial and error: "His mind became more humble; but his confidence in his own powers, after having compared himself with others, if less arrogant, was more secure and rational: he no longer considered a man as a fool the moment he differed with him in opinion" (I: 135). Although he does briefly come under the sway of a hothead nicknamed Tom Random, he soon recognizes the limitations of the ideas that Random espouses, in large part because he is simultaneously exposed to counterarguments that disabuse Forester of his tendency to venerate Random; as the narrator remarks, "It is a great advantage to a young man to hear opposite arguments, to hear all that can be said upon every subject" (I: 135). By finding employment in an environment where ideas can circulate freely, then, Forester learns how to avoid further quixotic error through the sheer number of new ideas with which he comes into contact, which he must evaluate carefully before deciding to agree

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<sup>37</sup> In his first position as a gardener, he learns to miss "Henry's agreeable conversation" (I: 95) almost as quickly as he loses his taste for "din[ing] like a philosopher on colcannon" (I: 94). Accustomed to the manners of gentlemen despite his professed distaste for them, Forester's experience with the lower orders teaches him, "By hard experience . . . that obliging manners in our companions add something to the happiness of our lives" (I: 125). Moreover, he discovers that his own position of relative wealth allows him to behave with a disinterested honesty that those who are wholly dependent on their earnings cannot mirror.

<sup>38</sup> It also has the more practical effect of forcing Forester to take better care of his appearance, when the bookseller offers him a promotion that is contingent on Forester obtaining "a decent suit of clothes and a cleaner shirt" (I: 160). The necessity of appearing creditable on behalf of his employer combined with his experience at the courthouse after his wrongful arrest, where his appearance is held against him, forces Forester into a better understanding of the reasons why appearing respectable are important.

or disagree. In this tale, Edgeworth represents the book trade as fundamentally social, a place where both printed texts and individuals interact, circulating ideas and exposing them to public scrutiny. Whereas Forester's early reading of *Robinson Crusoe* was a private act that occurred in relative isolation, the way ideas circulate in the printer's shop invites critical engagement from a variety of perspectives, forcing him to choose some and reject others.

Forester's participation in the book trade does not only bring him into contact with a variety of new ideas; it also teaches him how to understand texts as the product of human labour, and therefore subject to many of the same fallacies as the individuals he encounters. In the printer's shop, Forester comes into contact with books at various stages of production and learns how to engage with texts as he learns to produce them. His work in the printers' shop begins with the material production of books and newspapers, where his sense of the invisibility of his labour spurs him to also become a producer of meaning: "I am only a printer," said he to himself. "These just arguments, these noble ideas, will instruct and charm hundreds of my fellow-creatures: no one will ever ask, 'Who set the types?'" (I: 142). Although Edgeworth takes care to note that the work Forester performs as a compositor in a printer's shop is vital to the production and distribution of print texts, this question sets up a hierarchy that inverts Forester's earlier tendency to value manual labour, in which the more rewarding work is intellectual rather than manual. Over the course of his rise from a compositor to a corrector of the press to, finally, an occasional contributor to the newspaper that the printer puts out, his sense of pride in his work increases. Notably, this increased satisfaction corresponds to his visibility in the production process; although the essays that he publishes are "composed under a fictitious signature" (I: 166), he feels a greater sense of ownership over them than he did over the works that he composited on the behalf of other authors and has the pleasure of seeing them singled out for discussion by the people who frequent the shop. Even if he is not identified as their author, he draws satisfaction from the knowledge that readers are more likely to ask questions about the author than the typesetter, meaning that he has entered into the public discourse in a visible way.

Although the tale upholds this hierarchy that places intellectual labour above manual production, and therefore authorship over the labour of compositing required for print, Forester's experiences in the printer's shop draw attention to the material concerns of book production. While acknowledging authorship as the more satisfying form of work, Edgeworth draws her readers' attention to the usually unnoticed workers necessary to the production of print texts. When Forester laments the invisibility of his own labour, he makes it visible, reminding Edgeworth's readers of the unseen work that has gone into the production of the text they are reading even if the individuals remain unnamed: while the publisher can be found in the imprint and often the printer in the colophon, the names of individuals responsible for typesetting and proofing remain obscured. Nevertheless, drawing attention to these invisible networks of book production and distribution allows Edgeworth to remind her readers that books, especially their peritexts, are not fully transparent, and that the relationship between authors and their readers is mediated by a book that is produced by countless individuals of varying degrees of visibility. By representing this usually invisible network, Edgeworth forwards a conception of the industry of print as fundamentally social. Both ideas and material goods are the product of private relationships between individuals, which may or may not be reinforced by economic relationships. The peritextual matter of the circulating book is one place where these private, epitextual relationships become publicly visible; learning how to scrutinize books for this information gives rise to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between public and private, especially the way that private acts and relationships influence the public sphere.

In "Forester," the hero learns to navigate the public world of print through his private, social interactions; in "Angelina, or L'Amie Inconnue," private, social interactions represent a more significant danger than engagement with public texts. Like "Forester," "Angelina" provides its readers with a behind-the-scenes look at the production of printed books; however, the stakes are raised considerably for a female quixote who fails to understand the relationship between an author and the text she has written. "Angelina" literalizes the exchange of authors and readers through the correspondence between a naïve female reader with a novelist who styles herself after her sentimental heroine, Araminta. In this tale, Angelina's susceptibility to the conventions of

sentimental fiction is linked to her inability to understand the differences between a professional author's public persona, the heroine of a novel, and the private individual responsible for writing the text. Because the plot hinges on the slipperiness of the line between these different identities, Edgeworth's narrative interventions require a heavier hand so that she can contrast her own responsible writing practices with Araminta's irresponsible authorship. Unlike in "Forester," where the didactic narrative interventions are relatively brief and explicit, in "Angelina" Edgeworth's narrator continually intervenes, positioning her readers in a paradoxical contrast to Angelina in an attempt to distance herself from the unflattering and irresponsible version of female authorship that Araminta practices; Edgeworth's readers are simultaneously "sober-minded" (II: 13) enough to be aware of Angelina's folly yet still in need of instruction.

Whereas "Forester" is more concerned with teaching its readers how to understand a book's position in the world as the product of human labour, "Angelina" tries to teach its readers how to consider peritextual information about the author sceptically, a skill that could easily be turned against the author of the tale. In order to impart this lesson, Edgeworth herself must rely on the tropes common in popular sentimental fiction even as she tries to distance herself from them; while the implied contrast between her own sober fiction and the novels that Angelina reads is often used for comic effect, Edgeworth occasionally blurs the line between the two. As a result, Edgeworth's desire to instill good reading practices exists in tension with her attempts to control interpretation, even as those attempts at control are undermined by her own awareness of its impossibility. In particular, the potentially chaotic role epitextual information plays in interpretation feeds these anxieties; Edgeworth represents the way readers receive and use contextual information, especially contextual information that has been circulated privately, to read texts as uncontrolled and dangerous.

Like "Forester," the resolution of "Angelina" depends in large part on its heroine developing a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the public and private spheres. However, where "Forester" highlights the importance of integrating the private into the public, "Angelina" expresses anxiety about the private circulation of information, particularly in the form of letters: Angelina's exposure to sentimental novels

is the source of her quixotic misconceptions, but it is her secret correspondence with the author of those novels that leads her to act on them. The danger of private correspondence is highlighted early in the tale, when the narrator performs a close reading of Araminta's most recent letter to Angelina in order to point out the inconsistencies that Angelina glosses over: "She neglected to observe that, her Araminta was in the course of two pages—'almost heart-broken'—and in the possession of—'supreme felicity'" (II: 13–14). Although the narrator takes Angelina to task for her lack of discernment, she ultimately blames the letter and its writer more than the young woman who receives it. After the letter's close, the narrator repeats a series of Araminta's phrases in dizzying succession—"Garnish-tinselled wands' – 'shackle-scorning Reason' – 'isolation of the heart' – 'soul-rending eloquence' –with 'rocks and woods, and a meandering river—balmy air—moonlight—Orlando—energy of intellect—a cottage—and a heart-broken friend'" (II: 13)—each separated by a dash, in order to simultaneously mock the incoherence of the letter and recreate Angelina's overwrought experience as she reads it. This collection of disconnected yet evocative images causes "strange confusion in Angelina's imagination" (II: 13), a perfectly reasonable response that, if anything, hints at Angelina's natural but underdeveloped abilities, thereby laying the blame less with Angelina's faulty and immature judgment than with Araminta's irresponsible and disorderly use of language. The letter's absurdity becomes clear when placed within the context of a larger narrative in which the narrator's careful attention to the nuances of language sets her up as a different kind of writer, not given to sensory, sentimental imagery. By framing the letter with the narrator's commentary, Edgeworth's readers are insulated from its disordering effect in a way that Angelina, whose education under parents "who cultivated her literary taste, but who neglected to cultivate her judgment" (II: 14), is not.

While the letter doubtless recreates the sentimental texture of Araminta's published fiction, relying on those tropes in private correspondence compounds the danger of the printed sentimental text. The circulation of printed texts opens them up to public critique from various perspectives, which has the potential to correct misreadings, but correspondence can be concealed from unsympathetic readers able to critique the language and sentiment represented, thus allowing vulnerable and quixotic readers to go



uncorrected. Angelina's vulnerability, compounded by disgust for the society life she experiences in her guardian's home, makes her susceptible to Araminta's "highly flattering, and consequently, very agreeable style" (II: 15). The letter's combination of vivid yet bewildering sensory images with flattery proves a heady mix, and Edgeworth implicitly frames Angelina's response to it as a seduction, in which Araminta's language charms and overwhelms her judgment. When Angelina does finally find Araminta after a number of mishaps, the narrator confirms her role as a linguistic and sexual aggressor by figuring her as shockingly masculine: "a woman, with a face and figure which seemed to have been intended for a man, with a voice and gesture capable of setting even man, 'imperial man,' at defiance" (II: 99). This aggressive masculinity is reinforced by her response to the marriage proposal that she is in the process of receiving: her acceptance is contingent on a series of demands that assert her dominant position in the relationship. The sharp contrast between Angelina's expectations for Araminta and the reality of Miss Hodges's brandy-sodden vulgarity is further confirmed by the way Araminta/Miss Hodges greets Angelina—"with the tone and action of a bad actress who is rehearsing an embrace" (II: 102)—and her response to Angelina's recoil—"You are overpowered, my Angelina—lean on me" (II: 103). In misreading Angelina's physical revulsion, Miss Hodges overpowers Angelina with her person as she formerly did with her words. Although the tale is ambiguous about the extent to which Miss Hodges is actively predatory rather than simply deluded, this instance of figuring the author of sentimental fiction as a physical threat allows Edgeworth to make the threat she poses visceral even as she renders it absurd.

The gap between the overpowering masculinity of Miss Hodges's physical presence and her attempts to act the part of the sentimental woman makes for uncomfortable comedy, but it also reveals an additional layer of irony in Araminta's letter. Although the narrator encourages her readers to recognize its affected and incoherent sentimentality, what that affectation masks remains obscured. Edgeworth's readers are thus placed in the position where they are not quite as surprised as Angelina when her unknown friend lacks the "elegant delicacy" she has come to expect, but the extent of Miss Hodges's vulgarity is nevertheless jarring—something that no amount of critical reading could reveal. The extent of the deception means that although

Edgeworth's readers have been positioned to laugh at Angelina's gullibility, they are unprepared for the extent to which Araminta has misled them. In writing a letter that so obviously misrepresents the relationship between her novel and her life, Miss Hodges compounds the crimes of sentimentality and improbability committed in her fiction. Angelina's willingness to wholeheartedly believe the fiction that "superior genius and virtue are the inevitable objects of scandal" (II: 77–78) allows Miss Hodges to pass as Araminta, at least until Angelina encounters her in person. The true danger of written texts—both novels and letters—is their potential to disguise and misdirect their readers with regard to their author's character, and therefore the moral tendency of the work, rendering them an act of literary and linguistic forgery. The peritextual features of the book compound this potential for forgery, by providing authors with the opportunity to misrepresent themselves through pseudonyms and anonymity and their relationship to the text through titles and attributions that suggest fiction is fact.

For readers, the stakes of being able to recognize such a forgery are higher than they are for authors to maintain the fiction. As Edgeworth suggests, Miss Hodges' representation of herself as Araminta is only a logical extension of the relationship between romance and real life. In romance, characters and their emotions are inflated past the point of believability, a strategy that Miss Hodges has applied to her own aggressively prosaic life. Teresa Michals links this relationship to the inflated value of the romances themselves when she says,

[Edgeworth's] heroes and heroines are supremely sober, reliable, and constant, as Mrs. Barbauld notes in praising her for emphasizing the 'severe and homely virtues of prudence and economy' over less market-oriented 'splendid sentiments.' Splendid sentiments belong to the romance's world of shining improbabilities, not to Edgeworth's world of plausible character. (10)

Although the market value of sentimental texts may be higher, probable or "sober" texts are associated with increased literary and cultural value. By clearly aligning her own writing with the "world of plausible character" against the "splendid sentiments" of romance, Edgeworth positions herself as one whose representation of the world—and therefore her self-representation—establish her as creditworthy. Miss Hodges, by

contrast, attempts to pass off incredible romances as real life and the heroine of her novel as herself, an act that renders her simultaneously ridiculous and insidious. But Miss Hodges's writing does not only affect her own character: by failing to recognize it as fraudulent, Angelina compromises her own character, and, in the words of Sharon Murphy, "rapidly realizes that her identity is not fixed; who she is, she discovers, depends entirely upon her relationship to others" (68). The absence of a respectable guardian to act as an assurance of respectability leaves Angelina open to repeated and potentially dangerous misinterpretation; she becomes, like Araminta's letter, a jumble of unreadable signs divorced from meaning. Tellingly, the person on whom her identity depends is an author, which suggests that identity is also dependent on what kinds of texts she reads and how she reads them. Thus, over the course of the tale, Angelina must learn how to construct her own character by learning how to engage skeptically with books, or, as Mitzi Myers puts it, "how one arrives at selfhood through language" (28).

But, as Edgeworth's incredible popularity among her contemporaries suggests, the opposition between "market-oriented 'splendid sentiments'" and "Edgeworth's world of plausible character" that Michals sets up is not as straightforward as the tale makes it out to be. While the romances that Edgeworth pokes fun at were indeed considered a primarily commercial genre, Edgeworth's own tales were far more commercially successful than most works of fiction, and she certainly earned more from her publications than the fictional Miss Hodges, whose vulgarity is emphasized by her comparative impoverishment. This complication of the divide between commercially successful texts and literary value extends to the contrast between Miss Hodges's absurd sensibility and the tale's own straightforward prose. In trying to teach readers how to evaluate the texts they read, Edgeworth relies on a number of techniques akin to Miss Hodges's, resulting in a collapse of the distance between their texts. For example, when demonstrating the act of critical reading on Araminta's letter, the narrator uses techniques remarkably similar to the sentimental author's to control her readers' responses. Echoing Araminta's address to "my sober-minded Angelina," the narrator opens her critique of the letter by saying, "What effect this letter may have on *sober-minded* readers in general can easily be guessed," a phrase that pokes fun at both Araminta's high-flown phrases and Angelina's susceptibility to them (II: 13), even as it repurposes the term to describe her

own readers. However, in refusing to inform her readers directly of what the truly “sober-minded” response ought to be, she also redirects Araminta’s flattery towards her own readers, implying that their judgment will supply the criticism that she withholds. Furthermore, describing her readers as “sober-minded” before they have received her wisdom opens up the possibility that the story is superfluous: if they can already read critically, then there is no need for them to read this particular cautionary tale.

Such flattery sits uneasily next to the narrator’s obsessive need to guide interpretation and justify artistic decisions. Forced to draw on the conventions of romance in order to propel the plot forward by relocating Angelina to Bristol, the narrator justifies her choice with the remark, “The post seems to be the last expedient which a heroine ever thinks of for the conveyance of her letters; so that, if we were to judge from the annals of romance, we should infallibly conclude there was no such thing as a post-office in England” (II: 37). Conveniently for the purposes of the plot, Angelina’s misreading of romance novels has not only led her to run away to a cottage with an unknown friend; it has led her to forget the conveniences of modern life long enough that the newspaper has had time to print a notice regarding her whereabouts, providing her with the impetus to flee from Wales. Later, when the story incorporates a near run-in between Angelina and her guardians, Lady Diana Chillingsworth and Lady Frances Somerset, in a milliner’s shop, the narrator pauses to justify her inclusion of the event, describing it as “one of those extraordinary coincidences which sometimes occur in real life, but which are scarcely believed to be natural when they are related in books” (II: 50). Of course, in making the case for such an event’s probability, she reminds her readers of the fictional nature of the text they are reading, especially its uncomfortably close relationship to romance.

By drawing attention to and explaining away the moments when the text strains credulity, Edgeworth teaches her readers about the difference between genres and the aesthetics of probability, but she also puts herself in a defensive position, in which she feels compelled to justify the value of the tale and her own relationship to it. More than a patronizing narrative voice, the limitations of “*Angelia, or L’Amie Inconnu*” are the result of Edgeworth’s self-consciousness of her own position as an author at once

revealed by and obscured from her readers' view. Although Edgeworth seeks to enact a responsible, restrained model of authorship that teaches her readers to engage with texts skeptically, her strategies are not in complete opposition to the version of commercial authorship that Miss Hodges practices, in which earning money through writing entails taking advantage of vulnerable, untaught readers by distorting reality and manipulating emotions. In "Angelina," understanding authorship means recognizing that although an author's character can be partially revealed through careful scrutiny of her language, full transparency is impossible: barring a face-to-face meeting, the private individual responsible for writing a text is always mediated by the text. As a result, understanding that the author's relationship to the text, especially the way that the peritext might misrepresent that relationship, may not be straightforward is a fundamental feature of critical reading as Edgeworth defines it.

Nevertheless, Edgeworth's attempts to produce good critical readers are forestalled by her own anxieties about her own authorial practice's potential similarities to the predatory Miss Hodges and the question of how to create ethical texts, especially given the danger that hers may be misread, in spite of her best efforts to guide her readers. Despite the agency she allows Angelina in "cure[ing] herself of the affectation of sensibility, and the folly of romance" (II: 142), then, the ideal readers of *Moral Tales for Young People* remain passively obedient and ready to be directed. This anticipated passivity appears in the peritext of the work itself, which aims for clarity: the title which makes both genre and audience explicit; the author attribution that links the work to Edgeworth's work of educational theory, *Practical Education*; the fact that the title page for each volume indicates which tales are contained within it; even the frontispieces that illustrate scenes from the tales all contribute to an attempt to create paratextual transparency. Unlike the peritext of *Belinda*, which encourages readers to apply the tale's lessons about genre to its own paratextual framework, *Moral Tales for Young People* seeks to exemplify a transparency absent from the books that mislead its quixotes.

## **Conclusion: *Leonora* and the limits of quixotic reform**

The anxieties about the role paratextual information plays in interpretation that arise in *Moral Tales for Young People* return in Edgeworth's last quixote narrative, *Leonora* (1806), in which the dangers of sentimental correspondence threaten to break up a happy home. As in "Angelina," the most dangerous texts are not works of fiction, but the private letters that circulate between characters, particularly those of the sentimental quixote Olivia and her French confidant Madam de P—, who use the privacy of correspondence to conceal their true characters and persuade other characters into their way of thinking. Without full access to the correspondences of other characters, no one character can learn to correctly interpret another's letters or learn from their mistakes. Although Olivia ultimately does not keep the affections of Leonora's husband beyond a short period of cohabitation, she escapes from the tale relatively unscathed and unrepentant, having failed to learn any kind of lesson; likewise, the heroine of the piece, Leonora, does not provide a more effective model for interpretation, given her inability to read Olivia's letters with an appropriate degree of skepticism. Unlike print books, Edgeworth seems to suggest, texts circulated in manuscript like letters are always inscrutable on their own terms; in the absence of the standardized peritexts of print, interpretation depends wholly on epitextual knowledge of the writer's character to which not all readers will have access.

In its representation of readers who seem doomed to repeat the same cycle of interpretive errors, *Leonora* contains a more pessimistic quixotic narrative than those found in *Belinda* or *Moral Tales for Young People*, instead recalling the unrepentant quixote, Julia, of *Letters for Literary Ladies*. However, *Leonora* widens its scope beyond the individual effects of quixotic reading to consider the effects of Olivia's behaviour on the other people that she lives with, becoming less a cautionary tale about individual reading practices and more a meditation on the private and insidious dangers that an unruly reader can pose to other people. Rather than proposing strategies to reform bad readers, the plot concerns itself with the dangers that they pose to society as a whole, a concern that can be linked to specifically anti-Jacobin anxieties about women, intellectualism, and reading. Despite the biographical similarities to various female

philosopher figures of the 1790s, Olivia lacks many of the features common to the female philosopher figure generally, especially anything resembling coherent philosophical commitment, either sincere or affected. Nevertheless, she does try to frame her behaviour as systematic and exemplary of virtue when explaining it to Leonora:

Full of life and spirits, with a heart formed for all the enthusiasm, for all the delicacy of love, I married early, in the fond expectation of meeting a heart suited to my own. Cruelly disappointed, I found—merely a husband. My heart recoiled upon itself; true to my own principles of virtue, I scorned dissimulation. I candidly confessed to my husband, that my love was extinguished. I proved to him, alas! too clearly, that we were not born for each other. The attractive moment of illusion was past—never more to return; the repulsive reality remained. (I: 6)

Olivia's commitment to her "own principles of virtue" indicates the paradoxical desire to organize her "disordered mind" into set principles based on a reasoned philosophical position that places sentiment above reason. As a result, *Leonora* participates in a general discourse that conflates sentimental reading practices, radical feminist philosophy, and British cultural anxieties about continental influence; however, instead of linking dangerous reading to the uncontrolled circulation of print texts, Edgeworth suggests that the circulation of manuscript correspondence poses a more significant danger.

Olivia's command over both sentimental and rational rhetoric means that her letters are persuasive enough to convince Leonora that she has been wronged "by busy, malignant rumour" (I: 5). At the same time, we see Olivia as a victim of the influence of her friend Madam de P—, whose sentimental letters she fails to read with the appropriate ironic distance, and whose advice guides Olivia into further error. Olivia, therefore, occupies a dual role, as simultaneously a quixotic reader and the producer of dangerous texts. As the flawed reader of those dangerous texts who believes in her ability to protect Olivia from herself, Leonora is in turn also a quixotic reader, even as she is simultaneously the moral centre of the tale. Yet, neither of these quixotic readers undergoes a reform. Olivia retreats to France, and Leonora recovers her husband, but the question of whether or not Leonora's reading practices are ultimately reformed, or in need of reform at all, remains unanswered.

In representing quixotes who neither reform nor die, *Leonora* expresses anxiety about the futility of containing the effects of irresponsible writers outside of the context of print. These anxieties are closely related to the exchange of personal letters, a link that Edgeworth makes through her use of the epistolary mode. As in “Angelina,” private correspondence provides an opportunity for characters to represent their motives and character in flattering—and frequently inaccurate—terms. Edgeworth’s epistolary narrative thus places readers in a privileged position, in which they are privy to the confessions of all of the principle characters and often see the same events represented from multiple perspectives. Unlike characters who must act based on limited information, readers can see Olivia’s underhanded machinations alongside Leonora’s genuine wish to help her friend, and make their judgements based on full knowledge. The limited circulation of manuscript letters means that Leonora’s husband remains Olivia’s dupe until he reads the letters that pass between her and Madam de P—; reading Olivia’s letters provides him with the opportunity to witness her duplicity first-hand and justify his return to Leonora.

By contrast, readers who encounter the letters collected and arranged in print can interpret Olivia’s character correctly from the beginning. Printed texts circulate publicly and therefore can be freely compared to others and contextualised within a larger marketplace. As if to demonstrate this point, Edgeworth retreats from the use of explicit paratexts, offering *Leonora* to readers as a relatively unadorned text, with no preface and no genre designation: an unusual presentation within Edgeworth’s oeuvre. The absence of Edgeworth’s usual paratextual apparatus suggests that readers should be able to locate the text’s position within the literary marketplace without her intervention—that, unlike private correspondence in manuscript, printed texts can be contextualized within the trends of a public marketplace. The contrast that Edgeworth draws between the relative transparency of publicly circulated and scrutinized print with privately circulated and easily concealed correspondence sets up a problem that cannot be solved through public discourse: whereas readers of public texts will inevitably encounter others’ assessments of their reading matter, readers of private letters may be limited to the interpretive abilities of a small community and their personal knowledge of the letters’ authors. Print, which follows a set of conventions that readers can learn to recognize, is more easily



interpreted in general terms than private correspondence, which relies on a particular writer's relationship to a particular reader; even a savvy reader of print remains vulnerable to the misrepresentations of a close friend.

For Edgeworth, developing readers' knowledge of the public system of print, including how to interpret their paratextual materials, enables them to join a community of similarly savvy readers. In turning to Jane Austen, the next chapter explores some of the possibilities that are created when an author takes such a community as a given. In Austen's novels, paying attention to how texts interact with their paratexts to produce meaning reveals how the material structure of the three-volume novel supplements her narrative practice. Where Edgeworth seeks to educate readers in how to interpret paratextual information, Austen, as we shall see, uses that familiarity with paratextual features and the expectations they produce in order to mislead and manipulate readers.

## Chapter 3.

### **“When farther beauty is known to be at hand”: Navigating the Landscape of the Three-Volume Novel in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park***

#### **Introduction**

Near the end of *Mansfield Park* (1814), as the heroine Fanny Price returns to Mansfield after extended exile in Portsmouth, Jane Austen draws attention to the landscape passing by outside of the carriage:

Her eye fell every where on lawns and plantations of the freshest green; and the trees, though not fully clothed, were in that delightful state, when farther beauty is known to be at hand, and when, while much is actually given to the sight, more yet remains for the imagination. (517)

Freed by Henry Crawford’s elopement with Fanny’s married cousin, Maria, from the conclusion that the novel has seemed to be setting up as inevitable—Edmund Bertram’s marriage to Mary Crawford and Fanny’s own eventual acceptance of the rakish Henry—Fanny reflects on the springtime landscape as a way of articulating how her own narrative possibilities have been renewed and how she can now look forward to future events with hope rather than dread. Fanny’s meditation on imminent “farther beauty” comes near the end of the third and final volume, making the passage suggestive of the reader’s position within the text: the trees, “not fully clothed,” nevertheless suggest the fullness that will follow, much like how the reader has read enough leaves, or pages, to understand the general shape of things to come in the few remaining chapters. Austen’s description of the landscape therefore comments on her readers’ position within the narrative, evoking the pleasurable state of incomplete knowledge and imaginative possibility an unread novel represents.

Yet the promise of “farther beauty” exists in tension with the events that have already unfolded and are about to unfold, coming as it does shortly after an abrupt plot

twist three chapters before the conclusion. Despite the nearness of the novel's end, signalled by the limited number of pages left in the volume, the reader is not necessarily able to predict the events that remain: the entirety of the marriage plot between Fanny and Edmund will be summarized in the final chapter as a part of the narrator's last-minute dispensation of justice. Austen's passing reference to unfolding leaves in *Mansfield Park* can be read as a subtler example of what Christina Lupton observes in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), where Austen relates the likelihood of Catherine and Henry's marriage "to the machinery of the paginated book" ("Contingency, Codex, the Eighteenth-Century Novel" 1183). At this point in the novel, the narrator remarks, "the anxiety can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity" (259). Lupton's argument centres on how eighteenth-century authors including Austen exploit the relationship between an understanding of "the book as paginated reading technology and . . . narrative as a system that gestures at its formal limits to the variations possible within language" (1175), identifying the codex as an object to be interpreted by those handling it in much the same way as a narrative should be interpreted by its reader.

In this chapter, I build upon Lupton's exploration of self-referential moments in which narratives refer to themselves as books to consider how the physical structure of the book—especially the three-volume structure common to novels in the period—provides Austen with the opportunity to experiment with narrative. In particular, I argue that Austen extends the metaphorical relationship between moving through a landscape and moving through a narrative to include moving through a novel's volumes, and that Austen, attentive to volume breaks as potential points of narrative prospect, uses readers' knowledge of where they are physically within the book to manipulate and resist their expectations. In Austen's hands, the metaphorical equation of landscape with both narrative and the codex book unsettles the confines of genre by forcing readers to confront the constraining features of the marriage plot. Like Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, whose articulation of resentment when she finds herself simultaneously trapped within an engagement with a man she despises and bound within the wilderness when she wishes to pass into an open field expresses her feeling of sharply delimited possibility,

Austen's rushed conclusions create the effect of running up against an enforced boundary: the end of the third volume. However, also like Maria, whose feeling of containment is produced by her own idea of what kind of plot her life should follow—marriage to a wealthy man, whether or not she likes him—readers' dissatisfactions, Austen suggests, are produced by their own expectations, their own commitment to an ending in which virtuous characters are rewarded with marriage. On the surface, Maria's belated escape from her marriage by eloping with Henry Crawford is a destructive act that throws the society of Mansfield into chaos, but it ultimately gives rise to a renewal of narrative possibilities for everyone except Maria, producing, once again just before the novel's close, "that delightful state . . . when, while much is actually given to the sight, more yet remains for the imagination" (517).

Austen's novels exploit this tension between "sight" and "imagination," or between concrete knowledge and speculative possibility, by relying on an implied reader who is already knowledgeable about how novels work. As Lupton accounts for, in *Northanger Abbey* and elsewhere Austen assumes readers who are able to recognize her allusions to how the technology of the paginated book mediates narrative, and who are therefore able to understand their place within the novel both conceptually, in relation to events of the plot, and physically, in relation to the number of pages read and unread. However, as the opening of this chapter demonstrates, Austen's references to the material structure of her books do not always complement the place that they occupy in the narrative; instead, the moment when the narrator seems to suggest that the reader should have some kind of clarity of vision is often a moment when readers' ability to predict events is obscured by their position within a limited or even claustrophobic point of view—a narrative choice that results in sudden or seemingly rushed conclusions.

This chapter proposes that, through the use of limited points of view, Austen invites her readers into a relationship with her novels in which they must attend to the complementary—and sometimes conflicting—structures of the narrative and the book in order to understand their position within it. The limited points of view that Austen employs are closely linked to her use of landscape description, especially the picturesque, which she uses to comment on her readers' position within both the plot and the book,

and the prospects afforded by both. Like picturesque spectators, who are positioned within the landscape in ways that potentially restrict their ability to see the full picture, readers are limited by the perspective that the narrator adopts. This narrative practice relies on a relationship between the material form of the text and its content, in which the material form of the three-volume novel exists prior to its composition, a structure that Austen displays her own awareness of in a January 1813 letter to Cassandra, when she writes of *Pride and Prejudice*, “The 2<sup>d</sup> vol. is shorter than I c<sup>d</sup> wish—but the difference is not so much in reality as in look, there being a larger proportion of Narrative in that part” (210).<sup>39</sup> The tension between proportion of pages and proportion of plot that Austen observes in the second volume of *Pride and Prejudice* is exploited more fully in subsequent novels, where readers who rely on the number of pages remaining to gauge how much plot to expect may be led astray. Viewed in this light, Austen’s rushed endings become a response to the constraints of the three-volume novel, which, like the picturesque, seeks to efface its boundaries through realistic representation. Austen’s narrative interventions draw attention to the artificiality of both by creating conflict between the reader’s experience of the narrative and the reader’s experience of the physical book.

Creating this tension between physical constraints and literary form, like that between “sight” and “imagination,” relies on readers who have specific expectations for both. Unlike Maria Edgeworth who, as the previous chapter explored, incorporates peritextual elements into her quixote narratives to teach readers how to navigate the literary marketplace, Austen assumes that her readers are already experienced navigators of both novels and the books that contain them. Studies of how Austen’s narratives situate readers and Austen’s own reading practices centre around a mode of reading that Katie Halsey has described as “resisting” and “appropriative” (10).<sup>40</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>39</sup> While the Romantic-era novel could run to as many as five or six volumes, the three-volume novel was becoming increasingly common and, by the 1820s, had become the dominant length for fiction. Peter Garside identifies a “shift to the three-volume form . . . in the 1810s, this occurring mainly at the expense of the two-volume novel” (91), which he attributes to commercial considerations, namely “from publishers convinced that this was the maximum size the market could bear” once they began to count on sales from individual purchasers rather than circulating libraries (91).

<sup>40</sup> In *Jane Austen the Reader: The Artist as Critic* (2013), Olivia Murphy locates Austen within a tradition of late eighteenth-century tradition of critical reading practices, arguing, “Her critical readings are just as

Austen's imagined readers are well versed in plot conventions, especially the range of possibilities and the ways that those possibilities are limited by the generic constraints of the novel. But Austen's reliance on such a reader goes beyond the self-conscious integration of familiar elements: by writing into her novels a reader with specific, genre-based expectations, Austen frames their events—especially the conclusions—as narrative inevitabilities, even as she seeds them with uncertainties, disappointments, and possible points of departure. By paying attention to how this narrative practice requires readers to be already well versed in how novels work narratively *and* technologically, this chapter considers how Austen's novels resist closure by denaturalizing both the structure of narrative and the physical act of reading a book. This commitment to dissatisfaction and resistance to closure invites readers to examine their own expectations for the genre, including the seeming necessity of a marriage plot.

Understanding the codex book as a landscape that readers are expected to navigate and interpret reveals the extent to which Austen uses point of view to exploit and undermine her readers' expectations about narrative structure. The popular discourse of the picturesque, with its interest in perspectives and prospects, was useful for Romantic-era writers who sought to articulate how narratives positioned their readers. Many scholars have commented on Austen's use of landscape, especially her references to picturesque theory; some, like Anne Toner, Barbara Britton Wenner, and Karen Valihora, draw attention to the metaphorical register of landscapes, associating them with the reader's position within the narrative. Wenner and William Galperin have drawn attention to the specifics of Austen's critiques of enclosure and the patriarchal structures of land ownership, and Valihora has argued that Austen's critique of the picturesque point of view in her exploration of "the arts of immersion and absorption, necessary to creating a view that is integrated and yet which yields a vision of a complete whole" (93) points towards Austen's affinity for "the eighteenth-century principle of a moral nature" (112). This chapter extends that metaphorical register further, to consider how the

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important as her creative contributions in developing, establishing and remaking the genre of the novel" (29). In *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945* (2012), Halsey shows how Austen extends her critical reading practices to her readers by assuming that they will be able to recognize and appreciate her ability to adopt and modify the narrative practices of other writers.

reader's experience of handling the codex book becomes another landscape to navigate and interpret, in which the reader's "prospects" include a physical position within the volume. This is not to suggest that Austen's novels do not contain specific critiques of the gendered and classed politics of the picturesque (indeed, I think they do), but that these critiques arise out of a more general critique of reading practices that rely on speculating about and complacently expecting predictable conclusions.

Narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse mediate readers' ability to understand their location within the landscape of the plot; the vantage point of a particular character often mirrors the point of view Austen allows her readers, both of which are frequently limited in ways that neither character nor reader anticipate. However, the effect of this mediation varies widely from novel to novel. For example, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) offers a gradual approach to the conclusion, so that readers experience the plot as a teleological movement towards the marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy. In a letter to her sister Austen herself referred to the novel, somewhat ironically, as "rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants some shade" (*Letters* 2012). In her subsequent novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814), Austen provides that shade in the form of limited, even claustrophobic, points of view that make it difficult for even knowledgeable readers to see the forest for the trees—or leaves, as the case may be. By obscuring readers' ability to link a specific event to the general plot of the novel, such as when the events of the novel's third volume seem to confirm the courtship plot between Henry and Fanny, Austen increases the likelihood that readers will be disappointed in their speculations. At the same time, the references to landscape that Austen draws on to illustrate narrative possibility also gesture towards the material features of a book that produce limitations: just as geographical regions are indicated by fences or lines on a map (arbitrary as both may be), fictional possibilities are demarcated by both the boundaries of genre and the physical constraints of the codex book. Readers thus have an additional vantage point: their knowledge of the size of the book, the number of volumes in which the novel was printed, and their ability to manipulate its pages without necessarily adhering to a linear reading practice. While Austen's narrators often restrict knowledge within a limited point of view, her novels remain alert to the fact that readers always exist, by necessity, outside of the bounds of the book. In other words, the physical

structure of the novel's peritext functions as a frame for the picturesque plot; by drawing attention to that frame, Austen's novels denaturalize it, making the contrivances of fiction visible and inviting readers to reconsider the values that the narratives—especially their conclusions—seem to uphold.

In order to account for Austen's narrative experiments, then, this chapter brings together three strains of scholarship: discussions of Austen's engagement with picturesque theory, attempts to account for how Austen's reading practices relate to both imagined and historical readers, and the influence of the printed book on the form that narrative takes. I begin by establishing the terms by which Romantic-era writers invoked landscape and the picturesque in order to theorize narrative. The remainder of the chapter examines the various ways that Austen integrates the material act of reading into her responses to these issues, first in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) where narrative satisfaction results from a naturalized process of reading and rereading that largely effaces the book as a physical object, and then in *Mansfield Park* (1814), where the expectations of characters and readers alike are frustrated and reshaped in ways intimately related to metaphorical and physical positioning of the reader within the book. I conclude with *Lady Susan*, a late and polished example of Austen's juvenilia that has survived in the form of a fair copy manuscript dated to sometime after 1805, nearly a decade after its original composition in 1797. Turning to this manuscript work, with its extreme resistance to closure, as a contrast to Austen's printed works frames her interest in unsatisfying conclusions as integral to her narrative practice, rather than a late development in Austen's art, and highlights the role that the technology of the book plays in making Austen's endings acceptable. *Lady Susan's* seemingly tacked-on conclusion casts into relief the role that the codex form plays in interpreting narrative, asking, when, if ever, is a manuscript whole? And, how can that incomplete sense of possibility be translated into print?

## **Landscape, narrative, and the sagacious reader**

When Austen invokes landscapes in her novels, she refers, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, to the picturesque, a form of landscape design and



representation in vogue at the end of the eighteenth century. Theories of the picturesque emerged during the late eighteenth century as an attempt to describe, in the words of William C. Snyder, “themes or imagery not categorized under *beautiful* or *sublime*,” but rather as a way “to combine the humble with the grand, the mellow with the bold, the smooth with the rugged, the aged with the youthful” (Snyder 144). Writers such as William Gilpin and Uvedale Price used the picturesque to push back against the “fatiguing uniformity” (Gilpin 2) of the cultivated landscapes designed by gardener Capability Brown earlier in the eighteenth century. However, despite Gilpin and Price’s objections to Brown’s designs, the picturesque landscape was also highly constructed in its own way; in discussing the proper display of ruins on a property, Gilpin remarks, “a sort of negligent air should run through the whole; and if art should *always be concealed*; it should here be *totally hid*” (25). In this instance, Gilpin reveals the double artfulness of the picturesque, which requires simultaneous intervention on the part of the landowner and a concealment of that intervention in order to make it appear natural. The concealment of human intervention is closely linked to perspective; as Peter de Bolla has shown, the development of picturesque landscape theory was closely linked to a shift in ways of looking. According to de Bolla, the second half of the eighteenth century saw a shift in landscape painting away from the pictorialist mode, which situated the viewer in “a prospective experience, of looking out over a scene, taking a view, temporalized into the expectation that arouses and stimulates our hopes for the future” (109), towards the antipictorialist mode, which situates the viewer within the landscape and “noting that viewing landscape does not depend on the viewer’s occupying the true point of sight” (119).

The apparent naturalness of the picturesque landscape was often invoked by writers who sought to elucidate narrative. William Galperin has noted how theorists of the picturesque including Gilpin and Price drew on descriptions of realistic narrative fiction in order to naturalize pre-existing aesthetic judgements that obscured picturesque theory’s “motives and goals, most prominently the enclosure of property whose boundaries demarcating ownership are effectively drawn by nature itself in a properly improved landscape” (54)—how, in short, the strictures of beauty laid out by theorists of the picturesque were based on landscapes that effaced the evidence of human

interference. This discursive relationship between narrative and the picturesque was a reciprocal one, in which those writing about fiction drew on descriptions of landscape to articulate an ideal literary aesthetic that effaces the author or narrator's presence through seemingly natural representation of a scene from a given vantage point. Different ways of looking, varied points of view, and what those perspectives efface are therefore essential elements of the picturesque—and part of what makes it useful for commenting on narrative structure. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note that one of the things that these perspectives have the possibility to efface or to bring into view is the medium of the book and the constraints it imposes on or the possibilities it represents for narrative.

The usefulness of the picturesque to describe fictional narratives is on display in an 1810 essay by Anna Letitia Barbauld that scholars have frequently linked to Austen's narrative practice.<sup>41</sup> In "On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing," Barbauld reflects on the novels of the previous century, using the language of landscape to describe an experienced reader's ability to identify narrative possibilities.<sup>42</sup> For Barbauld, these possibilities are the source of the pleasure that reading novels produces, at once because of the room they create for prediction and because of the prospect of predicting correctly,

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Claudia Johnson's "'Let Me Make the Novels of a Country': Barbauld's 'The British Novelists' (1810/1820)" (2001); Anne Toner's "Anna Barbauld on Fictional Form in *The British Novelists* (1810)" (2011–12) and "Landscape as Literary Criticism: Jane Austen, Anna Barbauld and the Narratological Application of the Picturesque" (2014); and Jocelyn Harris's "Anna Letitia Barbauld, Jane Austen's Unseen Interlocutor" (2014).

<sup>42</sup> The essay prefaced the fifty-volume collection, *The British Novelists*, which was published at the height of Barbauld's critical authority. Barbauld was an eminent writer whose body of work included poetry, educational writing, and literary criticism. Although not a novelist, she had established her credentials as a critic of literature in general as the editor of several volumes of poetry. In particular, Barbauld's work as the editor of the six-volume *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* (1804) established her credentials as an editor of and commentator on fiction among her contemporaries and has been recognised as an inaugural example of narratological theory by scholars including Catherine E. Moore and Anne Mellor. Barbauld's early work as a critic centred on established genres and writers, but Mary A. Waters has traced how, as Barbauld's authority as a critic increased, she paid increasing attention to popular genres like the novel, which were not limited to elite, highly educated audiences. The shift in her interest is visible in "On the Origins and Progress of Novel-Writing," where she emphasises the importance of enjoyment in literary pursuits, while refusing to lend credence to the general anxieties about novel reading. Indeed, the enjoyment that novel reading offers provides Barbauld with the rationale to take the novel seriously as a form: as a genre that readers actually read, it has a degree of cultural power that other, more prestigious genres lack. For a full account of the development of Barbauld's authority as a cultural and literary critic, see Mary A. Waters, *British Women Writers and the Profession of Literary Criticism, 1789–1832* (2004).

an activity made possible by the limited conclusions available to an author, despite the appearance of complete freedom:

It is pleasant to the mind to sport in the boundless regions of possibility; to find relief from the sameness of every-day occurrences by expatiating amidst brighter skies and fairer fields; to exhibit love that is always happy, valour that is always successful; to feed the appetite for wonder by a quick succession of marvellous events; and to distribute, like a ruling providence, rewards and punishments which fall just where they ought to fall. (408)

Through recourse to a metaphor that compares the act of reading fiction to exploration within an apparently open landscape, Barbauld figures reading as an active process, in which readers continually attempt to make sense of events and form judgements from their position within the narrative. Likening reading to “sport[ing] in the boundless regions of possibility” and “expatiating amidst brighter skies and fairer fields” represents the reading process as play: exploratory with the illusion of freedom, but always contained by a foregone and just conclusion.

Readers’ knowledge of such an inevitably fitting conclusion complements the idea of “sport,” as a way of reading that involves considering a range of fictional possibilities that, at least at the outset, seem “boundless,” yet remain safely enclosed, bound by the conventions of genre and the covers of the codex book. At the same time, it figures reading as an active process, in which readers are expected to anticipate events before they occur; as Claudia Johnson has shown, “the Barbauldian reader . . . is not feminized, not passive, uncritical, apt to be overpowered, but rather has the sagacity to know that novels are the artifice of novelists and the self-consciousness to take novel reading as an occasion for the exercise of judgement and criticism” (172). However, readers’ ability to do so effectively depends in large part on the choices that an author makes in constructing a narrative. Anne Toner has remarked that, for Barbauld, “the carefully connected plot” is essential to narrative composition (“Anna Barbauld on Fictional Form in *The British Novelists*” 185). As Barbauld’s reference to the “ruling providence” of the narrative suggests, readers require narratives that function as

a *whole*, in which the fates and fortunes of the personages are brought to a conclusion, agreeable to the author’s own preconceived idea. Every incident

in a well written composition is introduced for a certain purpose, and made to forward a certain plan. A sagacious reader is never disappointed in his forebodings. If a prominent circumstance is presented to him, he lays hold on it, and may be very sure it will introduce some striking event; and if a character has strongly engaged his affections, he need not fear being obliged to withdraw them: the personages never turn out differently from what their first appearance gave him a right to expect; they gradually open, indeed; they may surprise, but they never disappoint him. (412–13)

Unlike the widespread anxiety about female novel reading that informed the quixote plots discussed in the previous chapter, Barbauld assumes readers comfortable with genre conventions in such a way that allows them to anticipate events before they occur. Accordingly, her criteria for what makes a novel “well written” is rooted in the author’s ability to write for just such a “sagacious reader” who is able to recognize familiar elements and respond to them appropriately. The “wholeness” of an ideal novel is contingent on a reader who understands how to read novels as self-contained entities in which all individual characters and events build into something larger. Barbauld’s “sagacious reader” is thus a forward-looking reader, with one eye fixed on the impending conclusion in an attempt to relate events as they unfold to the larger whole.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> By emphasising “wholeness,” Barbauld conceives of novels as made up of self-contained and providential plots, allegories for the complete history of the world rather than a part of some larger narrative. The moral imperative behind fiction that adheres to a “ruling providence” alongside a speculative and exploratory reader become more explicit when she goes on to draw a contrast between fiction and real life:

The great author of the drama of life has not finished his piece; but the author must finish his; and vice must be punished and virtue rewarded in the compass of a few volumes; and it is a fault in *his* composition if every circumstance does not answer the reasonable expectations of the reader. But in real life our reasonable expectations are often disappointed; many incidents occur which are like “passages that lead to nothing,” and characters occasionally turn out quite different from what our fond expectations have led us to expect. (413)

Here, Barbauld identifies the main difference between fiction and lived experience as a matter of scope; the experiences of real life are part of a much larger providential narrative encompassing all of human history in which the consequences of an event are not always visible, but the events represented within a novel are selected by an author who already knows their greater significance within the plot. Although elsewhere in her essay Barbauld identifies an inflated sense of reality as one of the dangers fiction poses to its readers, here she describes fiction as a kind of reality condensed: the plot of a novel in which “vice must be punished and virtue rewarded” functions as an allegory for the greater “drama of life,” a piece not yet finished, in which the purpose of “passages that lead to nothing” will eventually be revealed. In “real life” a person’s expectations may not be fulfilled because he or she does not have access to the full narrative scope of “the great author’s” vision, but in fiction, “A sagacious reader is never disappointed in his forebodings” (412) because he—or, frequently, she—understands how to read the conventions of plot and character generally and how to apply them to a specific text, making accurate speculation possible.

Central to this emphasis on narrative “wholeness” are the landscape metaphors Barbauld employs, a relationship that comes out of Romantic-era discussions of the picturesque in relation to narrative. Toner describes how Barbauld’s essay links moving through a narrative to travelling through a landscape, especially her preference for the “long avenue” which “offers multiple perspectives, but only in a monotonous and predictable way” (“Landscape as Literary Criticism” 13). As in the “boundless regions of possibility,” Barbauld’s landscape of reading invokes the kinds of viewpoints de Bolla associates with the pictorialist mode, in which approaching figures can be spotted from a distance and seen as part of the larger landscape. Likewise, readers who “[sport] . . . amidst brighter skies and fairer fields” have the clear sightlines that allow them to look forward to the future by viewing individual events as part of a larger narrative whole contained within the novel’s volumes.

The reader that Barbauld’s essay describes is a near relation of the imagined reader that Jane Austen places at the centre of her novels: one familiar with the conventions of fiction, engaging actively and critically with the text at hand and anticipating events before they occur. Anne Toner links their shared emphasis on active, critical readers to their use of landscape when she says,

. . . both Barbauld and Austen linger on the sustained rather than transitory view of a country seat, both dwell on the approach to the house as ‘gradual’ (‘the gradual approach’ [Barbauld], ‘they gradually ascended’ [Austen]), and both explicitly reject the ‘artificial’ (Austen) and ‘contrived’ (Barbauld) in the admired landscape.” (“Landscape as Literary Criticism” 15)

In Toner’s argument, Barbauld and Austen share an approach to landscape that points toward their relationship to the overall shape of a narrative; she claims that Uvedale Price’s “dislike of the ‘detached’ and the ‘broken,’ is also evoked by Jane Austen and Anna Barbauld as a principle of narration” (“Landscape” 14), a view of narrative that privileges conclusions, in which the entire plot is conceived of as a movement towards an inevitable event, which occurs in the final pages of the final volume. In this formula, the movement of the plot and the movement through the volumes coincide, offering a

harmonious reading experience that naturalizes the relationship between the narrative and physical structures of the book.

While this emphasis on unity and conclusions certainly holds true for *Pride and Prejudice*, where the plot progresses evenly and volume breaks provide readers with an opportunity to look back over events and project forward, Toner overlooks how Elizabeth's gradual approach to her marriage to Darcy and new status as the mistress of Pemberley is an outlier in Austen's oeuvre, where conclusions are by turns unexpected, rushed, or both. Galperin has argued that Austen pushes back against the regulatory features of the picturesque through a narrative practice that, "far from domesticating or containing otherness, actually celebrated its uncanny prevalence in everyday life" (53). In Galperin's view, Austen's resistance to the picturesque, and therefore to a naturalized narrative process, becomes visible in the "reduction to particularity, and the uncanniness achieved through a largely antipicturesque highlighting of detail" through which "she was able apparently to resist the realistic imperative, the imperative to probability, without also resorting to romance or the unreal" (60; 61); in other words, Austen's focus on detail disrupts the unity of the scene and calls into question the apparent harmony of the picturesque landscape.

However, Austen does not emphasize detail alone; instead, her novels rely on the interplay of what Sonia Hofkosh describes as "multiple kinds of lenses or kinds of shots—the microscopic and the lateral pan, the lingering close-up, and the global, God's eye view" (53). For Mary Beth Tegan, this movement between different perspectives is an important part of how Austen incorporates the picturesque; she notes that "the 'deserving' picturesque viewer is one who also moves about freely, shifting his or her point of view as necessity, or art, demands" (44), and that "the various looks deployed by [Austen's] characters reveal a wealth of information about their visual and social orientations, while the narrator's subtly shifting points of view work to undermine traditional 'seats' of rhetorical power and influence, and to transfer the locus of authorities to 'nobodies'" (48).<sup>44</sup> By focalising through characters with a limited view of

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<sup>44</sup> These shifting frames also contribute to the allusive quality that Yoon Sun Lee identifies when she describes Austen's style as at once "precise and abstract" (174), by which she means that "the global can be

the larger narrative at hand, Austen obscures the relationship between small-scale detail and large-scale plot, which allows her to wield her readers' speculations against them through complex and sometimes submerged plots that can only be fully understood when viewed in light of their conclusions. As we shall see, this effect is compounded by the way that Austen situates those characters within the landscapes they encounter and navigate; characters' prospects within the landscape, by turns, represent their state of knowledge of their place in the world or provide an ironic commentary on their mistakeness. The placement of these landscape descriptions within the volumes signals to readers how much to trust a character's interpretation of events; in her narratives, Austen exploits the fact that part of the reader's field of view includes a book that can provide cues as to how to interpret the narrative in order to draw attention to the potential for tension between the two forms.<sup>45</sup> Like the picturesque landscape, which obscures the

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derived through a focus on small-scale abstract units" (173), and that Austen's focus on detail "abstracts, decontextualizes, and scales down concepts in order to link them together into fields of possibility" (185). Tellingly, Lee draws on Henry Tilney's explanation of the picturesque to demonstrate how Austen develops this relationship between detailed description and abstract concepts; the picturesque is one of these abstract concepts, invoked explicitly, by references to theorists and principles of landscape design, and implicitly, by descriptions of landscapes that conform—or don't—to those principles. Similarly, when Austen invokes her readers' existing knowledge of how novels work in order to ask them to fill in the gaps in her own conclusions, she invites them to link their experience reading this particular novel to their experiences with reading fiction in general, drawing attention to how the field of possibility within a work of fiction "shows ideology at work" (Lee 186).

<sup>45</sup> Yet even when viewed from the endpoint, many of Austen's novels remain open to uncertainty and debate. Where Barbauld emphasises the importance of understanding a novel as a complete and enclosed entity, Austen's uses the relationship between the structure of the narrative and the structure of the book as an opportunity to push back against falsely naturalized narrative expectations. Emily Rohrbach has drawn attention to Austen's resistance to closure by exploring her unwillingness to allow the significance of any given moment to be decided by its end result. At the end of *Persuasion*, Rohrbach argues,

Austen alerts us . . . to the shifting of historical perspectives over time in a way that calls for us to see any judgment about a particular moment's significance as provisional at best . . . The difference does not signal that the "event" has now decided, that the last view is the "right" one; rather, it makes the ethical understanding of a moment appear as an interminably unfolding process whereby the interpretive possibilities of the moment become, at different points in time, variously illuminated. (128)

According to Rohrbach, Anne's change in sentiments over the course of the novel, from the belief that "she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it" (68) to her later assessment that, "I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience" (253) is not a final conclusion, but rather an indication of how interpretation of past events is contingent on one's present moment—the result of the shifting perspectives that both temporal and spatial movement create. While *Persuasion* is the most explicit example of how Austen conceives of her plots as part of history rather than self-enclosed entities, her other novels also conclude with similar gestures outwards that invite readers to use their knowledge of what has transpired before in order to project forward; rereading becomes a way of imagining the future by projecting past the boundaries of the closed, completed book.

human hands that shaped it, novels begin with the appearance of possibility when, in fact, their events have already been determined before the book's first printing.

By resisting the providential construction of "whole" narratives, and the picturesque scenes that are used to articulate them, Austen draws attention to the role that the codex plays in structuring meaning in narratives. In Austen's novels, passages of varying importance do frequently "lead to nothing": literally, in *Northanger Abbey*, where corridors end in disused rooms that do *not* contain secrets, but also in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Elizabeth Bennet's interest in first Wickham and later Colonel Fitzwilliam provide fleeting diversions; in *Mansfield Park*, where the bulk of the narrative is spent on courtship plots that ultimately fail; and in *Lady Susan*, which rejects any kind of narrative structure at all. As the remainder of this chapter will show, Austen's narrative practice is one that continually forces her readers to encounter the limits of narratives and their own interpretative limitations through recourse to spatial metaphors, including restricted vantage points and claustrophobic interiors, so that even the conclusion is inflected by interpretive uncertainty.

While Austen does construct her plots as a movement toward a concluding event, she resists the finality of that event, in part through a direct engagement with the material constraints of the codex book. *Northanger Abbey*'s reference to the necessity of concluding within the number of pages left in the volume is the most overt reference to the relationship between the novel's material and textual forms. However, Austen's other novels are also attentive to the potential tension between the physical and narrative acts of closing the book: as Lupton points out, "Austen makes the artificial closure of the marriage plot the condition of her revealing her book's commitment to an uncertain future . . . the marriages in *Emma* (1815) and *Mansfield Park* (1814) are famously settled just at the point where Austen exposes her reader to his or her imaginative part in the novel" ("Contingency, Codex, the Eighteenth-Century Novel 1182–83). In other words, Austen fulfills her narrative contract by concluding her novels with the expected narratives, at the same time as she draws attention to the artificiality of those conclusions through overt narrative interventions that summarize events rather than represent them. Austen's conclusions thus result in gaps that she invites her readers to fill, highlighting



the limits of the novel's plot conventions and the unpredictability of the future, even as the codex book reaches the point of literal closure. More importantly, though, these rushed summaries create the illusion that the end of the third volume is a fixed boundary that the narrative must be contained within, rather than a convention of the early nineteenth-century literary marketplace, thereby drawing attention to the artificial constraint it produces,

### ***Pride and Prejudice* and the picturesque plot**

Unlike those published later in her career, Austen's first two published novels do not seek to make visible either the narrative contrivances that their plots require, or the material constraints that help shape those plots. *Pride and Prejudice* in particular cultivates an aesthetic based in reader satisfaction rather than a resistance to convention, in large part due to the way that it integrates and naturalizes the acts of reading and rereading into its narrative structure. Despite occasional moments of narrative self-consciousness, like that at the close of the second volume when the narrator pauses to remark that "it is not the object of this work" to provide a detailed travelogue of Elizabeth's tour of northern England (266), the narrator largely avoids the direct addresses that make readers an explicit rather than an implicit presence in the novel. The difference in narrative address between *Pride and Prejudice* and Austen's other novels becomes particularly palpable in the conclusions, where rather than inviting her readers to fill in the gaps to their own satisfaction, the novel lingers over the dénouement, pausing to allow both Elizabeth and Darcy to account for their feelings, both to each other and to other characters. During this pause, Elizabeth and Darcy revisit the events of the novel, studying the plot of their courtship as they might a landscape they have traversed.

Readers who have travelled through this narrative landscape with Elizabeth have witnessed her movement towards a point of view more closely aligned with the narrator's omniscient gaze. The absence, for much of the first volume, of any strong narrative presence is highlighted by the extensive use of dialogue; even those few passages that are voiced by the third person narrator often summarize dialogue rather than representing it

directly. As Elizabeth becomes more self-aware, she emerges as the primary point of narrative focalization; the narrator only begins to rely on free indirect discourse as Elizabeth becomes aware of her errors in judgment. Unlike the ironic distance it creates in Austen's later novels, free indirect discourse in *Pride and Prejudice* is primarily a narrative device used to indicate a similarity in perspective between narrator and character. As Elizabeth learns to examine her own opinions and conduct, her perspective becomes more narratorial; so, too, does her position within the landscape change. The narrative reinforces Elizabeth's increasingly authoritative point of view by positioning her in landscapes that afford clear sightlines, allowing her to both look behind and anticipate the future.

In comparison with Elizabeth, readers have one additional prospect to help them interpret a particular event in relation to the novel as a whole: their ability to see where they are, physically, in the book. Paying attention to where events are located within in the three volumes of the novel offers vital interpretive clues regarding how to understand them. For example, despite the horror Elizabeth experiences during Mr. Collins's proposal, its location near the end of the novel's first volume reassures readers that their marriage will not be the conclusion of the plot. By contrast, Darcy's first proposal and subsequent letter that reveals previously hidden information near the midpoint of the second volume can be taken seriously because it synthesizes the events that have gone before. When the third and final volume opens with an extended description of the grounds of Pemberley, "the object of this work" comes into view (266). With each volume, the reader's perspective becomes clearer as the narrative gradually approaches the conclusion; the three-volume structure becomes a way of dividing up the plot and providing readers with clues about how to give weight to events in the plot, even if they cannot predict what the result will be.

The framing offered by the reader's physical position within the novel's volumes mirrors Elizabeth's perspective on events, which is emphasized by the way that she positions herself within the landscape. Elizabeth's role as a walker and the way the narrative positions her within the landscapes that she traverses informs and is informed by her knowledge of events and degree of self-awareness. The first volume positions

Elizabeth as a figure in the landscape, a picturesque object to be commented on by others. As Olivia Murphy has noted, “Elizabeth's walk itself is completed in one paragraph of text, yet the discussion surrounding her walk spreads over two chapters” (“Jane Austen’s ‘Excellent Walker’” 124); instead, the page space is devoted to how Elizabeth’s family debates the merits of the walk before she leaves and Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst comment on it derisively after the fact for the benefit of Darcy, focusing on the physical evidence of Elizabeth’s walk:

“She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild.”

“She did indeed, Louisa. I could hardly keep my countenance. Very nonsensical to come at all. Why must *she* be scampering about the country, because her sister had a cold? Her hair so untidy, so blowsy!”

“Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain; and the gown which had been let down to hide it, not doing its office.” (39)

While Murphy reads Elizabeth’s walking as the means by which Elizabeth expresses her agency and rejects the status of an object, the narrative’s focus in this instance on how other people view Elizabeth rather than how she experiences the walk nevertheless turns her into an object to be commented on and ridiculed, by men and women alike. In the absence of a direct representation of the walk itself, Caroline’s image of Elizabeth “scampering about the country, . . . [h]er hair so untidy, so blowsy” remains the most vivid, hypothetical though it is. Whether witnessed or not, the act of walking is “an exhibition,” an opportunity to comment on her indecorous solitude, her dirty petticoats, and even her eyes, “brightened by the exercise” (39). By providing readers with the outsider’s view of Elizabeth’s walk, the novel locates her as part of the scenery rather than the person who frames it for the reader.

Later in the same volume, Elizabeth offers some commentary of her own when she encounters the same three characters on a walk through the grounds of Netherfield Park. In this instance, she seizes the opportunity to reverse the gaze, using the picturesque as an excuse to maintain her solitude: “No, no; stay where you are.—You are charmingly

group'd, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good bye" (60). Here, Elizabeth's direct reference to picturesque theory is used as a way to position herself as an observer rather than the object of observation. By drawing attention to the picturesque scene and rejecting it, Elizabeth makes its artificiality apparent; in doing so, she briefly seizes control of the narrative frame, acquiring the authority to rearrange the scene so that she is outside of it, looking on. However, this example is fleeting and Elizabeth is saved from the consequences of her joke by running away; aware that the control she exerts is limited, she abandons the scene before it expires. Like the reader, who can begin to exert interpretive control through speculation, Elizabeth here begins to test the limits of her narrative authority by framing others the way that they previously framed her.

This fleeting moment of control is largely set up as a joke to display Elizabeth's wit, but over the course of the novel Elizabeth's relationship to the landscape she walks through changes, so that her point of view becomes the frame through which the reader experiences the narrative for more sustained passages. In the second volume, during her walks through Rosings Park, the narrative becomes increasingly introspective, so that by the time she reads Darcy's letter explaining his conduct the reader is fully immersed in her perspective. During these walks she remains an object within the landscape to be observed—Darcy knows her habits and where to find her—but her subjective experience comes to the fore, framing both events and the landscape through her gaze.

This volume uses moving through the landscape as an opportunity to explore Elizabeth's emotional state; what she sees is less important than what she feels. The morning after Darcy's proposal, she goes for a walk not to enjoy the "air and exercise" for its own sake, but because "it was impossible to think of anything else," and she only breaks from her habitual favourite walk because "the recollection of Mr. Darcy's sometimes coming there stopped her, and instead of entering the park, she turned up the lane, which led her farther from the turnpike road" (217). The path that Elizabeth takes to avoid encountering Darcy also takes her away from the improved main road, to a lane where she can walk in solitude. The unusually specific description of Elizabeth's route—especially given that readers have no clear map of Hunsford or Rosings Park—

emphasizes her conscious navigational choices and her awareness that the literal path she follows has narrative consequences. However, the landscape itself convinces her to abandon her plan so that she can better appreciate the scene:

After walking two or three times along that part of the lane, she was tempted, by the pleasantness of the morning, to stop at the gates and look into the park. The five weeks which she had now passed in Kent, had made a great difference in the country, and every day was adding to the verdure of the early trees. She was on the point of continuing her walk, when she caught a glimpse of a gentleman within the sort of grove which edged the park; he was moving that way; and fearful of its being Mr. Darcy, she was directly retreating. (217)

Despite her roundabout route, Elizabeth does find her way back to her usual ground, which includes narratively convenient trees that conceal Darcy's presence until she is too near to avoid him. Here, Elizabeth's attempt to control the course of events by altering her physical movements falls short because while she has been navigating the landscape in an attempt to avoid Darcy, he has been navigating the same landscape in search of her. Their cat-and-mouse game in the grounds of Rosings thus dramatizes the limits of a character's agency in planning a route, whether it is a morning's walk or determining her future.

The specificity of Elizabeth's route before she encounters Darcy forms a sharp contrast with the way she experiences her surroundings around her after reading his letter. From a mindset where she is able to appreciate "the verdure of the early trees" she shifts to a complete focus on the letter and becomes immersed in the emotions it evokes. In one of the novel's most sustained and turbulent passages of free indirect discourse, Elizabeth's reading and rereadings of the letter are punctuated by bouts of walking, but any attention to where she walks, her attention to the weather, the "early trees" are subsumed by the letter:

In this perturbed state of mind, with thoughts that could rest on nothing, she walked on; but it would not do; in half a minute the letter was unfolded again, and collecting herself as well as she could, she again began the mortifying perusal of all that related to Wickham, and commanded herself so far as to examine the meaning of every sentence. (227)

Reading the letter and walking through the landscape are here linked—walking leads to reading and reading leads to walking—but without any clear indication of where one ends and the other begins. Moreover, rather than moving to a new location, either literally or metaphorically, Elizabeth’s location and movements become cyclical. Instead of walking towards insight or perspective, Elizabeth retreads the same ground, “wandering along the lane for two hours, giving way to every variety of thought; reconsidering events, determining probabilities, and reconciling herself as well as she could, to a change so sudden and so important” (231).

While the letter offers a change in perspective, it requires Elizabeth to return repeatedly to familiar events in order to reframe them. This reframing, which occurs alongside the act of inattentive “wandering,” invites readers to not only reread Darcy’s letter, but the novel as a whole. Darcy’s proposal and his subsequent letter occur at the novel’s midpoint, almost exactly halfway through the second volume, and the positioning indicates that this turning point is a decisive one. The letter closes off certain avenues—primarily Wickham but also Colonel Fitzwilliam, who is dismissed as “no longer an object” at the end of the chapter (232)—leaving Darcy as her only viable suitor. However, given Elizabeth’s angry rejection and Darcy’s departure from Rosings, the mechanics of how this courtship plot will unfold remains a question to readers, who are still lost in the midpoint of the novel. At the same time, the act of wandering creates the sense that Elizabeth’s path—literal and narrative—is the result of unplanned yet inevitable movement outside of any one character’s control. Much as Elizabeth encountered Darcy despite her attempts to evade him, their marriage plot is figured as one that will unfold whether they seek it actively or not.

The transition between the second and third volume provides an answer to how the courtship plot will progress, with Elizabeth’s decision to travel to Derbyshire with the Gardiners and Mrs. Gardiner’s wish to tour Pemberley while they are there. Despite the fact that the second volume ends with the narrator’s remark that “it not the object of this work to describe Derbyshire, nor of any of the remarkable places through which their route thither lay,” the third and final volume opens with a sustained description of Pemberley as Elizabeth encounters it as a tourist—implicitly identifying what the work’s

“object,” in fact, is. In explaining this narrative practice to her readers, Austen reveals the artifice of her own seemingly natural narration, forcing them to acknowledge that the novel they are reading has “an object” that it is hastening towards. When Pemberley does, at last come into view and the narrator pauses to describe it, the novel further emphasizes that Pemberley—and, by extension, Elizabeth’s marriage to Darcy—is that object:

They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted.  
(271)

Like the detail with which the narrator describes Elizabeth’s walk the morning after Darcy’s proposal, the attention given to the ascent to “the top of a considerable eminence,” and the “large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills” indicates the importance of both the route taken and the view that route affords, a significance that becomes explicit when Elizabeth responds to it by feeling “that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something.” Darcy’s unexpected arrival on the scene—and even more unexpected hospitality—reinforces the inevitable sense of movement of the courtship plot. As Toner accounts for, here Austen, like Barbauld, “linger[s] on the sustained rather than transitory view of a country seat, . . . dwell[ing] on the approach to the house as ‘gradual’ . . . and . . . explicitly reject[ing] the ‘artificial’ (Austen) and ‘contrived’ (Barbauld) in the admired landscape” (15). This gradual approach to the house mirrors both the narrator’s approach to the plot and the way that the narrative uses Elizabeth’s point of view to represent it; here, the narrator’s approval of the landscape design blends with Elizabeth’s delight, retroactively locating the passage within her point of view while simultaneously maintaining the authoritative assessment of the narrator. By only revealing this information at the end of the description, it invites a reconsideration of the passage that accounts for Elizabeth’s more self-interested perspective as well as the narrator’s supposedly removed one. Much like the view of Pemberley, which is seamlessly integrated into its surroundings, the blending

of Elizabeth's voice with the narrator's, at times almost indistinguishably, develops over the course of the novel; the absence of any strong narrative presence at all in the first volume gradually gives way to extensive use of free indirect discourse in the second, so that by the opening of the third Elizabeth's ability to frame her experiences accurately allows her to take on the authority of a narrator.

In her engagement with this passage, Toner allows for one key difference between Austen and Barbauld's narrative preferences, namely that "Barbauld dislikes a house bursting upon a viewer's eye, while the language of abruptness is present in Elizabeth's first sighting of Pemberley" (15). However, the abruptness with which Elizabeth encounters Pemberley is heavy with irony; despite its sudden appearance, it is not a surprise to Elizabeth and the Gardiners, who have come with the explicit intention of viewing the house. Likewise, Elizabeth's movement towards Pemberley has had the weight of narrative probability since Darcy's first remark on her "fine eyes" (30), a moment in the first volume that is recalled by a second conversation about Elizabeth's appearance between Caroline Bingley, Mrs. Hurst, and Darcy in the third. While seeing Pemberley from a prospect with clear sightlines marks the moment when Elizabeth first consciously entertains the idea of marriage to Darcy, readers have been invited to anticipate the possibility since the beginning of the novel. The third volume thus opens with a clear view of the novel's endpoint, even though the path that the narrative will take to reach it is still uncertain. Indeed, the descent from the "eminence" that gives the reader a clear sightline back into the winding trail of the plot following Lydia's elopement with Wickham seems to forestall it, especially since the narrative focalizes almost entirely through Elizabeth, who is wholly unaware of Darcy's attempts to track Wickham and Lydia. The suspense in which the inhabitants of Longbourn are kept for much of this volume draws attention to how Elizabeth's perspective is limited by her geographical location, namely how her physical location prevents her from participating first in the drama of Lydia's elopement; just as she is lost in the grounds of Pemberley while her family is in turmoil, her removal to Longbourn while her father and uncle search for Wickham in London prevents her from knowing about Darcy's involvement until after the fact. By focalizing through Elizabeth's perspective, the novel continually draws



attention to the problem of spatial arrangement within a landscape and the limitations of any single prospect, even one with clear sightlines.

Whereas Austen's subsequent novels more fully exploit readers' inability to see beyond what the narrator represents, the conclusion of *Pride and Prejudice* ensures that all of the most important gaps in readers' knowledge have been filled. Notably, these gaps are filled through a series of walks which provide Elizabeth and Darcy with the opportunity to reevaluate the events of the plot together. On the first of these, Darcy's second proposal is met with an acceptance that overwhelms both of them so much that they cease to pay attention to the landscape around them entirely: "They walked on, without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said, for attention to any other objects" (407). Once again, heightened emotion results in inattention to the landscape—so much so, "that they had wandered about, till she was beyond her own knowledge" (413). On the following day, they walk out again, this time, at Mrs. Bennet's suggestion, to Oakham Mount—a fictional place that provides them with the opportunity to enjoy "a nice long walk" and a view. But despite the opportunity to offer readers a lingering view of the landscape similar to that Elizabeth achieves of Pemberley at the beginning of the volume, the narrator offers a lingering retrospective of the plot instead, inviting readers to recall events from earlier in the novel rather than pay attention to current or future ones.

In the novel's conclusion, the effacement of concrete geography in favour of recollections of the novel's plot comes to a head in Chapter 18, which opens with Elizabeth calling upon Darcy to account for "his having ever fallen in love with her" (421). The entire chapter occurs as disembodied, decontextualized dialogue, with the voices of the two characters anchored by only the lightest of narrative framework, with no temporal or physical setting to tell the reader where they are. Where they are and when this conversation occurs is unspecified, but given that they only seem able to be alone when they go on walks, the possibility of this conversation occurring on one such excursion seems possible. However, by absenting their physical context from the conversation, the novel gives narrative weight not to their literal location, but to their location within the plot, and therefore within the pages of the novel: readers are invited to

look back over events from the prospect of the conclusion. Tellingly, in her questions and answers, Elizabeth frames the process of falling in love as a journey, telling Darcy, “I can comprehend your going on charmingly, when you had once made a beginning; but what could set you off in the first place?” to which Darcy responds, “I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I *had* begun” (421). Dissatisfied with this response, Elizabeth narrates his emotional journey back to him, and he offers minor corrections. In this conversation, Elizabeth’s commentary recalls the reader’s attention to the novel’s events at the same time as she frames them as the clichéd plot of a novel. Tellingly, Elizabeth uses the language of walking to do so: Darcy’s “going on charmingly” through the landscape of the courtship narrative is preceded by an unremembered event that allows him to “set off.

The return to the dialogue-heavy style of the first volume reinforces the invitation to remember through the power of comparison; whereas before Elizabeth’s witty and epigrammatic style was the result of snap judgements about other characters, here, her observations have a narratorial effect, in that they seek to organize events into a coherent whole and make that process visible to readers. The effect of this commentary is a guided reinterpretation of the early volume, which, in the absence of a narrator’s voice to uphold theirs, allows Elizabeth and Darcy to narrate their courtship to each other. In coopting Darcy’s voice and describing his past feelings to him, Elizabeth displays a more sustained form of narrative control than she does when she abandons Darcy, Caroline Bingley, and Mrs. Hurst to their picturesque arrangement. Elizabeth’s authority is reinforced by the conversation’s location in the final volume, at the end, with very few pages remaining to afford a reconsideration.

Yet the novel does not simply conform to what Peter de Bolla calls the pictorialist mode, which draws on “the complex narrative structure of Whig historiography” in order to “write a history of the present with his back turned to it” (111; 112). Whereas the pictorialist Whig historiography requires a sustained view of the past from a single prospect, Elizabeth, like the picturesque viewer, examines and re-examines her plot from a number of angles when narrating it to different family members in order to reassure

them that the prospect of her marriage *is* satisfactory. Despite its tendency to linger over what has gone before, the conclusion to *Pride and Prejudice* is ultimately forward-looking; the prospect afforded of past events allows readers to project forward in the future: to imagine how Jane and Bingley will treat their servants, how Lydia and Wickham will require financial support, and how Kitty will improve under the influence of her sisters' new connections. Like the turning point at the middle of the novel, when Darcy's letter forces Elizabeth to reinterpret past events in order to conceive of a future with him, the conclusion of the novel looks back so that it can project forward. This forward speculation even at the moment of the novel's conclusion produces the sense that the closing of the volume occurs at the present moment—that careful reading of the past produces the ability to anticipate the future. Thus, while the novel does present a whole à la Barbauld, it also creates the illusion that the novel's characters continue to exist in the world, naturalizing its narrative process by effacing the boundary between the world bound inside the book and the world outside of its covers.

### **Against the courtship form: *Mansfield Park* and the confines of imagination**

If *Pride and Prejudice* upholds a harmonious relationship between the structures of the courtship plot and the three-volume novel, in which the conclusion effaces the boundaries of the book with its invitation to project forward into the characters' futures, *Mansfield Park*'s conclusion draws attention to the artificiality of its own narrative contrivances. Indeed, the dissatisfactions of *Mansfield Park* seem to offer a direct rebuke to the satisfaction of *Pride and Prejudice*; it rejects reader satisfaction in favour of an uneasy compromise between plot, narrative structure, and codex book. The extent to which *Mansfield Park* rewrites the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* becomes apparent when the location of key events within the novel is accounted for. In *Mansfield Park*, events occur in roughly the same physical location of the novel's volumes as they do in *Pride and Prejudice*, but to different ends: Fanny takes a dislike to Henry Crawford in the first volume, he proposes to her and she rejects him in the second, and in the third he begins to win her over. However, unlike Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, whose antisocial behaviour belies his moral character, Henry Crawford finally proves to be what he seemed all along.

By positioning the only character to see through Crawford as a naïve outsider, the narrative represents Fanny's moralistic reactions to characters and events as naïve even as the narrator focalizes through her, using the same technique of free indirect discourse that grants Elizabeth authority in *Pride and Prejudice* to undermine Fanny's perspective. In *Mansfield Park*, therefore, free indirect discourse is used to ironic effect, meaning that when Fanny proves to be right near the end of the final volume, readers, instead of the heroine, are forced to reevaluate not only what they think they know, but how they respond to the appearance of narrative authority. *Mansfield Park*, therefore, becomes a commentary on the reader's desire for plot and the critical assumption, forwarded by Barbauld among others, that a satisfying conclusion is the same thing as a just one.

As in *Pride and Prejudice*, the location of significant events within each volume corresponds to particular locations and landscapes that the heroine finds herself in. Ann Banfield has pointed out the volume-based structure of the plot in *Mansfield Park*, especially how each volume centres around a particular location: Sotherton in the first, Mansfield in the second, and Portsmouth and London in the third. However, where Banfield uses the novel's "trinary" structure to argue that "Sotherton and Portsmouth represent two extremes of which Mansfield becomes the just mean" (5), and that "*Mansfield Park* is [Austen's] eighteenth-century landscape—balanced, reposed, dignified by architectural forms, yet with a hint of the picturesque—where the pattern of human figures takes its meaning from the placement of the figures in the setting" (24), the balance that Banfield's claim depends on a reader being satisfied by the novel's conclusion.

However, as Katie Halsey argues, *Mansfield Park*'s abrupt conclusion is deeply unsettling, not in the least because the apparent return to narrative control through a direct address to the reader and shift into diegetic representation at the opening of the penultimate chapter is undermined by the narrator's focus on the conclusion that did *not* take place:

As when Austen emphasizes the alternative ending to *Mansfield Park*—the Fanny–Henry and Edmund–Mary marriages—the reader is here simultaneously complicit with the 'rightness' of the outcome as drawn by

Austen, and made aware of the chasm between fiction and reality. *Mansfield Park*'s subverted ending thus deliberately emphasizes the difference between what is 'natural' and what only claims to be so. The narrative voice hence asks the reader to question the assumption underlying a marriage plot—that the heroine and hero will marry—just as, earlier, the narrator dismisses the assumption that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. The narrative voice thus problematizes both the generic and the moral conventions that dictate the ending of *Mansfield Park*. (55)

Halsey's analysis emphasizes the artificiality of narrative that the narrator's direct address to the reader highlights; however, embedded within this artificiality is the possibility that events, which are under the narrator's control, could have unfolded differently. Whereas the conclusion of *Pride and Prejudice* invites its readers to reread the events of its plot as a series of events leading inevitably to Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage, the final chapter of *Mansfield Park* invokes an alternate ending, in which the marriage plots of Edmund to Mary and Fanny to Henry are not cut off prematurely. The fact that this ending did not come about *is* the punishment that the narrator inflicts on those characters "greatly in fault" (533), as well as those readers who fail to adequately reconcile themselves to the novel's conclusion.

Those characters whom the conclusion of *Mansfield Park* punishes share a commitment to the courtship plot. Early in the novel, Mary Crawford states, "I would have everybody marry if they can do it properly: I do not like to have people throw themselves away; but everybody should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage" (50); her maxim proves to be the operating principle that the novel works against, as it shows again and again failed marriages and marriages that fail to materialize. Like the plot-seeking Crawford siblings, who are punished by the failure of their respective courtship narratives, readers who have invested too much into the conclusion that the novel seems to be promoting suffer from their own disappointed hopes. In disappointing those hopes, *Mansfield Park* challenges the boundaries of genre, questioning the primacy of the courtship plot, both for readers of novels and as an organizing structure of life for young, unmarried women. By this, I do not mean that it rejects courtship and marriage altogether; instead, by relegating Fanny and Edmund's marriage to an aside in the final chapter, akin to the description of Kitty's post-plot improvement in *Pride and Prejudice*, it shifts the organizing structure of the plot away from a successful courtship plot to a

series of failed ones. As a result, the plot becomes one about rejecting financial gain at the expense of moral integrity, which positions the concluding marriage as Fanny's reward, not the object of the plot.

However, the failure of the various courtship plots is not the only unsettling element of the novel. The surprises afforded by the end of *Mansfield Park* are particularly jarring in light of the fact that, rather than forcing the heroine to reconsider what she thought she knew, the conclusion confirms that she has been right all along. If Elizabeth Bennet earns the role of heroine by gaining the clear-sightedness to recognize her narrative trajectory when it is laid out before her, Fanny Price is notable for her ability to see clearly despite the enclosed, often claustrophobic spaces she finds herself contained in. The attic room, the wilderness at Sotherton, the cramped quarters in her family's Portsmouth house: none of these enclosures prevent her from interpreting events with accuracy and moral clarity. However, Fanny's position on the margins of Mansfield life means that she is often absent from the scene of essential events, such as the grounds of Sotherton and the London social scene that enables Maria and Henry's adultery, meaning that she, and the reader with her, are often dependent on the flawed representations of other characters. When combined with Edmund's frequent objections to Fanny's (correct) interpretations and the way that the novel continually sets her naïve perspective against the worldlier Mary Crawford's, her marginal position means that it becomes difficult to trust even her obviously virtuous perspective.

These narrative techniques compound with the structure of the novel, which, in its mirroring of *Pride and Prejudice*, seems to suggest a similarly gradual approach to Fanny's eventual acceptance of Henry. Whereas in *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*—and, indeed, most novels—“the compression of the pages” indicates that few surprises remain, in *Mansfield Park* a scandal and a new marriage plot is compressed into the end of the final volume, forming a sharp contrast with the seemingly gradual approach that the rest of the novel takes. By consigning Edmund's active courtship of Fanny to the end of the novel, Austen marginalizes it in a way that is comparable to Fanny's marginalization throughout the novel, inviting readers to question the appearance of narrative justice and the necessity of a courtship plot, as well as their own impulses to

speculation. Like Henry and Mary Crawford, who are punished by the failure of their desired conclusions, readers who have invested too much into the conclusion that the novel seems to be leading towards suffer from disappointed hopes. By contrast, Fanny's marginal status early in the novel means that she has learned to avoid creating narrative expectations for herself, which gives her greater agency when she does move into the centre of the plot, to reject Henry, but also to help members of her Portsmouth family.

Fanny's position as an outsider removed from key events in the Mansfield circle is frequently emphasized by her physical positions, in and out of doors. Unlike Elizabeth, who begins her novel as an object within the landscape before becoming the frame through which it is viewed, Fanny is positioned as a forgotten observer who judges the events of the plot rather than participating in them. Similarly, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth moves through the landscape, while Fanny observes and comments on it from a relatively stationary distance. The first volume establishes Fanny's removal from the conventional trappings of the courtship plot repeatedly: when her cousins attend balls, Fanny attends her aunt and listens to their accounts on their return; when Mary Crawford borrows her horse, Fanny watches her ride alongside Edmund from a distance; and when an outing to Rushworth's estate, Sotherton is planned following Maria's engagement to him, Fanny is nearly excluded from the invitation.

This excursion, in particular, emphasizes the extent to which Fanny is excluded even when she has been nominally included, from the initial carriage ride, to the rearrangements of characters in the Sotherton wilderness. By situating the Sotherton episode, with its focus on prospects and boundaries, in the middle of the first volume, Austen links the courtship plot to the deceptively open features of the picturesque. The Sotherton episode has been frequently commented on, to various effect. On the one hand, the movement of characters through trees and over ha-has can be read as an "allegory about female abandonment and restraint" (Yeazell 84); on the other, the extensive conversations between Henry and Rushworth about Humphrey Repton and "improvements" to Sotherton can be read as "a subversive plea for the necessity of women's freedom and liberty" (Heydt-Stevenson 267) or a critique of "the aesthetic, geographical, and epistemological premises that ground the imperialist sensibility of

Rushworth and his associates” (Voskuil 593). Austen’s control over point of view is central to all of these claims, not in the least because so much of what transpires is hidden from Fanny—and therefore from readers. Yet Lynn Voskuil’s remark that, “[t]hroughout this episode, the usually clear-sighted Fanny Price remains stationary and seated in the wilderness” (603), misrepresents Fanny’s position, as though she is usually free to move around and consider landscapes and events from all angles; instead, Fanny’s skill is her ability to remain “clear-sighted” despite her limited mobility. While the approach to and grounds of Sotherton provide a location for plot to play out, in which different prospects, literal and figurative, are sought out and considered by various characters, Fanny remains relatively passive within them, uninvolved in the conversations, arrangements, and rearrangements that other characters engineer.

Fanny’s passivity is emphasized during the approach to Sotherton, when the prospects in question are all Maria’s; seated behind Julia and Henry, “her prospect always ended in Mr. Crawford sitting side by side full of conversation and merriment” (95), but as the carriage draws closer to Sotherton, she begins to look outside, detailing the features of the landscape to Mary Crawford with “elation of heart” (95). Fanny’s presence during this conversation is largely ignored, except when she ventures a comment that “might be heard with complacency” (96). What that comment is, beyond one of “admiration” (96), remains unspecified, reflecting the general inattention to Fanny’s presence, an inattention in which the narrator is likewise complicit. Although the carriage ride begins with a passage from Fanny’s point of view, establishing that she “was happy in observing all that was new, and admiring all that was pretty” without joining the conversation (94). How much, then, of the interplay between Maria’s “Rushworth-feelings, and Crawford-feelings” (95) falls within Fanny’s observation and how much is the narrator’s omniscient knowledge remains unclear. The events of the day, however, force Fanny into acute awareness about the complications of her cousin’s feelings, and the role Henry has played in encouraging them. Once inside Sotherton, “[t]he situation of the house excluded the possibility of much prospect” (99), affording a lack of perspective that mirrors Rushworth’s own failure to see clearly. Whereas Pemberley is situated so that viewers may either gaze upon it or gaze out from its windows, offering a variety of points of view from within as well as without, Sotherton is only an object within the landscape to be



considered, suggesting that the façade alone is Maria's object, at the same time as it reveals to her that marriage to Rushworth represents an end to other possible plots.

Sotherton's claustrophobic interior represents Maria's impending enclosure in a marriage with Rushworth, even as its grounds provide various characters with the opportunity to explore potential plots. The tour of the house results in a "wish for air and liberty" that leads the younger generation outside (106), first to a terrace and then into the cooler wilderness where Fanny is left "to sit in the shade on a fine day, and look upon verdure" (112), while the other characters wind in and out of sight, evading and chasing after each other by turns. Their descent from the terrace, with its "view . . . into the tops of the trees of the wilderness" (105) into the wilderness itself, where no one seems able to follow a clear path or see ahead of them corresponds to the novel's descent into a muddy tangle of plots and counterplots, in which Mary Crawford's dismay at learning Edmund's intention to become a clergyman is offset by Maria's pursuit of Henry, and Julia and Rushworth's pursuit of both of them. Fanny's position means that the various groups pass by her as they pursue their various objects but, unlike Elizabeth, who first exercises narrative authority by figuring other characters as picturesque objects within the landscape, Fanny acts as a witness to their movements, only offering silent disapproval of Henry and Maria's behaviour, reluctant directions to Julia, and sympathy to Rushworth. Despite her attempts to encourage them toward more appropriate behaviour, Fanny functions as little more than a signpost, directing the characters toward each other without any knowledge as to her success or failure once they leave her field of vision.

Although, on the surface, the wilderness seems to be a landscape in which licentious behaviour goes unseen, it is worth noting that it is Maria's decision to leave the wilderness and enter the park with Henry by way of the ha-ha that the novel condemns. Her complaint, that "that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship" (115–6) and subsequent escape into the park point toward her desire for further narrative possibilities than those she can see from Sotherton, or that Austen can represent in a respectable novel. However, as Nicholas M. Williams points out, the novel's description of the view of the park from the wilderness is perhaps most notable for its lack of clarity:

Some elements of the picturesque are invoked: the gate and the sunken ha-ha provide a materialized frame for the view, and, as noted, Maria's question regarding the literal/figurative binary itself seems deeply picturesque. But if this is a picturesque prospect of sorts, the thinly sketched figures of knoll and oak grove make it a kind of blank picturesque, in which the focus on "ways of seeing" almost completely dispenses with any specificity concerning what is seen. As such, the scene seems a genetic account of prospect, and another way of relating the literal and the figurative, this time in terms of the ground of material elements which undergird prospect—viewer, vantage point, physical setting, the material eye itself—the outlined figures—knoll and oak grove—which gradually emerge with and against this ground. (319)<sup>46</sup>

By travelling into the park with Henry, Maria abandons a clearly defined possibility—Sotherton—for an indistinct and vaguely picturesque scene that she and Henry are soon lost within, a pursuit of the kind of "boundless regions of possibility" (Barbauld 408) that fiction seems to represent. However, just as the naturalization of the relationship between book and narrative creates the illusion that the beginning of a novel represents an unbounded range of possible events, even though the outcome is always predetermined, the use of the ha-ha as the barrier Maria and Henry must cross suggests that the possibility the park represents is illusory, and they remain as confined at the top of the knoll as they were in the wilderness. Likewise, Maria's dissatisfaction with the conclusion of one courtship plot with her engagement to Rushworth leads her to seek out a new one with Henry, but the structure of that plot remains fundamentally—and fatally—the same. Maria's compulsion to seek out a new courtship plot to replace the previous one reveals Austen's critique of courtship as an organizing structure for women's lives: just as women who are precluded from participating in the courtship plot have no alternate path, women who achieve the desired end no longer have a direction for their energies.

While other characters place an undue emphasis on their own plots, Fanny remains at a remove; assuming that she has no prospects of her own, she pays attention to

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<sup>46</sup> Williams goes on to link this lack of concrete description to the novel's interest in the act of viewing, further claiming, "By focusing on an array of viewers positioned in attitudes of landscape appreciation, while providing only the barest sketch of what they perceive, the scene directs attention back to the process of perception itself, to the embodied eye and its activity of isolating figures from a 'literal' material substrate" (319).

those of other characters. However, her position as a marginal character, able to judge accurately in part because of her removal from the courtship plots of other characters, does not continue into the second volume, where she is moved into the centre of the plot. As she becomes more central to the machinations of other characters, her point of view is undermined by the narrator's emphasis on her naïveté, seemingly setting her up for the kind of moment of clarity and reconsideration that Elizabeth experiences in the second volume of *Pride and Prejudice*, so that when Henry proposes near the end of the volume it seems as though Fanny's refusal will later be redacted. Her responses to landscape, in particular, receive condescending treatment—from both the narrator and other characters—that present her as naïve and in need of more worldly guidance, guidance that seems to appear in the form of Mary Crawford's friendship. Following Maria's marriage and Julia's extended visit with the Rushworths, Fanny becomes a sought-after companion by both of the Crawfords, who place her at the centre of their own plots. Instead of the stationary role she adopts in the first volume, she begins to move freely between the house and the parsonage, moving to the centre of the plot as she does so; in the absence of her more willing cousins, Henry turns to her as a distraction, with the stated “plan to make Fanny Price in love with [him]” (267). The transformation of Henry's feelings from the desire to make her “a *little* [in] love” (269) to being “quite determined to marry Fanny Price” (338), revealed through a series of conversations with his sister, places her at the centre of a courtship plot that she refuses to believe is happening, even after his proposal. Fanny's rejection of Henry proves, ultimately, to be a sign of her reliable judgement, but at the moment it occurs, Fanny seems to be rejecting the plot of the novel of which she is the heroine.

This rejection comes at the end of a volume that repeatedly sets Fanny's moments of heightened emotion against the Crawfords' detached worldliness, suggesting that her refusal to accept Henry is as troublingly naïve as her responses to nature. In particular, the contrast between Fanny's rhapsodic commentary on the Parsonage gardens that bleeds into a meditation on “the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory” and “Miss Crawford, untouched and inattentive” (243) presents two extremes, seemingly both in need of moderation. Fanny, in particular, reaches a somewhat hyperbolic state of emotion when contemplating the evergreens growing in the grounds of the parsonage:

“I am so glad to see the evergreens thrive!” said Fanny in reply. “My uncle’s gardener always says the soil here is better than his own, and so it appears from the growth of the laurels and evergreens in general.—The evergreen!—How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen!—When one thinks of it, how astonishing a variety of nature!” (244)

Fanny’s sincere exclamations demonstrate her complete involvement in the scene—a level of absorption comparable to Mary’s. However, where Mary is contemplating a hypothetical future as Edmund’s wife and finding herself “far better reconciled to a country residence than [she] had ever expected to be” (245), Fanny is contemplating the scene on its own terms, without linking it to any future prospect. Mary views landscapes, like events, speculatively, as the background for a future that she acknowledges is unpredictable even as she plans for it; Fanny seems incapable of imagining herself within a narrative, courtship or otherwise, of her own.

Fanny’s unawareness of her own narrative potential forms a sharp contrast with how both of the Crawfords conceive of her—first as an object of their own plots, but increasingly as the heroine of a marriage plot of her own. While Mary initially sees Fanny as a useful token of exchange in Edmund’s hesitant courtship of her and Henry speaks of making Fanny fall in love with him as an intellectual exercise, Fanny’s resistance to their plans for her makes her even more central to their plots. But seeded throughout their plans is the true reason for Fanny’s resistance to plot of any kind—her belief that the specific conclusion she desires is closed to her. The passage following Edmund’s gift of a chain for the cross pendant that her brother has given her is the closest she comes to articulating such a possibility, and, even then, she shies away from putting it into words:

It was her intention, as she felt it to be her duty, to try to overcome all that was excessive, all that bordered on selfishness in her affection for Edmund. To call or to fancy it a loss, a disappointment, would be a presumption; for which she had not words strong enough to satisfy her own humility. To think of him as Miss Crawford might be justified in thinking, would in her be insanity. To her, he could be nothing under any circumstances—nothing dearer than a friend. Why did such an idea occur to her even enough to be reprobated and forbidden? It ought not to have touched on the confines of her imagination. She would endeavour to be rational, and to deserve the

right of judging of Miss Crawford's character and the privilege of true solicitude for him by a sound intellect and an honest heart. (307)

Even within "the confines of her imagination," Fanny is unwilling to speculate about a future with Edmund; instead, she positions herself as what she already is—"nothing dearer than a friend"—while carefully avoiding putting into words any other possibility. However, Fanny's inability to articulate a plot for herself means that Mary and Henry's alternate plots have greater narrative weight; with Henry's decision to propose and Mary's projection forward into their life after marriage, in which she imagines Fanny as "a sweet little wife; all gratitude and devotion" (338), the narrative loses track of Fanny's own wishes—or, rather, her carefully enforced lack of them. The second volume thus ends with the false prospect of Fanny and Henry settled in a house in Northamptonshire, despite Fanny's attempt to reject it and the self-interestedness plot demands of a heroine.

Unlike the third volume of *Pride and Prejudice*, then, which opens with a sustained view of the novel's end point, the transition between the second and third volumes of *Mansfield Park* focus on a false object, which all of the other characters are trying to convince Fanny to accept. When it becomes clear that she will not, Sir Thomas sends her to Portsmouth in the hope that a change of scene will allow her to reconsider her prospects; in doing so, Sir Thomas, like his daughters and the Crawfords, reveals his own commitment to the mode of the courtship plot as the only narrative possibility for a young, unmarried woman, and he persists in his belief that the rejection of such an eligible offer without first consulting him constitutes "a gross violation of duty and respect" (368). Fanny's inability to articulate an alternative means that he remains perplexed by her refusal and willing to enact his own machinations to ensure her eventual acceptance. By contrast, Fanny understands his position perfectly, musing in a subsequent conversation that, "she had no right to wonder at the line of conduct he pursued. He who had married a daughter to Mr. Rushworth. Romantic delicacy was certainly not to be expected from him" (382). Sir Thomas's commitment to the idea of women submitting to an eligible marriage as soon as possible thus overrides his better judgement, first in his willingness to let Maria marry a man who is clearly foolish, and again when he accuses Fanny of ingratitude, even though he objects to Mrs. Norris's accusation of the same as "unjust" (373). Like so many of the novel's characters, Sir

Thomas is unwilling to allow the courtship plot to take its course, and, as a result, becomes a plotter, scheming first to throw Fanny in Henry's way and, when that fails, removing her from the comforts of Mansfield to the cramped and unhealthy Price home in Portsmouth.

The abrupt shift into the cramped, dirty, urban scene at Portsmouth in the midst of the third volume does, indeed, alter Fanny's view of her own prospects. Removing Fanny from the scene of action forces her into the speculative state in which the other characters have existed since the beginning. The letters she receives from Mary and Edmund, in particular, force her into a state of imagining their future marriage with dread, but also with specific details that extend past the conclusion of the courtship plot and into the marriage itself. After one particularly vexing letter, she concludes, "Suspense must be submitted to, and must not be allowed to wear her out, and make her useless. Time did something, her own exertions something more, and she resumed her attentions to Susan, and again awakened the same interest in them" (485). Part of submitting to suspense involves immersing herself in Portsmouth life, and, by extension, the plots that take place there. As Elizabeth does in *Pride and Prejudice*, Fanny, in the final volume of *Mansfield Park*, begins to take on her own narrative agency in a more sustained way, operating within her own landscape and field of vision to instruct her sister and better manage her mother's household, first by solving a sibling feud with the gift of a silver knife and later by subscribing to a circulating library to assist in her sister's education. Notably, though, Fanny's acts of narrative agency do not promote marriage; instead, she focuses on the current and relatively contained project of improving her family's—but especially her sister's—domestic happiness within the home they already inhabit. While *Pride and Prejudice* invites readers to reread Elizabeth's movement as all towards her eventual marriage, whether she is conscious of it or not, Fanny's actions decentre the courtship plot, suggesting other possible avenues for female agency.

More importantly though for the way that the novel positions readers in relation to its conclusion, the removal to Portsmouth limits her ability to observe the events taking place elsewhere, isolating her more from the events transpiring in London than she would be if she had remained at Mansfield: her access to news is limited to occasional letters

from and the newspaper item that first hints at Maria's elopement with Henry. At the time of their elopement, Fanny is still musing over the apparent changes in Henry's behaviour during his Portsmouth visit, when she begins to think him "altogether improved since she had seen him; he was much more gentle, obliging, and attentive to other people's feelings than he had ever been at Mansfield; she had never seen him so agreeable—so *near* being agreeable" (471). Fanny's altering feelings, represented through a rapid succession of observations that lead her to deem him agreeable before retracting it, mirror Elizabeth's growing sense of Darcy's worth in *Pride and Prejudice* when she encounters him at Pemberley. However, instead of acting as a gracious host, Henry seems to prove his own disinterest by behaving with more genuine politeness to Fanny's comparatively low family than Darcy does to the comfortably genteel Bennets until after he is actually engaged to their daughter. Combined with Henry's determination to go to his estate in Norfolk rather than lingering in London, the novel seems well on its way to concluding with his success.

The discovery, three chapters before the novel's end, that Henry has eloped with Maria throws the novel's tidy structure into disarray, forcing readers to abandon the marriage plots that seemed inevitable and begin their speculations anew. The point in the third volume of *Pride and Prejudice* at which Elizabeth and Darcy re-examine their courtship fondly, is, in *Mansfield Park*, a moment of renewed narrative possibilities. At the same time, the shift into diegetic representation in the final chapter seems to signal a return to stability in the wake of the Crawfords' permanent expulsion from Mansfield; the narrator's statement, "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore every body, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest" (533), sets up the narrator as a scorekeeper, able to distribute rewards and punishments. Valihora reads this last-minute intervention as one way that Austen signals her preference for eighteenth-century moral idealism over the relativism of picturesque points of view:

The issue that the picturesque puts centre stage is not how to create a separate and bounded artwork, a framed painting for example—the focus of so much eighteenth-century thought about distance and disinterest—but how much what is seen is always a product of different ways of seeing. The

picturesque, at exactly the same moment that it threatens to reveal once and for all that "nature" does not exist outside of our various constructions of it, threatens to expose the frame for what it is, the arbitrary imposition of a certain point of view . . . In actually entering in at this point to rush things along, Austen seems to be drawing attention to the frame, her frame, the sign of her imposition of an idealized point of view on us, her readers. (114)

However, the emphasis that this conclusion places on other possible endings troubles the narrator's claim that justice has been dispensed, especially given that the only person who suffers any consequences beyond the lack of a hoped-for marriage is Maria. In this conclusion, narrative justice is passively, rather than actively, distributed, and has as much potential to frustrate as it does to satisfy. Even Edmund and Fanny's eventual marriage resists familiar plot structures; unlike the carefully accounted-for passage of time during Fanny's stay in Portsmouth, the narrator "purposely abstains from dates on this occasion, that every one may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary much as to time in different people" (544). The "idealized point of view" that Austen retreats to at the end of *Mansfield Park* is therefore one undermined by its lack of specificity, its misplaced emphasis, and its failure to produce satisfying punishments and rewards. The need "to rush things along" is the product of two arbitrary constraints: the three-volume novel and the generic demands of the courtship plot. Cramming Edmund and Fanny's courtship into a few paragraphs in the final chapter questions both the material constraints that make this rush-job necessary and the need for a concluding marriage in the first place.

### **Conclusion: *Lady Susan* and the untamed beauty of the manuscript**

The extent to which material form influences interpretation of a novel like *Pride and Prejudice* or *Mansfield Park* is thrown into relief by a brief consideration of the way that critics have resisted the idea that one of her manuscript works, *Lady Susan*, can be considered complete. An epistolary work that survives as a fair copy autograph manuscript that scholarship generally accepts was transcribed at least a decade after its original composition, sometime in the late 1790s, *Lady Susan* follows the exploits of a conniving widow who manipulates those around her in an attempt to find socially and



financially advantageous marriages for herself and her teenaged daughter. Like *Mansfield Park*, *Lady Susan* ends with a heavy-handed narrative intervention that seemingly dispenses justice while, at the same time, undermining the very possibility of that justice, or a conclusion of any kind. However, in *Lady Susan*, the rupture between narrative and conclusion is made more jarring by the shift from the epistolary mode to a disembodied, omniscient narrator.

Twentieth and twenty-first century scholars, following Mary Lascelles, have frequently treated the conclusion as an addendum added after Austen had decided not to continue the work.<sup>47</sup> Here, I wish to trouble the hypothesis that the abruptness of *Lady Susan*'s conclusion means that it should be treated as fragmentary, in order to reconsider this work's relationship to the published novels, especially Austen's resistance to conclusions and the role that the form of the three-volume novel plays in structuring Austen's narratives. Considering the letters and conclusion of *Lady Susan* as a complete entity highlights Austen's reluctance to treat fictional narratives as "a *whole*, in which the fates and fortunes of the personages are brought to a conclusion, agreeable to the author's own preconceived idea" (Barbauld 412). In particular, the established timeline for *Lady Susan*'s original composition, sometime around 1797, makes it roughly contemporaneous with early drafts of Austen's first two published novels, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, both of which are generally accepted to have begun as epistolary works. When considered in the context of two novels that were eventually revised into narratives related by an omniscient narrator, *Lady Susan* becomes a meditation on the frustrations of managing the various moving parts of an epistolary novel in a way that makes events intelligible. However, *Lady Susan* does not limit its commentary to the epistolary mode alone; in the conclusion, omniscient narrators, too, come under scrutiny for their attempts to present their interpretations of events as universal truths, a critique that becomes central to Austen's narrative practice in her published works. The questions raised about completion by the manuscript form contribute to Austen's critique of various narrative styles and the manipulation that each requires to produce a satisfying conclusion. While

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Mary Lascelles' *Jane Austen and her Art* (1939) and Brian Southam's *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts* (1977).

in some ways the plot adheres to familiar fictional structures, at others it rejects them; at such moments, the absence of the author's intention to publish represented by the printed codex as a way to anchor meaning compounds the difficulties of interpretation.<sup>48</sup>

*Lady Susan*'s status as a manuscript work therefore means that the grounds on which Austen identifies the limitations of the novel in letters has often been overlooked by scholars who have understood the work as incomplete. This assumption has resulted from the material form in which the work survives: as an autograph fair copy that was presented to Austen's niece by her sister. At some point between 1871 and 1898, the manuscript was rebound as a series of single leaves, effacing much of the evidence about its original structure. However, Andrew Honey has determined that it was likely originally written in a quarto notebook similar to that used for the rest of the juvenilia and that a number of pages must have been removed when it was rebound.<sup>49</sup> This detail about the missing blank pages highlights one of the primary differences between a manuscript, even a fair copy in a notebook, and a printed book; unlike a printed book, in which the number of leaves included correspond to the number required to print the text, a notebook includes a predetermined number of pages that a writer may or may not need. In the case of *Lady Susan*, the spectre of these unfilled pages represents the possibility of incompleteness, regardless of the author's intent; while the conclusion as it exists may be unsatisfying, the possibility of further writing remains. *Lady Susan*'s textual landscape is therefore a disorienting one, in which the posthumous effacement of physical clues about composition compound the seemingly fragmentary narrative structure.

In many respects, then, the abrupt ending of *Lady Susan*, marked by an authorial intervention that summarizes events after the various correspondences have come to a close, is simply a more exaggerated version of the commentaries that conclude Austen's

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<sup>48</sup> By this, I mean that the printed book is structured around the length of the text it contains, while a notebook containing a manuscript has a pre-existing number of pages that the writer may fill completely or leave blank.

<sup>49</sup> Honey's conservation report uses the physical evidence to conjecture, "Six complete folded quires, each with 16 leaves, would provide 96 leaves. If the first three leaves from the first quire and final three leaves from the sixth quire were used as pastedowns within the binding, as was the case with *Volume the First*, and *Volume the Second*, this would indicate an original text-block of 90 leaves." Given that the manuscript of *Lady Susan* fills only 81 quarto leaves, there would have been a number of blank pages left at the back of the volume, suggesting the possibility of further writing.

published works, especially *Mansfield Park*. The exaggeration is in large part due to the shift in narrative mode, from the letters that have comprised the narrative thus far, to a detached third person narrator who retroactively reframes the narrative, drawing readers' attention to new interpretive possibilities. Although the epistolary fiction of the eighteenth century often features a similar interplay of letters that construct a narrative (at times more fragmentary than others) and a narrator removed from their contents, the narrator usually offers some kind of explanation for how the letters came into their possession as well as moral guidance for how they should be interpreted. The narrator of *Lady Susan* appears only at the end and her conclusion remains evasive, offhandedly explaining the fragmentary nature of the narrative—"This Correspondence, by a meeting between some of the Parties & a separation between the others, could not, to the great detriment of the Post office Revenue, be continued longer" (75)—offering no explanation as to how the letters came to be assembled or her own relationship to their contents. Even more jarringly, this narrative intervention produces a temporal disjunction between the conclusion of the various correspondences and the conclusion of the plot. Rather than ending with the deaths and marriages of the various characters, letter-writing comes to an end because of the physical rearrangements of the characters and the effect those rearrangements have on the way they can communicate with each other. This attention to the physical, material, and even financial (through the reference to the revenue generated by the post office) barriers to producing a coherent epistolary narrative makes visible the authorial contrivance required to naturalize this narrative mode.

The gap between the end of the letters and the end of events opens up a space for Austen's familiar, ironic voice to intervene and dispense justice. However, justice is a term to be used loosely here: Mary Poovey has argued that in *Lady Susan* "the epistolary form generates moral anarchy" (178). However, instead of using the third-person conclusion to contain and discipline the "moral anarchy" that the novel-in-letters represents, the narrator heightens it through her active refusal of authority, in a passage that seems to be repeating gossip:

Whether Lady Susan was, or was not happy in her second Choice—I do not see how it can ever be ascertained—for who would take her assurance of it,

on either side of the question?—The World must judge from Probability.—  
She had nothing against her, but her Husband & her Conscience. (77)

Rather than presenting an omniscient interpretation of events that readers can accept as true, the narrator identifies “The World,” not a stable narrative voice, as the source of judgment. In placing the moral authority of judging Lady Susan into the hands of “The World,” the conclusion interrogates the source of an omniscient third person narrative authority and suggests that third person narration is little more than a form of a communal voice founded on gossip, much like that which opens *Pride and Prejudice*. However, more than simply framing the narrator’s authority as gossip, this remark calls upon its readers to reconsider their relationship to Lady Susan’s letters, especially their privileged knowledge of her apparently less artful confessions to Alicia Johnson. On the one hand, the narrator seems to be inviting her readers to use their privileged knowledge of Lady Susan’s private letters to provide the authoritative interpretation that she seems reluctant to provide herself; on the other, it asks her readers to evaluate the extent to which Lady Susan’s “assurances” to Mrs. Johnson offer trustworthy accounts of her interiority.<sup>50</sup> In inviting questions about whether Lady Susan’s unabashed deviousness is simply another persona offered to a particular audience, the conclusion unsettles the complacency of readers’ assumptions about their access to Lady Susan’s interiority and motivations more directly than any of Austen’s published novels. Thus, the conclusion’s most jarring move is to invite readers to reconsider their interpretation of events in a way that undermines what little narrative authority the work can be said to have.

Of course, the implied readers of *Lady Susan* differ substantially from the readers of Austen’s published novels. As a fair copy manuscript, likely circulated among friends and family, *Lady Susan* assumes a more specific interpretive community than any of her published novels. Michelle Levy has discussed how Austen’s addresses to a confidential readership did not end when she entered into print and were not confined to manuscript writings; nevertheless, the kinds of assumptions that Austen could make about her

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<sup>50</sup> However, as Lise Gaston reminds us, far from being a feminine mode of circulating information, gossip “in Austen’s novella remains a discourse mediated through a male-dominated public that always already constitutes the exchange of personal correspondence between women” (406). In other words, despite Lady Susan’s attempts to manage her public image, the gossip—privately shared information made public—that precedes her has always already tarnished her image.

readers in the printed works were considerably different than those she could make about the readers of her manuscripts. Still, in both manuscript and print, Austen's narrative voice adopts elements of gossip, in both apparently omniscient passages that repeat commonly held assumptions, such as the "truth universally acknowledged" that the narrator of *Pride and Prejudice* opens with or the history of the Ward sisters' marriages that opens *Mansfield Park*, and moments when she addresses her readers directly, framing them as her confidantes with whom she shares the difficulties of narration. Like gossip, narration is simultaneously a distant and impersonal form of judgment and an intimate, conspiratorial act that takes place between a speaker and a listener. Placing these two features of narration side by side in *Lady Susan's* conclusion allows Austen to draw attention to narrative and moral authority as an effect produced through stylistic techniques that hide an author's contrivances. By rendering those contrivances visible, Austen demonstrates to her readers the necessity of resistant reading practices that question narrative modes and expectations.

As the rest of this chapter has demonstrated, Austen's attempts to encourage her readers to resist closure were not limited to manuscript works. However, *Lady Susan's* existence in the form of a manuscript means that it lacks the intentional structure of a printed book, leaving readers without the familiar volume structure to help them navigate the plot and thereby emphasizing the various ways that Austen incorporates the book as a material object into her narrative form. The scholarly response to *Lady Susan's* conclusion reveals critical assumptions about the relative authority of print and manuscript forms; a printed book—especially one authorized by the author, during her lifetime—is always an intentional act, always complete, while a manuscript, even a carefully transcribed fair copy, always retains the possibility of further writing, further revision. We can read *Mansfield Park* as a finished project because it was printed during Austen's lifetime, even though its ending feels rushed, but *Lady Susan's* conclusion remains an object of scrutiny, illegible because it lacks the deliberate physical structure of the printed book to contain it. Although the text itself may remain the same, manuscript is a kind of untamed landscape that the printed book organizes without seeming to, a naturalized picturesque frame that hides its existence at the same time as it directs our gaze.

However, manuscripts are not the only inscrutable textual objects. In turning to the narrative experimentation undertaken in Frances Burney's final two novels, *Camilla* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814), the next chapter considers how a printed book, with all its paratextual trappings, can also fail to properly orient its readers. Like Austen, who uses the three-volume structure of the novel to disorient readers and reshape their narrative expectations, Burney uses narrative techniques to challenge readers' expectations that they will be invited into a sympathetic relationship with her heroines; however, her attempt to use the paratextual framework to support her narrative experiments with the paratextual information of her authorship backfires. Despite a shared public epitextual knowledge of the author and her previous works, the reception of *The Wanderer* demonstrates a degree of critical disorientation that, ultimately, produced a narrative of Burney's career as a decline into cynical attempts to reproduce her earlier success.

## Chapter 4.

### The Texture of Sympathy: Authorial Reputation and Sympathetic Failure in Frances Burney's *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*

#### Introduction

In Frances Burney's third novel, *Camilla* (1796), the narrator pauses in the midst of a fraught scene to ask, "But what is so hard to judge as the human heart? The fairest observers misconstrue all motives to action, where any received prepossession has found an hypothesis" (703). This scene, in which the extent that the heroine and her suitor have failed to interpret each other adequately, explicitly engages with one of the novel's main preoccupations: the nature of sympathy and the role that observation plays in creating it. Here and elsewhere, the novel questions the ethics of observation, especially when it fails to bring about understanding in even "the fairest observers." Burney's final novel, *The Wanderer* (1814), returns to the questions that *Camilla* poses about the relationship between observation, sympathy, and narrative by positioning its readers as observers of an anonymous heroine, asking whether someone with no clear external markers of identity can be "of a texture to create that sympathy without which even friendship is cold" (166). Although Burney's concern with the relationship between observation and sympathy runs throughout her work, it takes on greater urgency in her final two novels where she complicates the way readers are positioned within her narratives in order to scrutinize the ease with which fiction can produce sympathy. By reading *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* as responses to the sympathetic relationships constructed in Burney's earlier fiction, this chapter considers how her authorial identity, as expressed in the peritextual byline and as epitextual cultural knowledge, shaped both Burney's literary experimentation and the reception of her later works.

Burney's interventions in the way that fiction constructs sympathy for characters represent an attempt to capitalize on her readers' epitextual, or contextual, knowledge of her authorial reputation as one of the great novelists of the eighteenth century to question

the dominant understanding of sympathy in the Romantic period, especially who was deserving of it and why. However, these literary experiments had implications for both the immediate reception of her work and the way that modern scholarship has understood her career, revealing the reciprocal nature of the relationship between text and paratext; that is, although Burney tried to use the paratext surrounding her novel to shape its reception, the reception of her novels reshaped that paratext, especially how readers understood her position as an author. *The Wanderer*, in particular, provoked a series of hostile reviews by critics from a range of periodicals, including John Wilson Croker of *The Quarterly Review* and William Hazlitt of *The Edinburgh Review*. This reception imposed on Burney's career a narrative of decline in quality that began with her third novel, *Camilla* (1796), and continued in her final novel, which, in the words of Croker, "cannot, in our judgment, claim any very decided superiority over the thousand-and-one volumes with which the Minerva Press inundates the shelves of circulating libraries" (124). Although positive reviews appeared in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* in June 1814 and the *Monthly Review* in April 1815, they were not enough to offset the condemnation of *The Wanderer* in the two major quarterly periodicals.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the legacy of *The Wanderer's* critical failure has proven a sticking point in scholarly accounts of Burney's life and career, with many seeking to explain the increasingly hostile reception of Burney's later novels through recourse to biography, paying particular attention to her marriage to a French émigré, their subsequent residence in Napoleonic France, and even Burney's advancing age,<sup>52</sup> while others have claimed that the changes in Burney's

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<sup>51</sup> Burney's documented response to the *The Wanderer's* reviews is not as thorough as that for her earlier novels, in part because, as she stated in an April 1814 letter, she had decided "not to read any of them, to keep myself from useless vexation — till my spirits & my time are in harmony for preparing a corrected edition" (Vol. 7, 484). In a letter to her brother James in July 1815, Burney reinforced her lack of interest in the reception of *The Wanderer*, describing herself as "gifted, happily, with a most impenetrable apathy upon the subject of its criticisers" (Vol. 8 317). While Burney's need to explain the cause for its critical failure (which she attributes to "Expectation . . . founded upon Impossibilities, or Improperities" (317)) suggests that the reviews may have been a sore spot, she does take pains to note that the novel was a financial if not a critical success.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Margaret Ann Doody's biography, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (1988) and Devoney Looser's *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750–1850* (2008). Doody's biography of Burney remarks on the impact that her perceived lack of patriotism had on *The Wanderer's* reception: "The facts of Burney's life were well known and her allusion to them in her autobiographical dedication, with its praise of France, did something to sabotage the novel. The author had married a Frenchman, resided in France—and now failed to criticize Napoleon" (332). Looser shows how negative stereotypes about elderly



personal life resulted in a shift in her priorities towards making money rather than artistically valuable literature.<sup>53</sup> As with Burney's contemporaries, epitextual knowledge of the author's biography inflects how scholars interpret her novels in ways that Burney, despite her hyper-awareness of her public visibility, could not have predicted.

The scholarly emphasis on biography has helped contextualize the terms by which unsympathetic reviewers attacked Burney, explaining the source of some of their vitriol, but it has often come at the expense of understanding how Burney's narrative choices contributed to the critical hostility she encountered and why those choices are important for understanding her late novels. In her literary biography of Burney, Janice Farrar Thaddeus shifts her attention back to the novels themselves to argue that Burney's career was marked by continual and potentially unsettling innovation: "Originality is inevitably hard on readers, and Burney's critics have struggled with her variousness. She achieved this uniqueness mainly by changing within the text the shape of her genre, her language, her theme, her mood, and her characters" (8). Recently scholars have explored the nature of some of these innovations. Emily Allen, Francesca Saggini, Marcie Frank, and Heather King have linked them to Burney's interest in importing theatrical techniques into the novel.<sup>54</sup> Others including Suzie Asha Park and Jennifer Locke have considered how

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women informed the attacks on Burney's late writing, arguing that in the critical response to her final novel, "The body of the novel and the body of the aging female author are found similarly repugnant" (26).

<sup>53</sup> In *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994), Catherine Gallagher dismisses Burney's final two novels as an attempt to "[cash] in her credit with her readers, but only by devaluing her own paper" (255). However, understanding *Camilla* as a purely commercial endeavour is by no means universal. Sara K. Austin argues that Burney draws on the structure of the prose epic, a term usually associated with the masculine tradition of fiction to which Cervantes and Henry Fielding belonged, "to dissociate *Camilla* from the commodified novel" (275). Similarly, Sara Salih claims that Burney's substantial edits for the second edition of *Camilla* demonstrate her on-going concern with retaining her literary credit, and Emma Pink objects to Gallagher's claim about *Camilla* on the grounds that it "invok[es] a dichotomy which opposes aesthetic and commercial concerns, and which claims that a writer engaged with the material aspects of cultural production is not (and in fact, cannot be) concerned with aesthetic interests" (56), arguing that Burney's use of subscription demonstrates her increased authorial confidence.

<sup>54</sup> Emily Allen explores moments in *Evelina* when the narrative draws readers attention to the gap between "the visual realm of theatrical spectacle and the invisible realm of the senses" (434), to argue that Burney is dramatizing the rise of the novel as a form concerned with interiority at the expense of theatre and its focus on exterior signs. Heather King builds on Allen's distinction between the spectator of a theatrical display and the reader of a novelistic interiority to argue that Burney's use of the sentimental tableau in her fiction grows increasingly critical of "the spectacle of women's suffering" (49). Similarly, Francesca Saggini links Burney's use of theatrical conventions to depict madness, showing how madwomen, both on stage and in Burney's novels, are permitted to circumvent the restrictions on female behaviour, while Marcie Frank argues

Burney's final two novels express suspicion of conventional narratives by examining *The Wanderer's* critique of Romanticism's emphasis on compulsory storytelling and by historicizing *Camilla's* references to fortune-telling, respectively.<sup>55</sup> Yet Thaddeus's emphasis on "variousness" is at odds with one of the main complaints that reviewers made about *The Wanderer*: that it displayed Burney's lack of originality, or, worse, was a cynical attempt at "repetition and self-imitation" (Croker 125). Turning to Burney's engagement with sympathy helps reconcile these two vastly different interpretations of Burney's career by demonstrating how her innovations depend on her authorial reputation, especially the recycling of familiar plots with narrative modifications that unsettle the usual relationship between heroine and reader and between reader and author.

This chapter contributes to these explorations of Burney's formal innovations to argue that many of her experiments in narrative, and their attendant frustrations and failures, are the result of a deep distrust of the sympathetic relationship between readers and characters that the period's novelists (including Burney) sought to establish. In particular, the difficulties posed by her final two novels result from her critique of fiction's reliance on sympathy that depends on the reader's access to privileged information.<sup>56</sup> While most Romantic-era novels relied on narrative techniques that

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that Burney's innovation of narrative techniques that modulate distance between readers and their texts results from "the configuration of theater, shame, and narration in her oeuvre" (616).

<sup>55</sup> In "'All Agog to Find Her Out': Compulsory Narration in *The Wanderer*," Park argues that *The Wanderer* resists the Romantic confessional mode on the grounds that the freedom of expression that Romantic writing seems to invite becomes obligatory, or, "that both models of female expression—silence and direct expression—are actually compelled versions of each other" (131). Jennifer Locke's recent article, "Dangerous Fortunetelling in Frances Burney's *Camilla*," explores how *Camilla* highlights the dangers of imposing expected narratives onto young women through reference to debates about the practice of fortunetelling at the end of the eighteenth century. Locke claims that in *Camilla* Burney compares amateur fortunetelling to the kind of predictions that educational writers relied on, to show that both methods ultimately reduce women to limited stereotypes.

<sup>56</sup> The difficulties presented by the "variousness" that Thaddeus identifies are on display in early reviews of *The Wanderer*, which identify the interplay of familiar and unexpected elements. For example, Croker links his claim that Burney "endeavours to make up for the want of originality in her characters by the most absurd mysteries, the most extravagant incidents, and the most violent events" to a personal attack against her as "an old coquette" (126), his remarks also contain a comment on the work itself as simultaneously unoriginal and unnecessarily "extravagant." However, the extravagance that Croker critiques—namely the mystery surrounding the heroine's identity—is fundamental to the critique of normal sympathetic relationships in which Burney's novel engages. Similarly, Hazlitt complains about the constant frustration of expectations: "The reader is led every moment to expect a denouement, and is as constantly disappointed on some trifling pretext" (337). In both cases, the reviewers respond to the difficulties of Burney's novels, but fail to identify

developed a sense of intimacy between their readers and their characters, Burney's later fiction revises these conventions in order to undermine the expectation of that sympathetic intimacy, using their narrators to obstruct sympathetic identification rather than facilitating it through their representation of characters' point of view. *Camilla's* narrator provides alternate perspectives of its heroine to complicate *Camilla's* interpretation of events, while *The Wanderer* prevents its readers from having full access to its heroine's point of view, effectively grouping readers with the novel's unsympathetic secondary characters.

Central to these experiments is Burney's own sense of her own significance as an author. As Claire Brock accounts for, Burney was highly aware of, and engaged in, managing her public image, a concern that finds its way into her writing, where her "heroines followed the public example of their author, treading a fine line between perceived personal modesty and public virtue and the more designing attempts to achieve a name in the world" (130). The paratextual information surrounding the publication of *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* attest to the role her awareness of her literary celebrity played in shaping her publications. In particular, the title pages of these two works, signed "By the author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*" and "By the author of *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla*" respectively, do not represent a desire for anonymity or self-effacement; rather, the peritextual content of the title page invokes readers' epitextual knowledge of Burney and her writing, constructing a meta-narrative for her career by listing her novels chronologically and setting the later novels up as responses to the earlier ones. Thus, *Camilla* rewrites *Cecilia's* descent into debt and penury and *The Wanderer* retells *Evelina's* ascent to recognized legitimacy, but rather than simply repeating the familiar plots, the later novels radically reposition their readers within familiar narratives in ways that challenge the dominant sympathetic storytelling mode of the time. Whereas *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782) foster straightforward sympathetic relationships with their heroines by providing their readers with privileged access to their heroines' interiority, Burney's final two novels query the terms and validity of that sympathy in order to

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them as part of a strategy of critiquing the conventions of sympathy rooted in unsettling the complacency of readers' expectations.

develop a critique of an increasingly suspicious and reactionary society that demanded strict adherence to conventional behavior. In other words, Burney repositions her readers within the narrative to challenge the restrictions that people—especially women—were placed under in order to be considered worthy of sympathy. Burney’s challenges to sympathetic convention were not wholly unsoftened; using the title page to announce each novel’s relationship to its predecessors represents an attempt to reassure her readers through the peritext that, despite the later novels’ unsettling qualities, they can ultimately trust her to satisfy their narrative demands. However, linking her more experimental narratives to the earlier ones backfired; as the reviews indicate, Burney’s attempt to arrange her novels into a narrative on the title page made *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* seem like failed repetitions of what had gone before.

I begin by establishing the dominant theories of sympathy circulating in the late eighteenth-century and the ways Burney’s first two novels draw on them to make their characters sympathetic to readers. The subsequent sections consider how, first in *Camilla* and, with greater urgency, in *The Wanderer*, Burney responds to a social and political climate that policed who could be considered sympathetic because of the heightened concern with, in the words of Mary Fairclough, “sympathetic communication as a medium of corrupting revolutionary doctrine” (55). In adopting narrative techniques that increase the divide between reader and heroine, Burney positions her readers so that they must choose whether or not to sympathize with her heroines, a choice that places the general cultural anxiety about sympathy under scrutiny. In *Camilla*, the omniscient narrator’s wide scope opens up the possibility of an alternate plot with different points of sympathetic identification, in which Camilla’s trajectory is not one of persecution but corruption; *The Wanderer* creates an even more insurmountable barrier to sympathy with the narrator’s refusal to reveal the heroine’s name or history, even to the reader. These restrictions emphasize the limitations of conventional sympathy by identifying its production as the moral responsibility of the reader rather than the obligation of the author. However, while Burney succeeds in highlighting the inadequacies of conventional sympathetic models, her attempts to articulate an alternative fall short. Moreover, the success of both novels depends on readers’ willingness to sympathize in the absence of the conventions that they have come to expect, with the author of the novel if not its

heroine; yet, as the narrative of Burney's career as a decline indicates, the challenge issued by her repudiation of the conventions of sympathy was met with a hostility that would inflect her literary reputation for the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond. Burney tried to use paratextual knowledge of her authorship to persuade readers to accept her literary experiments, but the critical failure of those experiments meant that her authorial reputation was yoked to them in an ultimately damaging way.

## **Sympathetic reading in the Romantic-era novel**

Burney's fiction was not always openly skeptical of the fictional conventions of sympathy: indeed, one of her most significant contributions to the novel was her successful deployment of techniques that enabled readers to sympathize with her characters and that were adopted by countless other novelists in the decades following the publication of *Evelina*. Deidre Lynch has singled out Burney as the instigator of a school of fiction that facilitated sympathy for its heroines by placing the reader in a privileged position:

Discriminating readers of that fiction, those who are privy to the novel's true text of free indirect discourse and who share a space of sensibility with the heroine, quickly learn to discredit as mere appearance the appearances that the supporting characters see when they look at her. Discriminating readers will accept the invitation to sympathy the text tenders each time it asks them to contrast their powers of discernment with those of the misjudging characters within the fiction, and as they do so they will locate the true meaning of the person beneath the surface, an indescribable soul. (152)

According to Lynch, taking readers' sympathy for the heroines of Romantic-era novels as evidence of their "discriminating" abilities is at once enabled by their unique knowledge of a heroine's interiority and the result of the self-flattery that comes from contrasting their superior judgment with that of a novel's hostile secondary characters. Of course, Lynch's definition of "the Burney school" provides a general description of the features of Romantic-era fiction as pioneered by Burney in her first two novels and imitated by other writers throughout the 1790s, rather than a checklist of qualities to be found in her *oeuvre*. Nevertheless, both the epistolary *Evelina* and the third-person *Cecilia* model

techniques that would become common to novels of the period, techniques which allowed readers to sympathize because they provided information that made characters legible and which positioned Burney as one of the novelists most adept at producing sympathetic heroines. Invoking Burney's authorial reputation did not only invoke two of the most successful novels of the eighteenth century, but an entire narrative mode based in a reader's sympathetic identification with a heroine.

The relationship between reader and heroine that Lynch describes is informed by the cultural understanding of how sympathy worked at the end of the eighteenth century, an understanding strongly influenced by the writings of David Hume and Adam Smith. Sympathy had been theorized by David Hume, first in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), as the movement of sentiments between people who reflect each other's sentiments spontaneously: "the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees" (252). By contrast, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) offered an alternate theory of sympathy as imperfect, situational, and imaginative, in which, "The compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation, and, what perhaps is impossible, was at the same time able to regard it with his present reason and judgment" (17). While both Hume and Smith were writing earlier in the eighteenth century, scholars including Joe Bray and Rae Greiner have identified the 1790s as a point of shift in the popular understanding of sympathy, away from one based on David Hume's description of sympathy as emotional contagion, towards the rational, imaginative processes detailed by Adam Smith.<sup>57</sup> As Fairclough accounts for, sympathy in the Humean sense became

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<sup>57</sup> Joe Bray's *The Female Reader in the Eighteenth Century Novel* (2009) provides a useful overview of the shifting discourses of sympathy in the eighteenth century. Bray discusses them in relation to Frances Burney and Charlotte Smith's novels, although he links his discussion to intradiegetic acts of reading and the ways in which texts can facilitate sympathy between their multiple readers. According to Bray, whereas in *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, sympathy and sympathetic readers are not always easy to come by, he argues that a heightened "anxiety about the limitations of sympathy, and sympathetic reading, can be found in Burney's later fiction" (43), in which overly enthusiastic reading is off-putting (as Mrs Berlington's is in *Camilla*) and shared reading is laborious rather than pleasurable (as Juliet finds when Mrs Ireton employs her as a companion in *The Wanderer*).

associated with the fervor of revolutionary mobs and was viewed with anxiety in the reactionary climate that prevailed in Britain following the French Revolution.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, Smith's conception of sympathy as rooted in the more collected processes of observation, imagination, and judgment was better suited to the skeptical conservatism that dominated political discourse at the turn of the nineteenth century because it offered an alternative form of sympathetic feeling that could be controlled through rational behavior.

This shift in the dominant cultural understanding of sympathy plays out in the changing literary fashions of the long eighteenth century. John Mullan has described how Hume's model of sympathy structured readers' relationships to characters in the sentimental fiction popular earlier in the eighteenth century, in which

Novelists were able to concede that habits of sociability were limited or exceptional, only just surviving in a world in which fellow-feeling was rare and malevolence prevailed; but they were able to position each private reader as the exceptional connoisseur of commendable sympathies, and to imply such a reader's understanding of the communication of sentiments and the special capacities of sensibility. (13–14)

Mullan's description of the reader's position as exceptional because of his or her "special capacities of sensibility" closely mirrors Lynch's discussion of how Romantic-era fiction flattered its readers into sympathizing with its heroines by singling them out as exceptional. However, where Mullan's argument describes readers as uniquely capable of responding to "sentiments" and "sensibility," the ideal readers that Lynch describes are "discriminating," implying an intellectual rather than an affective response symptomatic of a larger shift in the way sympathy was understood.<sup>59</sup> Thus, while Hume's theory of

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<sup>58</sup> Fairclough's discussion focuses on the increasing anxiety about sympathy as contagion, especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In tracing the development of discourses of sympathy in the century between David Hume and Thomas De Quincey's writings, Fairclough remarks on the shift from Hume's "indulgent attitude towards the 'contagion' of sympathetic communication," to De Quincey's condemnation of sympathy "for enabling the mindless actions of the 'mob'" (2), which she identifies as the British response to revolutionary unrest in France.

<sup>59</sup> Although Humean sympathy is less concerned with adherence to particular narrative forms in the production of sympathy, it does still rely on narrated experience to produce sympathy. However, rather than relying on narrative techniques that produce sympathetic intimacy between heroes or heroines and readers, sentimental novels frequently situate their heroes or heroines as the recipients of narratives; their displays of sentiment in response are meant to be mirrored by the readers. Thus, works like Sarah Fielding's *The*

sympathy informed the sentimental fiction of authors like Richardson, Mackenzie, and Sterne, which focused on the embodied, sentimental responses of their characters that readers were expected to mirror, Smith's theory became central to the ways in which Romantic-era writers conceived of a more rational relationship between their readers and their characters.

By moving away from the assumption that a protagonist's feelings will be transmitted to readers naturally and automatically, fiction of the later eighteenth century places authors and their narrators in a defensive position, where they must persuade potentially skeptical readers that their characters are worthy of sympathy. The sentimental fiction that Mullan describes assumes that "each private reader" will be willing to participate in the sentiments of the characters; fiction of what Lynch terms "the Burney school" assumes that readers act more like what Smith terms "the impartial spectator" (33), the nature of which has been much debated. Although, on the one hand, the impartial spectator can be interpreted as a mechanism of self-surveillance that enforces normative behavior according to an unachievable ideal,<sup>60</sup> Greiner argues that it is also a way of managing expectations by outlining a standard of behavior that the average person can achieve, thereby making sympathy possible in the first place—in other words, "impartial spectatorship is the mechanism through which a social average is imaginatively taken on" (39). However, the slipperiness of this "social average" creates problems for fiction writers seeking to write sympathetic characters: in order for a reader to share a character's sentiments, those sentiments must be made to seem appropriate from the point of view of a detached observer. As a result, novels operating in this mode

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*Adventures of David Simple* (1744) and Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762) represent their heroes in the act of listening to a narrative and offer their appropriately emotional responses as a model for readers to follow. Narratives in later examples such as Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) grow increasingly fragmentary and are comprised of a series of incidents that display the hero's capacity for responding to the emotions of others with sentiment without linking them to any larger, coherent story. Notably, in Mackenzie's novel, Harley sympathizes not just with conventional figures whose narratives display exemplary behavior, but also with prostitutes and the impoverished. By representing this shared emotional response of hero and reader as exceptional, sentimental novels suggest that sympathy begets sympathy through the movement of feeling from character to reader.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary* (1987).



assume that readers must be persuaded, over the course of the narrative, that their heroines are worthy of sympathy.

This shift in the relationship between readers and characters from one based in sentimental feeling to rational assessment takes on a particular resonance when contextualized within the gendered expectations surrounding the novel at the turn of the nineteenth century. Although recent scholars have troubled the assumption that most novel readers were women,<sup>61</sup> the genre was nevertheless firmly associated with a female readership, particularly one given to inappropriately sentimental reading practices that needed to be carefully controlled.<sup>62</sup> The naturalized, embodied reading practices associated with women in the period closely resemble the dangerously spontaneous and infectious model of sympathy theorized by Hume. By comparison, the rational, narrative requirements of a more Smithian model of sympathy have a corrective effect on these imagined female readers, both by instilling in them the self-surveillance required to regulate their behavior and by teaching them to link sympathy to rational, critical observation rather than spontaneous feeling produced by witnessing emotional displays. By treating readers as skeptical observers who must be persuaded to sympathize with their heroines, then, novels in this mode imply that readers ought to be skeptical, meaning that even readers given to sentimental responses will need to adopt a more rational stance rooted in observation.

In this persuasive mode, plot is key; according to Greiner, this kind of sympathy “is grounded in the pursuit of narrative effects rather than epistemological certainty,” and, “rests entirely on our ability to reconstruct imaginatively another’s ‘situation,’ to simulate his point of view—so thoroughly that we can sometimes find ourselves experiencing

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<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (2006).

<sup>62</sup> For example, Ina Ferris has explored how periodical reviewers frequently highlighted anxieties about female reading practices through standard tropes, the most frequent of which involved comparing the act of reading to the act of eating, a metaphor that “makes reading an act of the body rather than the mind” (37). By linking women’s reading to unruly appetites, reviewers thus developed an understanding of reading novels as “a form of sensuality” in which “the act of reading itself becomes identified with pleasuring the body, even with the working of sexual desire” (37). This metaphor is also closely linked to Humean ideas of sympathy, through the spontaneous, embodied responses it describes; the danger of sentimental response is thus collapsed into the danger of unruly sexual appetites.

emotions he is ‘altogether incapable of feeling’” (17). The narrator’s role is to mediate between readers and characters, aiding readers in their imaginative reconstruction of a character’s experience through techniques like free indirect discourse, which convey information about characters that they may not be capable of articulating themselves. Thus, the mediatory role of the narrator can compensate for a character’s apparently blamable behavior by reliably representing her more sympathetic intentions, providing an explanation of “the appearances that the supporting characters see when they look at her” in a voice that both is and is not her own (Lynch 152). More importantly, by placing the responsibility of relating the heroine’s interiority onto the narrator, the heroine can retain the appearance of innocence necessary for a genteel young woman to remain sympathetic. But persuading readers to sympathize with a character also requires a narrator who can anticipate a reader’s needs; an important element of constructing a narrative with a sympathetic heroine is an author able to project onto and sympathize with her readers. Readers who feel that an author has inadequately sympathized with them may, therefore, respond with hostility.

Burney’s first two novels are early examples of this persuasive mode of narration; they share an acute awareness of the possibility that readers may not sympathize with their heroines and often take additional steps to ensure that their heroines will be appealing. Although *Evelina* uses an epistolary narrative rather than a third-person narrator, Burney draws on a rotating cast of letter writers who frame and intercede in Evelina’s narrative at key moments to produce an effect similar to that of a third person narrator negotiating between a character’s exterior and interior. The novel’s opening correspondence between Lady Howard and Mr. Villars establishes Evelina as the product of a legitimate but secret marriage, and her character as that of an “amiable girl,” “humane,” with a “natural vivacity of . . . disposition,” “rustic,” and “a little angel” (12–22). While Evelina is the novel’s primary letter-writer, Mr. Villars and Lady Howard’s letters provide necessary information about her that she cannot appear conscious of because it would reveal a degree of self-knowledge at odds with her role as an uninformed ingénue. More than simply vouching for her character and her history, they allow Evelina to remain convincingly naïve while they instruct readers in how to read both her person and her letters. Thus Mr. Villars and Lady Howard’s insider information

positions readers so that they can unite with Evelina against the potential misjudgments of society at large. Importantly, those misjudgments remain more a threat than a narrative actuality; Evelina's pervasive sense of embarrassment at the possibility of being misjudged is never accompanied by the first-person account of another letter-writer who has misjudged her, meaning that any misjudging characters' opinions are safely contained within either Evelina's own narrative or the narrative of a sympathizing character.

Because it relies on a third-person narrator, *Cecilia* does not have the same need to represent Cecilia through the perspective of a secondary character. Nevertheless, Burney uses techniques similar to those she relied on in *Evelina* to reinforce her narrator's ability to accurately assess Cecilia; an early passage from the perspective of her neighbor, Mr. Monckton, serves a similar function to the initial correspondence between Lady Howard and Mr. Villars. Monckton's covetous fixation on Cecilia proves to be one of the most destructive forces in the novel, but his calculating personality—the narrator describes him as “a man of parts, information and sagacity” (7)—means that his assessment of Cecilia's character will be insightful despite his interest; indeed, his interest in her and her fortune leads him to observe and interpret her circumstances and behavior with uncanny accuracy, but without any sense of fellow-feeling. But representing Cecilia through Monckton's point of view serves a double function: it also allows the novel to establish their characters in contrast to one another. Although Cecilia is not yet aware of any threat to her happiness, Monckton's view of both her and her estate as “his future property” imbues the narrative with a sense of dread that Cecilia does not share (9). While Monckton has “faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, [and] a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own” (7), Cecilia's ignorance of his motives contributes to readers' understanding of her as a virtuous and unworldly heroine at the same as it establishes him as dangerous. Over the course of the novel, Monckton's point of view reappears at key moments, demonstrating his ability to accurately predict Cecilia's behavior and her motives, while simultaneously establishing him as an antagonistic force against which readers can unite with Cecilia. Monckton's shadow narrative represents the tragic possibility of an unsuitable marriage; in this case, “the novel's true text of free indirect discourse” (Lynch 152) includes a

malevolent perspective that continually reaffirms Cecilia as the appropriate point of sympathetic identification.

Although Burney's first two novels indicate an awareness of the ways sympathy can fail, through both her representation of misjudging characters and her deployment of techniques that shore up readers' sympathy for her heroines, they nevertheless encourage readers to sympathize fully with their respective heroines. After *Cecilia*, Burney moved away from techniques that encouraged full sympathetic identification towards a more skeptical treatment of the narrative positions that produced sympathy in her early novels. In moving away from the relatively straightforward relationship between heroine and reader that Lynch describes, Burney's later work responds to the dynamic conversation about the nature of sympathy that played out over the course of the eighteenth century as well as the political anxieties of her own historical moment, which placed increasing limitations on who could be considered sympathetic.<sup>63</sup> In particular, Britain's conservative reaction to the French revolution produced a political climate hostile to outsiders, including the French émigrés exiled to Britain, one of whom Burney married in 1793, the same year when she produced a short pamphlet titled "Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy: Earnestly Submitted to the Human Consideration of the Ladies of Great Britain." This pamphlet represents a transitional moment between the straightforward sympathetic mode of *Cecilia* and the more cynical conception of sympathy represented in *Camilla*, in which Burney tries to convince her readers to provide financial support to the destitute French clergy expelled from France following the revolution. In it, Burney balances Smithian demands for a sympathetic narrative that readers can scrutinize with more Humean emotional appeals by describing the pitiable state of the émigrés through sentimental language.<sup>64</sup> Other scholars have

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<sup>63</sup> Both *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*'s engagement with the relationship between observation and sympathy extends beyond the way each novel structures its readers' relationship to its heroines. *Camilla* displays particular interest in the implications of the relationship between observation and sympathetic feeling for women: Camilla's outward appearance is continually contrasted with the other young women in the novel, especially her sisters and Indiana Lynmere, but also with the beautiful, mentally ill girl that Mr. Tyrold brings his daughters to see.

<sup>64</sup> Both of these strategies are reinforced by an inversion of the kind of flattery that both Mullan and Lynch place at the centre of their respective arguments. That is, instead of situating the pamphlet's readers as exceptionally capable of sympathy, they outline the effects should those readers fail to turn any sympathetic feelings that the narrative produces into a monetary contribution:

explored in depth how the lack of public sympathy extended to the émigré community gave rise to social critiques in Burney's fiction, but Burney's acute awareness of this failure of sympathy also caused her to reconsider more generally the ethical implications of the techniques she had used to develop sympathy for her own heroines in her early fiction.<sup>65</sup> By signing the pamphlet "By the author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*," she also demonstrated an awareness of the ethical components of authorship and a new willingness to draw on her authorial identity to forward a political cause.

While her first two novels predated the general shift in the dominant understanding of sympathy towards a version resembling that described by Smith, her final two novels respond to the shift in her culture's understanding of sympathy: they engage with the conventions of sympathetic identification to critique the idea that the kind of narrative, rational sympathy Smith theorizes is adequate, suggesting that it is equally likely to result in a failure of sympathy that amounts to persecution. The unrealistic ease with which fiction can produce sympathy because of the exceptional status it grants its readers becomes a central and unsolved moral problem in her final two novels—one Burney draws attention to by shifting her readers into a more complicated position in relation to her heroines. Through narrators who change the terms of the usual

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... anticipate the historians of times to come: will they not say, "These holy men, who died for want of bread, were Priests of the Christian Religion. They had committed no sin, they had offended against no law: they refused to take an oath which their consciences disapproved; their piety banished them from their country; and the land in which they sought refuge received, admired, relieved—neglected, forgot, and finally permitted them to starve!" (15)

By recounting the narrative of the emigrant clergy's refusal to capitulate to the revolutionary government and subsequent exile from France in short, rapidly punctuated phrases calculated to produce heightened emotion through suspense, Burney enacts both models of sympathy. Moreover, her reliance on a negative flattery, in which her readers are to be commended for their exceptional sympathy only if they avert the disastrous scenario she envisions, gestures towards the accusatory tone sometimes adopted by *The Wanderer*'s narrator. However, unlike Burney's fiction, which represents events in the past tense, this document allows her to project forward in a way that allows readers to turn any sympathy they feel into concrete action. Nevertheless, despite her use of multiple strategies to produce sympathy, Burney recognises that she cannot rely on sympathy alone to convince her readers to act: alongside the sympathetic representations of the émigrés' plight, she includes an appeal to her readers' self-interest, in which she points out that any money donated to her cause will find its way back into the local economy, even as she condemns such logic as "a refined species of usury" (18).

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Katharina Rennhak who has observed the important role that the plight of émigrés played in women's writing that dates from the 1790s, including Burney's *The Wanderer*, arguing that such texts "imagine social communities of exiles . . . to envision a brighter future for the French emigrants . . . and those *metaphorical exiles* (especially women, but also, e.g. second sons) who are portrayed as being 'homeless' within their own native country" (576).

sympathetic relationship of readers to characters, Burney's later novels engage critically with the ways fiction constructs sympathy, ultimately challenging readers to find ways to sympathize with characters who are not immediately recognizable heroines that easily fit the narrative conventions she had been instrumental in developing. Indicating Burney's identity on the title page as "the author of *Evelina and Cecilia*" indicated to readers what kind of heroine they could expect, but it also created expectations about what kind of relationship readers would have to that heroine. Reshaping that relationship, as Burney does in *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*, meant that her authorial reputation would also be reshaped.

### **Dividing sympathies in *Camilla***

Although she had not published a new novel since 1782, Burney's critical reputation in the 1790s remained high, meaning that the 1796 publication of *Camilla* was highly anticipated. Whereas *Evelina* and *Cecilia* construct highly effective sympathetic relationships between their heroines and readers, Burney's final two novels experiment with techniques that complicate these relationships, attempting to draw on the strength of her authorial reputation instead of narrative techniques as the means of persuading her readers to sympathize with her heroines. In *Camilla*, Burney begins to articulate a critique of the sympathetic conventions that she developed in her first two novels, exploring the limits placed on sympathy by an adherence to a Smithian model based on observation and judgment. Burney's critique becomes most apparent in the contrast between Edgar's repeated misinterpretation of Camilla's appearance and what the narrator reveals to be Camilla's intentions and experience—what Lynch terms "the novel's true text of free indirect discourse" (152). In *Camilla*, Edgar functions as an observer without the benefit of a narrator able to mediate between his observations and his object of study. Unlike Monckton in *Cecilia*, whose observations are accurate even if his personality is odious, Edgar's observations lead him to imagine a standard misogynist narrative for Camilla of a fall from virtue into vanity and coquetry, which, once he has conceived of it, inflects all of his observations. In *Evelina*, misjudging characters remain an embarrassing or even threatening possibility rather than a point of view represented by the narrative, and in *Cecilia* Monckton's point of view reinforces the reader's sympathy

for Cecilia; by contrast, the incongruity between Edgar and Camilla's perspectives and their approach to observing others complicates the potential for sympathetic identification with either of them. Although readers' position within the novel means they can identify the narrative Edgar imposes on Camilla as false, its very conventionality makes his mistake understandable, even as it potentially makes him unsympathetic. By supplementing Camilla's point of view with those of other characters, Burney highlights how observation has a limited capacity to produce sympathy and, under certain circumstances, may in fact prevent it, thereby interrogating the ethics of her familiar narrative mode and the readerly expectations that accompany it.

Edgar's misjudgments exist not only in opposition to the narrator's representation of Camilla's interiority, but also to the mode of sympathy that Camilla herself embodies. By representing Camilla's mode of sympathizing with others as spontaneous and natural but devoid of excessive sentimentality, Burney attempts to imagine a sympathetic ideal that does not rely on rational judgment, but rather a sustained yet passive attentiveness to the concerns of others. Burney's engagement with Smithian sympathy as a narrative model is therefore three-pronged, based on the critique of a model of sympathy predicated on adopting an objective position, an awareness of the complexities of trying to produce sympathy for one character at the expense of another, and an attempt to articulate an alternative, in which sympathy is a reader's—and an observer's—default position, rather than something that must be achieved through rational means. However, although Camilla's method of sympathizing offers an alternative to the Smithian mode that Burney critiques, it proves equally limited, in part because it requires a naïveté that makes Camilla vulnerable to opportunistic and malicious characters, and that readers, with their knowledge of those characters' interiorities, cannot enact.

Burney's most sustained critique of sympathy as a process of observation and rational judgment results from her representation of Edgar, who spends most of the novel carefully observing and drawing conclusions about Camilla based on her behavior. His constant surveillance leads him to take on the role of an alternate narrator who constructs a shadow narrative in which Camilla falls prey to the dangers of dissipation. Ironically Edgar's first, most favorable interpretation of Camilla is the most accurate, but the advice

of his mentor, Dr. Marchmont—that he adopt the role of an impartial, judging spectator before deciding whether Camilla will make a suitable wife—inaugurates a series of misinterpretations that form the basis of the novel’s plot. Edgar’s repeated failure to consider Camilla’s position as a young woman forbidden, both implicitly (by the societal expectations governing modest female behavior) and explicitly (by her father), from articulating her own feelings without first hearing his, causes him to misinterpret the decisions she makes in the face of what her parents view as his “diffidence . . . with respect to her internal sympathy” (237). The “diffidence” produced by the false narrative Edgar imposes onto Camilla to explain her behavior reveals what the novel considers one of the major flaws of sympathy created by careful observation and judgment. Unlike the novel’s readers, Edgar has no omniscient narrator to guide his responses to Camilla’s behavior, meaning he must rely on his own interpretive abilities to understand her, which are further limited by the standard narratives for women available to him.

Even the act of adopting an impartial position is not neutral, as evidenced by Marchmont’s advice to “study her, from this moment, with new eyes, new ears, and new thoughts . . . Nothing must escape you; you must view as if you had never seen her before” (159–60). In telling Edgar to be objective, Marchmont advises him to ignore the existing knowledge of Camilla that makes her legible; it also opens Edgar up to influence by characters whose opinions he knows to be misguided, such as the small-minded governess, Miss Margland. While Edgar “knew the splenetic nature of Miss Margland, and trusted she might be wrong” (183), the accusations she levels against Camilla color his subsequent interpretations. When Camilla inevitably disappoints him, he yokes Marchmont’s well intentioned advice to Miss Margland’s malicious observations, concluding, “Dr. Marchmont was right in his doubts, and Miss Margland herself not wrong in accusing her of caprice” (266–67). Rather than allowing him to see Camilla clearly, attempting to adopt an impartial position means that Edgar becomes susceptible to the general opinions circulating about Camilla, despite his better, more partial judgment.

Edgar’s decision to listen to Marchmont’s advice reveals how the line between impartial judgment and hostile surveillance is a fine one, if it exists at all; by attempting



to follow it, Edgar constructs an imagined (and false) narrative based on careful observation that amounts to an act of violence against Camilla, in that it leads to her illness at the end of the novel. Edgar's repeated misreadings of Camilla highlight how imposing an imagined narrative on another person, even one based on careful observation, can destroy sympathy undeservedly. In allowing his fear to overrule his judgment, Edgar demonstrates his inability to achieve impartiality and therefore to consider a narrative for Camilla other than the clichéd descent into dissipation that other characters have imposed on her. Jennifer Locke has identified the dangerous expectations that imposed narratives create in her study of fortune telling in *Camilla*, where she argues that attempts to predict the future result in characters who "inevitably become reduced into fairly transparent, reductive categories of gender, class, and appearance" (712). Although based on observation rather than prediction, Edgar's narrative for Camilla has a similar effect, reducing her to a stereotypical coquette, a narrative that Edgar only questions when Camilla is on the verge of death.

The novel's readers are positioned so that they can recognize the misinterpretation on which Edgar's narrative is founded; nevertheless, its very familiarity makes it compelling, not in the least because of the genuine anguish Edgar feels at witnessing what he believes is Camilla's "delicacy perverted" (705). Edgar's interpretive limitations are at once potentially sympathetic and potentially unsettling to readers because they are familiar and plausible—the kind of misinterpretation that could easily be made in the absence of an omniscient narrator able to mediate between an observer and the object of observation. Unlike *Cecilia*, in which Monckton's alternate perspective is, despite its reliability, the most straightforward manifestation of malevolent self-interest in the novel, *Camilla* has no clear antagonist: rather, self-involved misinterpretations and good intentions gone awry drive the plot, which can only resolve once the gap between Camilla's point of view and Edgar's has been closed. Therefore, although Edgar treats Camilla with a degree of suspicion that approaches hostility, the possibility of readers sympathizing with him remains because his motives are always comprehensible. In *Camilla*, then, Burney rewrites the plot of *Cecilia* to place pressure on the role a "misjudging character" plays in creating sympathy (Lynch 152), objecting to the wholesale dismissal of such characters by ultimately reintegrating Edgar and Camilla's

opposing viewpoints even as she scrutinizes the objectification inherent in observing others from a supposedly impartial perspective.

However, the reintegration of Camilla and Edgar's viewpoints is not unproblematic. In thematizing what the novel terms "Two Ways of looking at the same Thing" (147), Burney potentially divides her readers' sympathy between two characters whose perspectives frequently seem irreconcilable. Marcie Frank has identified "perspectival reversal" as one of the theatrical innovations Burney develops; she defines it as a narrative technique that "offers a sequence in which the view of what a character sees is immediately followed by a description of what can be seen in her" (627).<sup>66</sup> According to Frank, perspectival reversal in *The Wanderer* highlights its heroine's awareness of her suspicious appearance and the sense of shame that accompanies it; in *Camilla*, this technique emphasizes the opposite—Camilla's lack of shame-producing self-awareness. Unlike Burney's earlier novels, in which readers experience the heroine's embarrassments as she does, the narrative's double lens of Camilla's self-perception and Edgar's perception of her highlights Camilla's frequent ignorance about the ways her high spirits and attempts at self-government are open to misinterpretation. By alternating between Camilla's naïve point of view and Edgar's more hostile perspective, the narrator reveals the inevitable failure of Camilla's hopes and plans in advance, producing all of the anxiety of *Evelina* and *Cecilia* with none of their reprieves: because the narrative has always already revealed how Edgar has perceived Camilla, sympathizing with her becomes more painful than pleasurable, when it is possible at all. Moreover, although Edgar's mistakes are more obviously harmful than Camilla's, her interpretation of events—especially of the way that she has been perceived—requires correction, and Burney's use of perspectival reversal helps to create the necessary distance from Camilla's perspective, positioning readers so that they feel the embarrassment and anxiety that Camilla does not. This distance from Camilla's point of view potentially qualifies readers' ability to sympathize with her because, like Edgar, they are positioned

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<sup>66</sup> Although Frank argues that Burney first developed her use of perspectival reversal in *The Wanderer*, it also plays an important role in Burney's earlier novels, especially *Cecilia* and, to an even greater extent, *Camilla*.

so that they can recognize and pass judgment on her failures, even if they do not sympathize with him.

At the same time as she critiques the kind of observation that leads to hostile judgment, Burney recognizes the key role observation and narrative play in the development of sympathetic understanding; her novels struggle to resolve the tension between the imaginative interest that narrative produces and the ways in which people can suffer by the imaginings of others. In representing Camilla's method of observation, Burney attempts to reconcile her critique of Edgar as an impartial, Smithian observer with the impossibility of avoiding the act of observation. Through Camilla, whose attention to other characters is not accompanied by judgment, Burney develops a character who at times functions as the novel's truly impartial—and non-judgmental—spectator of her social circle, able to observe other characters' concerns without inserting herself into their narratives. Camilla's ability to observe without judgment is most fully on display in public scenes such as the ball in Book II and the boating party that opens Book IX, where the narrator shows Camilla stepping back to take in the scene passively. For example, at the ball, Camilla takes advantage of not dancing to survey the people surrounding her, noting, "an elderly lady, who, wholly employed in examining and admiring the performance of her own daughters, saw nothing else in the room," and, "a gentleman, much distinguished by his figure and appearance, and dressed so completely in the extreme of fashion, as more than to border upon foppery" (64). While these comments on the fashionable gentleman border on satirical, ascribing to him "a secret disposition to deride the very follies he was practising" (64), Camilla's observations, unlike Edgar's, are not accompanied by reproach or regret at his apparent moral failings.

This method of observation unaccompanied by moral commentary can be interpreted as politically neutral, as Brian McCrea does when he cites an instance in Burney's diaries in which she adopts a similar mode of observing the poor without any deeper analysis as evidence of her apolitical stance: "Burney records details of their dress and behaviour, notes their economic (mis)fortunes, and transcribes their dialect. However, Burney offers these accounts without analysis, without 'class-consciousness.'"

. . . she can see the poor without trying to imagine their lives” (6).<sup>67</sup> McCrea’s comments echo Hazlitt, whose backhanded praise of Burney’s (and, more generally, women’s) “power . . . of immediate observation” in his review of *The Wanderer* assumes an uncritical, depoliticized position (Hazlitt 337). Yet Burney’s—and, in the novel, Camilla’s—ability to bear witness to the experiences of others without constructing a narrative to explain their causes and effects resists the dominant, Smithian mode of sympathy and the reactionary politics that underscore it. Rather than trying to imagine herself in the position of the impoverished people protesting the price of bread or seeking to understand the economic forces at play, Burney takes the position that the act of observation without judgment gives rise to a more authentic form of sympathy, a position that harkens back to the Humean model that structured sentimental novels earlier in the eighteenth century. However, Burney also departs from Hume’s theory by avoiding the heightened affective language of the sentimental tradition, which separates sympathy from sentiment: while sympathy and sentiment can and often do coexist, Burney’s novel suggests that sympathy should not depend on an involuntary emotional response.

In the novel, this position plays out in the contrast between Camilla’s active attempts to imagine other characters’ perspectives, especially Edgar’s, which result in devastating failure, and her more passive meditations on the concerns of those around her, which are largely accurate. While Camilla can recognize that Edgar is misreading her and tries to modify her behavior to make her intentions apparent, she completely misunderstands the nature of his interpretations; her failure to see herself as Edgar does is cast into relief by her ability to feel a passive, general sympathy for those characters whose opinions she feels less invested in. The danger, then, in relying on a mode of sympathy based on imaginative narrative is twofold. On the one hand, imagining a narrative to explain the distress of others may result in a failure to sympathize at all because, as Edgar demonstrates, it creates the possibility of adopting an overly hostile perspective in the name of impartiality; on the other, as Camilla demonstrates in her failed attempts to imagine how Edgar sees her, trying to sympathize with others by

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<sup>67</sup> McCrea refers to a 4 March 1800 letter to Burney’s father collected in the fourth volume of Joyce Hemlow’s edition of *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d’Arblay)*, in which she describes the consequences of the shortage of bread on local labourers.

striving to see oneself as they do can only have limited success. By contrast, the passages that represent Camilla sympathizing successfully have a neutral, descriptive quality that makes it difficult to differentiate Camilla's observations from the narrator's.

In these passages, the novel makes use of what Dorrit Cohn has described as the "seamless junction between narrated monologues and their narrative context" (103), lending Camilla's sympathetic observational mode a degree of narrative authority.<sup>68</sup> However, Burney's attempts to represent this mode of sympathy also have a problematic effect on the narrative: through her own attentiveness, Camilla sometimes recedes from the narrative in favor of the minor characters who surround her, compounding the effect of the reader's removal from Camilla that results from the narrator's movement between Camilla and Edgar's perspectives. Camilla's mode of sympathy causes further problems for the novel because it exists in tension with the way that the novel asks its readers to sympathize. Unlike Camilla's passive yet constant attenuation to the feelings of those around her, the novel positions its readers so that, although they share Camilla's general awareness of other characters, they also have the additional knowledge that the narrator provides about their motivations. This knowing position forces readers to exercise the judgment that Camilla lacks in deciding how and with whom to sympathize, leaving them with a model of sympathy that looks remarkably like the Smithian one that the novel identifies as lacking.

The opening chapter of Book IX, entitled "A Water Party," encapsulates the complex set of strategies Burney draws upon to comment on sympathy in *Camilla*; it also sets off the final chain of events that results in Camilla's father's imprisonment for debt and Camilla's own illness. Throughout the chapter, the opposition that the novel sets up between Camilla and Edgar's perspectives and modes of observation is structured as an

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<sup>68</sup> In *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (1978), Cohn offers an alternative term for passages of free indirect discourse, "narrated monologues," which she describes as "[a] transformation of figural thought-language into the narrative language of third person fiction" (100). For Cohn, one of the main features of these "narrated monologues," or passages of free indirect discourse, is the easy movement between a narrator's voice and a character's, which complicates the process of identifying them and therefore assigning narrative authority.

implicit and explicit dialogue within the narration. It opens by locating the reader within Camilla's private concerns—"The ball dress of Camilla was not yet ready, when she set out for the amusement of the morning" (695)—before abruptly shifting focus towards the host of other characters in the process of assembling for the outing, indicating Camilla's careful attention to the rest of her party. Only passing references to Camilla's reactions hint that this passage should be read as her point of view: while later parts of the chapter employ obvious examples of free indirect discourse, the neutrality and accuracy of these observations make them seem like those of an omniscient narrator, rather than those of a character embedded in the narrative.

The narrator's movement between Camilla and Edgar's perspectives further complicates this chapter's use of free indirect discourse. When Camilla catches sight of Edgar, the narrator shifts to his perspective, revealing that he "for some time past, had joined the utmost uneasiness what conduct to pursue with regard to the friends of Camilla, to the heart-rending decision of parting from her for ever" (696). The cautious, formal phrasing that indicates his grave disapproval of her friends and conduct forms a sharp contrast with the lengthy descriptive sentences that characterize her rising spirits over the course of the outing:

Camilla, to whom the beauties of nature had mental, as well as visual charms, from the blessings, as well as pleasure, she had from childhood been instructed to consider as surrounding them, was so enchanted by the delicious scenery every way courting her eyes, the transparent brightness of the noble piece of water upon which she was sailing, the richness and verdure of its banks, the still and gently gliding motion of the vessel, the clearness of the heavens, and the serenity of the air, that all her cares, for a while, would have been lost in admiring contemplation, had she not painfully seen the eternal watching of Henry for her notice, and gathered from the expression of his eyes, his intended expostulation. (702–703)

Camilla's vacillation between excitement and self-awareness continues throughout the chapter. At first, the narrator communicates Camilla's "enchantment" by using heightened language to rapidly list the elements of the scene that capture her attention, emphasizing the "noble" qualities of the water and the "richness" of the banks they sail past. However, her awareness of Henry's unwanted attention forces her out of her reverie and into evasive action in the form of a conversation with Lord Valhurst. The gap

between Camilla's "sincere and generous wish to spare him [Henry] the humiliation of a rejection" and Edgar's interpretation of her behavior as "the most degrading fondness for adulation" fuels the rest of the chapter (705). Caught off-guard by a proposal from Lord Valhurst, Camilla imagines her rejection has proven her disinterestedness to Edgar, when, in fact, it increases his belief in her "delicacy perverted" (705).

As the chapter wears on, the narrator alternates between Camilla and Edgar more rapidly, heightening the tension between Camilla's borderline manic "uncontrollable gaiety" and Edgar's distress at what he interprets as evidence of "how spoilt! how altered! how gone!" Camilla has become (705). The narrator's use of free indirect discourse to represent both perspectives emphasizes Camilla and Edgar's different interpretations of the same events by imbuing them with emotional immediacy; their enclosure within their own points of view becomes particularly fraught at the culmination of the chapter, when Edgar finally approaches Camilla and their eyes meet: "He made way, then, to the group, though with unsteady steps; his eye pierced through to Camilla; she caught and fixt it. He felt cold; but still advanced. She saw the change, but did not understand it" (707). Their eyes come together, but their perspectives remain resolutely distinct, enclosed in short, sharp phrases, a division reinforced by the chapter's conclusion, where Edgar and Camilla part for what seems like the final time.

This chapter, like the novel as a whole, positions its readers uncomfortably between Camilla and Edgar, perpetually reinforcing both characters' mistaken interpretations. However, while Camilla's errors stem from her misguided attempts at sympathy with Edgar's position—she senses his disapproval and seeks to lessen it—Edgar's tendency to assume the worst of Camilla displays an overreliance on the conventional, misogynistic narratives of femininity that prevent him from sympathizing with her. The moment when Camilla does finally understand Edgar's intention to permanently break off their engagement reinforces the difficulty they have in communicating—unable to speak, Edgar breaks off and Camilla fills his silence with an inarticulate flash of divine inspiration: "He would have said *my last* but his breath failed him; he stopt; he wanted her to seize his meaning unpronounced; and, though it came to her as a thunderbolt from heaven, its very horror helped her; she divined what he could

not utter, by feeling what she could not hear” (708). In this moment, Camilla is attuned enough to Edgar to recognize she has misunderstood him, but his failure to articulate the basis for the misunderstanding results in “resentment, that he could thus propose a separation, without enquiring if she persisted to desire it” (709). In this particular scene, the rapidity of the shift between points of view highlights the failures of both characters to understand each other; however, rather than creating sympathy for Camilla at Edgar’s expense, the narrator presents both characters as potential points of sympathetic identification that readers must balance against each other.

But the repeated shifts between Edgar and Camilla’s perspectives do not only emphasize their different interpretations of events. A change in narrative style accompanies the movement from Camilla’s point of view to Edgar’s early in the chapter, indicating the difference in how they engage with and feel for other people through a more subtle deployment of free indirect discourse. While the language describing Camilla’s observations is neutral, even when it refers to characters (like Miss Margland) who treat her with disdain, the narrative’s tone becomes openly critical—even satirical—when the narrator represents Edgar’s observations, matching the “pain,” “disgust,” and “alarm” that the various members of the party evoke in him (696). When Camilla observes them, she notes the sources of tension within the group, such as how “Miss Margland still continued to exact the attendance of the Doctor, though his wry looks and sluggish pace always proclaimed his ill will to the task” (695), but does not dwell on them; when Edgar observes them, he assigns motivations, especially to Indiana, whose “mortification,” “haughty disdain,” and “pique” torment Melmond after he helps Eugenia onto the boat (699–700). Camilla is a more sympathetic observer, but Edgar’s satirical lens provides Burney with the opportunity to imbue the narrative with the kind of incisive social commentary that characterized her earlier works, making for more entertaining reading—especially when the object of critique is someone other than Camilla—and thus making Edgar’s point of view more enjoyable for, if not necessarily more sympathetic to, readers. Although Camilla’s perspective is more generous, Edgar’s infuses the narrative with his own opinions, meaning that, unlike Camilla, his perspective is not lost in the general milieu.



Nevertheless, the novel presents Camilla's ambient sympathy for her social circle as an alternative to Edgar's more hostile observation of both Camilla and the novel's secondary characters: for Camilla, a sympathetic response is the default rather than something that results from the behavior of the person being observed. However, even within the confines of the novel, the efficacy of this model is limited: Camilla's lack of skepticism about other people's motives leads her to incur the debts that contribute to her family's financial problems, raising questions about what the limits of sympathy without judgment should be. In *Camilla*, the division of Camilla and Edgar's perspectives potentially divides readers' sympathy between the two characters and forces readers to acknowledge how apparently impartial observation can result in misguided persecution rather than sympathy. In her final novel, Burney returns to these questions when she moves her exploration of sympathy out of the realm of representation by asking her readers to examine their own role as observers of a heroine without a stable name or identity. Limiting readers' access to the heroine's interiority positions them so that they must decide what kind of observers they want to be, potentially making them complicit in other characters' misinterpretations of the heroine and therefore subject to the same critiques. While *Camilla*'s critique of the dominant modes of sympathy is contained within the novel, *The Wanderer* extends its commentary outside of the boundaries of its narrative. Criticizing her readers alongside the novel's unsympathetic characters requires Burney to perform a complex balancing act, in which she attempts to use her position as a well-known author to offset the unsettling nature of its narrative structure. By using the peritextual byline to create expectations that she undermines, Burney invites her readers to consider how those expectations might prevent, rather than facilitate, sympathy.

### ***The Wanderer* and the burden of narrative**

While *Camilla* pushes back against a Smithian model of sympathy, it still provides its readers with privileged access to Camilla's interiority; *The Wanderer* limits this access, assuming that the truly discriminating, sympathetic reader will be able to recognize the heroine's "true meaning" without the flattery implied by Lynch's configuration of the relationship between reader and character (Lynch 152). Unlike *Camilla*, whose narrator provides an excess of information, *The Wanderer*'s restricts it to

such a degree that readers know little more about the heroine than the other characters in the novel do. Indeed, in the early pages of the novel, even taking the heroine at face value proves a difficult endeavor: she begins the novel disguised in blackface and wrapped in bandages, and, during the subsequent three days, her skin changes from “a regular and equally dark hue” to “smeared and streaked,” until she appears with “the brightest, whitest, and most dazzling fairness” (43). Over the course of the novel, her name also shifts: first described simply as “the stranger,” she is given the name “Ellis” until a reunion with her childhood friend, Gabriella, reveals that her given name is Juliet. But the heroine’s initial disguise, her unfixed identity, and her resolute silence in the face of questioning are not the main problem. Rather, the narrator’s complicity in this silence means the normal relationship between reader and character as one enabled by special knowledge of the heroine’s interiority has been disrupted. By the time Gabriella reveals that Juliet is, in fact, Lady Juliet Granville, the secret, legitimate elder half-sister of Lady Aurora Granville and Lord Melbury, the reader has been kept in suspense about the heroine’s identity and history for nearly four of the novel’s five volumes.

Unlike Burney’s first novel, which prefaces the novel with an origin story that confirms Evelina’s status as a suitable heroine, *The Wanderer* expects its readers to recognize Juliet’s suitability based almost entirely on external signs—and, barring those, based on what they know about Burney’s previous heroines. Although the narrator frequently represents her emotional responses in the moment through free indirect discourse, this interiority is restricted: readers do not know everything that Juliet knows, never mind what she may not be aware of or capable of articulating. Whereas Burney’s first three novels offset the representation, in excruciating detail, of their heroines’ trials through the pleasures that come with privileged access to their heroines, in *The Wanderer*, sympathetic readers not only suffer alongside Juliet, but also suffer from suspense at the hands of the narrator. Far from being placed in a position where they can “contrast their powers of discernment with those of the misjudging characters within the fiction” (Lynch 152), readers of *The Wanderer* must interpret the heroine’s appearance alongside the other characters and reach their own conclusions. This refusal to provide Juliet’s history for most of the novel means *The Wanderer*’s narrator demands sympathy for its heroine without repaying its readers with the usual privileges that help produce

sympathetic identification. Instead, readers are asked to trust the author of *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla* to provide them with a suitable heroine, even though she delays providing them with the narrative proof until the novel's final pages.

In *The Wanderer*, Burney's rejection of a Smithian conception of sympathy based in narrative looks back to the sentimental fiction informed by Hume's idea of emotional contagion, but does not consider it an adequate model; instead, an awareness of the shortcomings of sympathetic identification rooted in spontaneous feeling complicates her attempts to invoke this Humean mode of sympathy. When Burney limits her readers' access to her heroine, she places Smith's mode of sympathy in conversation with Hume's, revealing the shortcomings of both, and inviting her readers to challenge themselves to sympathize with fictional characters—and, more generally, other people—in the absence of sentimental or narrative conventions. However, this invitation is limited by its failure to articulate a clear alternative: feeling sympathy becomes a moral imperative, but how to achieve it remains unclear.

The emphasis that falls on Juliet's outward appearance raises questions about how much interiority is possible in the absence of full knowledge about a character's experience, especially the extent to which the representation of her thoughts and emotions can have meaning in the absence of any knowledge about her social context. Helen Thompson equates the heroine's lack of a history with a "lack of interiority" and a "lack of depth" (971), and Suzie Asha Park argues, "the wanderer's reserve . . . questions and challenges the very pressure to disclose depths that an increasingly Romantic culture both exerts and manages to veil as a gentle invitation to express the self freely" (127). The "compulsory narration" that Park identifies as a hallmark of Romantic culture is a key feature of the Smithian mode of sympathy that structures the fiction of the period and, in Lynch's account, produces the illusion of interiority necessary for readers to sympathize. For Park, the novel's refusal to participate in the persistent demand to narrate personal experience undermines the idea that fiction can adequately represent interiority: "The point of elusiveness and reticence in *The Wanderer* . . . is not to produce the illusion of depth but to reveal the illusory basis of authoritative forms imposed upon character" (130). By rejecting the narrative conventions that produce sympathy for its heroine, the

novel also refuses to maintain the illusion of interiority, and, in doing so, points out the ways in which understanding a character's interiority is based on knowledge of their social context.

Juliet's limited interiority extends beyond the lack of a history, though: the narrator keeps readers from experiencing her point of view at all until the sixth chapter, until which point the narrator rotates through the perspectives of various secondary characters, providing them with the opportunity to speculate about the heroine based on her appearance. Without the corrective that insight into Juliet's perspective would provide, readers are forced, along with the novel's other characters, to read her decontextualized body and draw their own conclusions, a process impeded by the darkness on the ship, her disguise, and her refusal to speak. In the opening chapters of *The Wanderer*, Burney exaggerates the same technique that she relied on in her previous novels, in which the heroine becomes an object of unsympathetic scrutiny by characters who construct an inaccurate narrative about her in order to justify their responses. However, where earlier heroines' difficulties stem from their need for an invitation to narrate their experiences that is never extended, the heroine of *The Wanderer* actively refuses the repeated and insistent demands that she explain herself. Camilla becomes an object of study for primarily one man—Edgar—but Juliet incites the curiosity of society at large, and finds herself subject to misinterpretation by almost everyone she meets, including, potentially, the readers of the novel. Moving from the representation of a misunderstood heroine whose history and intentions are legible in *Camilla* to a mysterious heroine whose name and history are unknown raises the stakes of sympathetic identification for Burney's readers: because the information they have about the heroine is similar to that of other characters, readers are implicated in the narrator's critique of those characters if they fail to sympathize correctly.

Even once the narrative shifts to her perspective, Juliet remains vulnerable to misreading. An early passage representing Juliet's "sober style of reasoning" shows her grappling with her treatment at the hands of her benefactors, openly acknowledging why their sympathy should be so limited:

Unknown, unnamed, without any sort of recommendation, she applied for succour, and it was granted her: if she met with the humanity of being listened to, and the charity of being assisted, must she quarrel with her benefactors, because they gave not implicit credit to the word of a lonely Wanderer for her own character? or think herself ill used that their donations and their aid were not delicate as well as useful? (72–73)

While the novel usually uses free indirect discourse to represent Juliet in a moment of heightened emotion, here it represents Juliet meditating on the necessity of gratitude for what aid she has received, despite her desire for “implicit credit.” By representing Juliet’s self-awareness about the reasons that other characters fail to sympathize with her and her reasoned lack of resentment towards them, the novel tries have it both ways: readers are invited to use such passages as a means of giving her credit, but are still denied access to the information that would confirm such credit has been assigned correctly. Refusing to provide readers with information about the heroine’s past while still providing access to her emotional responses through free indirect discourse places Lynch’s understanding of the relationship between sympathy and “the novel’s true text of free indirect discourse” (152) under pressure, drawing attention to how representations of interiority do not create sympathy, but only supplement that which has already been produced by a cohesive narrative. Instead of producing a sense of interiority, free indirect discourse functions here as an extension of the physical reactions that other characters use as evidence either for or against Juliet.

Thus, although the narrator frequently provides readers with Juliet’s thoughts in the moment, readers continue to be denied any stable way of identifying her: without a fixed face or name, Juliet remains illegible, a series of physical and emotional reactions to be interpreted, as Mrs. Maple’s repeated references to her as “a body,” “this body,” and “that body” indicate. Upon overhearing her play the harp and sing, Mrs. Maple angrily demands, “And pray where might such a body as you learn these things?—And what use can such a body want them for? Be so good as to tell me that; and who you are?” (75) The discrepancy between Juliet’s appearance as a “bold young stroller” (74) and the genteel accomplishments she displays should provide Mrs. Maple with the opportunity to rewrite the narrative she has constructed for the nameless guest in her house, but she insists on maintaining her interpretation in the absence of any concrete

evidence to disprove it. Describing the unique challenge that Juliet's namelessness presents to the cultural authority of upper-class women like Mrs. Maple, Barbara Zonich argues that, "she is challenging the most basic assumptions of a patrilineal culture" (117), assumptions that underlie the rigid doctrine that dictates who deserves sympathy. Unable to imagine a narrative in which the heroine's body has a respectable identity or name attached to it, Mrs. Maple, like the other older female gatekeepers, reveals her sympathetic imagination to be limited to conventional characters within recognizable plots. The possibility that the novel's readers will follow suit places the narrator in a defensive position, not unlike that of Juliet herself, resulting in what Helen Thompson calls the novel's "structure of redundant discovery" (971), in which Juliet is represented as repeatedly enacting a class position she cannot claim. Ironically, Juliet *is* a conventional heroine, but, in repositioning her readers as outsiders, Burney makes her difficult to recognize as such.

Both the heroine's and the narrator's determined silence seem to fuel what Lynch has described as *The Wanderer's* "fantasy of the self that exists independent of social exchange" (201). However even as the novel seeks to prove its heroine's inherent value by refusing to reveal her socio-economic position, it reinforces the necessity of that context: virtuous behavior unfixed to a class-based identity means that her behavior cannot be evaluated and deemed appropriate, either by the novel's secondary characters or by its readers. The novel attempts to offset this lack of context by demonstrating her superiority to aristocratic and genteel members of society; nevertheless, the only characters who take up her cause with any degree of conviction are themselves limited in the kind of power they can wield, either by extreme youth, political radicalism, erotic desire, or eccentricity. In *The Wanderer*, only the young—Gabriella, Lady Aurora Granville, Lord Melbury, Elinor Joddrel, and Albert Harleigh—or the elderly and ineffective—Sir Jaspar Herrington—seem capable of sympathy at all, even in a limited capacity, suggesting, as Burney's earlier novels do, that the main barrier to feeling sympathy is rooted in self-interest.

Where *The Wanderer* departs from Burney's earlier critique of the relationship between self-interest and the failure of sympathy is in the way it implicates readers in its

critique; in order to sympathize with Juliet, readers must forgo the privileges accorded to readers in the usual sympathetic narrative structure. Unlike *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, in which Burney deploys an array of strategies to induce readers to sympathize with her heroines, this novel expects readers to recognize its heroine as sympathetic based on their own abilities to piece together textual and paratextual clues. Elinor functions as the novel's most direct acknowledgement of the possibility that, in the absence of those privileges, readers may fail to feel sympathy; positioned as a stand-in for the reader who expects a coherent history and does not receive one, she embodies the novel's position on the limitations of sympathy elicited by narrative. During those early chapters when the audience only sees Juliet through the eyes of other characters, much time is spent representing the on-going political debate between the revolutionary Elinor and the steadier, more cautious Harleigh. The differences in their professed approaches to political reform mirror their abilities to sympathize with and aid the heroine. Elinor invites Juliet into her aunt's house, partly out of politically motivated defiance of social convention, but largely to satisfy her own curiosity. Although, as Kristina Straub observes, "Juliet uses story-telling—and her interlocutor's [Elinor's] desire for narrative—to disguise her own situation and to gain herself a measure of economic protection" (205), the novel also shows the limits of storytelling's power. Elinor's interest in Juliet wanes after she realizes Juliet does not intend to divulge her secrets; when Elinor observes Harleigh's interest in Juliet, a new opportunity for narrative arises, and she casts the three of them in a tragic love triangle of her own making. Elinor's narrative desire thus proves the source of her caprice, operating in opposition to her more instinctive generosity. Despite her political radicalism, Elinor stands in for the conventional reader: at first intrigued by Juliet's incongruous position, she extends sympathy, but that sympathy is contingent upon Juliet's confidence. When Juliet fails to share her history, Elinor's sympathy also fails. However, this failure has less to do with her position as a judging spectator than with the narrative desire that Juliet refuses to satisfy, a distinction that reveals the fickle nature of the sympathy that narratives produce.

Not all characters demand a narrative in exchange for sympathy: in particular, Harleigh, Lady Aurora Granville, and Gabriella all accept Juliet's inability to explain her circumstances, and their acceptance provides a tentative model for how the novel's

readers might also sympathize with Juliet. Harleigh's greater consistency comes from his ability to set aside his own narrative desire when required. Although his desire to learn more about Juliet increases over the course of the novel, his capacity for sympathy stems from principle as well as his own feelings, and he remains publicly steadfast in his support of her. When confronted by Lord Denmeath during Juliet's tenure as Mrs. Ireton's companion, Harleigh offers a lengthy speech detailing her virtues, concluding:

Her conduct has rather been exemplary than irreproachable from the moment that she has been cast upon our knowledge; though she has suffered, during that short interval, distress of almost every description. Her language is always that of polished life; her manners, even when her occupations are nearly servile, are invariably of distinguished elegance; yet, with all their softness, all their gentleness, she has a courage that, upon the most trying occasions, is superiour to difficulty; and a soul that, even in the midst of injury or misfortune, depends upon itself, and is above complaint. Such, my lord, I think her! not, indeed, from any certain documents; but from a self-conviction, founded, I repeat, upon progressive observations; which have the weight with me, now, of mathematical demonstration. (613)

Here, Harleigh castigates those who do not recognize her virtues as conventional upper-class qualities that belie her impoverished and "nearly servile" condition, establishing his method as based on "progressive observations" and "mathematical demonstration" to obscure his deep personal feeling. Even though he lacks knowledge of her history, framing his observations as "progressive" arranges them into a makeshift narrative that allows him to fulfill some of the requirements of Smithian sympathy. At the same time, the impersonal tone and language of scientific observation he adopts lend him authority, masking the fact that his affections have potentially compromised his judgment. He recognizes his impartial narrative of her circumstances is more likely to inspire sympathy than an impassioned plea, and adapts the form of his defense to suit his audience. By positioning himself as Juliet's impartial observer, Harleigh briefly takes up the responsibility of narrating her, both to the other characters and to any readers who remain skeptical. Harleigh's defense gives voice to the novel's defensive position as the story of a heroine without a history—or at least without one she is willing to share. At the same time, Harleigh's failure to win Lord Denmeath's sympathy despite his strict adherence to the forms of a Smithian model of sympathy indicates the novel's general skepticism of



this sympathetic mode. Unlike Edgar in *Camilla*, Harleigh can interpret Juliet accurately, but his accuracy has little practical use.

In failing to evoke Lord Denmeath's sympathy despite his cool-headed defense of Juliet, Harleigh demonstrates how narrative can fail to produce sympathy; later in the novel, he also demonstrates narrative's more destructive potential when he finally learns Juliet's history. His role as disconnected observer during the scene when her husband claims her represents the first occasion in the novel where his sympathy fails. The abrupt switch from Juliet's perspective to Harleigh's when she encounters him in the inn allows for a theatrical representation of the moment when Juliet finally becomes fully legible to him. The result is a rapid succession of varied emotions: the revelation of her parentage results in "a sudden delight, thrilling, in defiance of agony, through his burning veins," followed by "rage, astonishment, grief and despair" (729), which he directs at Juliet:

A sudden sensation, kindred even to hatred, took possession of his feelings. Altered she appeared to him, and delusive. She had always, indeed, discouraged his hopes, always forbidden his expectations; yet she must have seen that they subsisted, and were cherished; and could not but have been conscious, that a single word, bitter, but essentially just, might have demolished, have annihilated them in a moment. (730)

The moment when Harleigh should be best able to sympathize with Juliet's position results in a failure of sympathy more personally accusatory than any of the general suspicion she falls under over the course of the novel, demonstrating how self-interest can overwhelm sympathetic impulses in the face of a narrative that ought to inspire it. Although he now possesses the knowledge he has spent the novel seeking, Harleigh's sympathy fails because he believes Juliet has failed to adequately sympathize with him. This scene reveals that Harleigh's sympathy is ultimately similar in nature to Elinor's: despite his lack of knowledge about Juliet's circumstances, he has inserted her into a courtship narrative with him. When this narrative seems to have failed, so does his ability to sympathize. But this failure is not just the failure of Smith's model to produce sympathy: it also shows the breakdown of a more Humean form of sympathy when, overwhelmed by his own feelings, Harleigh is unable to feel with Juliet.

The breakdown of Harleigh's ability to sympathize, brief as it is, contrasts sharply with the constancy of Juliet's two sister-figures, Gabriella and Lady Aurora Granville. Through their relationships to Juliet, Burney gestures towards the possibility of an ideal sympathetic female community of which the novel seems skeptical elsewhere. Tara Ghoshal Wallace attributes the failure of female community in *The Wanderer* to the absence of "mutual confidence [that] leads to emotional and practical alliances" (503), resulting in Juliet being "perforce barred from a community built on shared tales of woe" (505). However, in Juliet's relationships with her two sister-figures, Burney imagines a community of women not only able to sympathize without the justifications that "shared tales of woe" provide, but also able to relieve each other from the demands to narrate their situations. Unlike the older female characters who threaten Juliet's security at every turn, Gabriella and Aurora represent a respite from the need to narrate—but while Gabriella's history with Juliet allows for implicit trust, Aurora, like Harleigh, has only her own observations to rely on. Where Aurora's sympathy inspires overpowering gratitude in Juliet, though, Gabriella's can be taken as a matter of course: Juliet's relief at finally being reunited with her childhood companion creates a brief lull in the novel, in which she experiences "the felicity of being loved because known; esteemed and valued because tried and proved" (394).

The nature of the kind of sympathy this community represents is active rather than passive: both Gabriella and Aurora release Juliet from the burden of narration by taking it on themselves. By explaining the circumstances of Juliet's birth to Sir Jasper Herrington, Gabriella allows Juliet to avoid the appearance of chasing an inheritance to which she may or may not be entitled, while at the same time removing Sir Jasper's doubts. Off-page, Aurora takes on a similar narrative role by piecing together Juliet's identity through scraps of family gossip. Despite Aurora's initial belief that Juliet is illegitimate, she plots with her brother to protect Juliet and finds ways to provide her with financial aid, placing her own judgment and sense of responsibility above the propriety and self-interest her guardians demand. Near the end of the novel, when Aurora and Juliet are finally united in full knowledge of their relationship, Aurora gently chastises Juliet for her reluctance to identify herself, saying, "Did I wait till I knew your rights to my affection before I loved you? Did I not divine them from the moment I first conversed

with you?” (818) Even more so than Gabriella, Aurora represents a reprieve from the demand to narrate: in her off-page detective work, she seeks out the information that confirms her relationship to Juliet, but Juliet’s most important claim on her remains their mutual, instinctive sympathy. Aurora’s willingness to privilege feeling and instinct over narrative proves her to be Juliet’s ideal reader, setting a standard that the novel’s actual readers may not be able to achieve, especially because the kind of active storytelling that Gabriella and Aurora take on is prevented by readers’ limited access to information. Despite its shortcomings, Harleigh’s speculative mode, based on the kind of observation and extrapolation under scrutiny in both *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*, remains a possibility open to readers, suggesting that Harleigh’s sympathetic abilities result from his merit rather than a superior mode of sympathy.

The relationships between Gabriella and Juliet and between Aurora and Juliet also represent Burney’s hopes for how readers will approach her novel. Like Juliet with Gabriella, Burney hopes that readers will grant her “the felicity of being loved because known; esteemed and valued because tried and proved”; like Juliet with Aurora, she hopes that they will have the interpretive savvy to relate the plot of *The Wanderer* to the plot of *Evelina*, another novel in which an unacknowledged heiress is misinterpreted by those around her. However, in order to play the Aurora to Burney’s Juliet, readers must first sympathize with her authorial position, a task made difficult by the challenges the novel makes to a sympathetic mode.

In *The Wanderer*, Burney refuses to reassure her readers of their exemplary sympathetic capacity by “ask[ing] them to contrast their powers of discernment with those of the misjudging characters within the fiction” (Lynch 152) or “position[ing] each private reader as the exceptional connoisseur of commendable sympathies” (Mullan 14); instead, she asks them to reckon with the possibility that they may also be “misjudging characters” against whom more sympathetic readers can elevate themselves. However, although the ability to sympathize is linked to personal merit, it is not necessarily an innate quality: as Harleigh’s defense of Juliet and his own struggle with his disappointment over Juliet’s marriage reveal, sympathy is a conscious decision enacted over time rather than a passive feeling in response to a compelling narrative. Thus, the

novel attempts to turn the logic of Lynch's "discriminating readers" or Mullan's "exceptional connoisseur" back on itself by relying on readers' investment in an idea of themselves as exceptionally capable of sympathy in order to push them towards a more expansive idea of who is worthy of that sympathy

## Conclusion

In *Camilla*, the narrator resists expectations by dividing readers' sympathy between the heroine and her observers; *The Wanderer's* narrator sets herself in more direct opposition to her readers by refusing to provide information that would allow for easy sympathetic identification. Through this refusal, the narrator groups her readers with the genteel society that rejects her heroine, suggesting if they cannot sympathize with her based on the virtue that she repeatedly and painfully performs, then they are no better than a Mrs. Ireton or a Mrs. Maple. In *The Wanderer*, readers are not automatically granted unlimited access to the heroine's interiority by way of "the novel's true text of free indirect discourse" (Lynch 152), but rather required to prove their worth through a more expansive definition of sympathy than that allowed for by either Hume or Smith. Those who can trust the author enough to sympathize with a nameless heroine without a history will be rewarded—their sympathy means they can take pleasure in the novel's conclusion as well as the knowledge that they have been elevated above both hostile readers and hostile characters.

*The Wanderer's* indictment of a society that demands external indicators of social value above personal, virtuous characteristics potentially includes its own readers, unless they can prove, through sympathetic identification with its nameless and unfixed heroine, their own value. While in *Camilla* Burney uses an in-text unsympathetic observer to demonstrate the limits of Smith's model of sympathy, in *The Wanderer* she restructures the usual relationship between reader and heroine, shifting the responsibility for creating sympathy from the narrator to the reader. The limits Burney places on sympathy in her final two novels thus constitute an objection to the conservatism of sympathy at the turn of the nineteenth century, resulting in a challenge to her readers to expand the limits of their sympathetic imagination and a critique of those who fail to do so. Nevertheless, in

revealing Juliet's history, *The Wanderer* ultimately capitulates to those conventions that it protests against. The ease with which she fits into the conventional narrative of the legitimate aristocratic woman abandoned by her father is both the problem and the point: without the narrator's mediating influence creating the illusion of interiority, the normally sympathetic heroine becomes unrecognizable and open to readers' suspicion, until she soothes their class-based anxieties by ultimately proving she is exactly what she ought to be.

The novel's author was subject to much the same double-bind as her heroine. Accused by Croker of being "a *mannerist*; that is, she has given over painting from the life, and has employed herself in copying from her own copies, till, instead of a power of natural delineation, she has acquired a certain trick and habitual style of portraiture" (124), Burney stood accused of seeking to repeat her earlier success without offering anything new. Her refusal to name herself on the title page, instead only listing her previous works, contributed to the criticism of Croker and others, who could recognize the narrative similarities but not their differences. Moreover, like Juliet, whose shifting name is one of the markers of her untrustworthiness, reviewers capitalized on the difference between Miss Burney, the author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, and Madame D'Arbly, the Francophile author of *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*, suggesting that the works of the two different names were, in some way, irreconcilable. As this chapter has demonstrated, personal and political animosities were not the only reasons for critics to resist the literary experiments of *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. Nevertheless, the public, epitextual narrative of Burney's life and marriage provided an additional excuse for readers to choose not to sympathize with her, and, in the absence of sympathy for her authorial position, readers of *The Wanderer* had no reason to sympathize with her heroine. In *Paratexts*, Genette asks, "How would we read Joyce's *Ulysses* if it were not entitled *Ulysses*?" (2). Similarly, we might ask, "How would John Wilson Croker and William Hazlitt have read *The Wanderer* if they had not known it was by Frances Burney or Madame d'Arbly?"

## Coda

*Of course, this circling of the book, too, this reading around it before reading inside it, is a part of the pleasure in a new book, but like all preliminary pleasures it has its optimal duration if you want it to serve as a thrust toward the more substantial pleasure of the consummation of the act, namely the reading of the book.*

Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveller*

This dissertation has attempted to reconcile the divide between what Calvino, in the above epigraph, calls “reading around [the book]” with “reading inside it.” However, rather than treating these two acts as separate, I have argued that they are in fact deeply entangled within each other, at the level of both composition and reception. By simultaneously reading around and through the books discussed in the previous chapters, I have sought to demonstrate how an historically grounded understanding of paratexts, especially the material book and the context it suggests, can give rise to a new appreciation of literary form, and that the assumptions authors make about the material form their texts may take provides them with a framework for experimentation. The first two chapters provided concrete examples of paratextual elements and how they provide a framework for authors as well as readers to engage with the literary marketplace. In moving to less immediately visible paratextual elements, such as volume/narrative structure and authorship, the final two chapters demonstrated how paratextual information is implicated in the text in intimate structural ways and how paying attention to that relationship can offer new avenues for understanding narrative.

I began this dissertation with a focus on title pages with the hope of demonstrating how, in the face of a well-established marketing system, interpretations of individual texts are shaped, before their pages are even opened, by a pre-existing paratextual apparatus. While I addressed the title pages of four major publisher-booksellers, the methodology that this chapter employed could be extended to other publishers and other genres, significant and minor, to develop a more robust understanding of the visual component of early nineteenth-century print culture. The context provided by the first chapter enabled the analyses in the subsequent chapters, where I explored how

Edgeworth uses genre to teach readers how to navigate the literary marketplace, how Austen develops the picturesque as a metaphor for reflecting on how readers move through the landscape of the text and the material book, and how Frances Burney attempts to mobilize her readers' epitextual knowledge of her authorship to reshape their understanding of what makes a character sympathetic.

Each of these chapters demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between a pre-existing set of paratextual conventions and an individual author's intervention in print, which makes pulling the paratext apart from the text, at best, a difficult task. Throughout this dissertation I have tried to be attentive to the nuances of both the design of the material book and narrative technique; this approach is particularly important to Chapters 3 and 4, where narrative control over readers' knowledge intersects with readers' knowledge about epitextual information such as the usual structure of the book or familiarity with an author's oeuvre. By drawing attention to this relationship between the mediating role of narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse and the mediating role of the book, I have tried to model a method of interpretation that blends narratological concerns with historical context and the context of production. By integrating the act of "reading around" into "reading inside" the book, I hope to have resituated the way we read Romantic-era fiction within the material conditions of its production, opening new avenues for the study of the intersections between textual and bibliographical codes.

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