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This periodical is only as substantial as the material it contains: therefore, we more than welcome any contributions that members of the academic community might wish to make. Articles we would be most interested in publishing include those addressing Romantic literary studies with an especial slant on book history, textual and bibliographical studies, the literary marketplace and the publishing world, and so forth. Papers of 5–8,000 words should be submitted by the beginning of April or October in order to make the next issue, if accepted. Any of the usual electronic formats (e.g. RTF, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, HTML) are acceptable, either by post or e-mail. Submissions should be sent to Dr Anthony Mandal, Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, ENCAP, Cardiff University, PO Box 94, CARDIFF CF10 3XB, Wales (UK), [mandal@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mandal@cardiff.ac.uk).

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# MARY MEEKE'S 'SOMETHING STRANGE'

## The Development of the Novel and the Possibilities of the Imagination

*Michael Page*



THE FAMILIAR STORY of the rise of the modern novel has been told often enough that I need only briefly summarise it here. Most narratives credit the printer Samuel Richardson with initiating the discourse of the modern novel when he published *Pamela* in 1740, though it is hard to imagine Defoe being left out of the conversation. What Richardson did that made him so 'modern', and thus marked a breakthrough, was to introduce psychological realism into narrative fiction (a psychological realism, do not forget, that was wish-fulfilment fantasy). Soon after, Horace Walpole opened the modern conversation up to the dark side of human psychology with *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). What Walpole in effect did was to suggest that the unconscious—the unknown, terror, the sublime—was just as much a part of the modern mind as the realism of Richardson. So at this point the two sides of the creative discourse of Modernity were set and the novel would become the central literary form in which that conversation took place. The two aspects of Modernity—consciousness and the unconscious—were to be explored in depth, sometimes oppositionally and sometimes, in the very best of novels like *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Moby-Dick*, in concert. So by the end of the nineteenth century, American novelist Frank Norris could declare, 'naturalism [i.e. extreme realism] is a form of romanticism [i.e. sublime imagination]'.<sup>1</sup>

It wasn't long after Richardson and Walpole that the novel blossomed in Western culture. The 1780s and '90s saw an enormous increase in the production of novels. Many factors are included here, not the least of which is literacy. However, as Clifford Siskin has pointed out, until recently, 'once we rise novelistically past Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne, and the 1780s and '90s come into view, critical attention shifts to the supposedly lyrical advent of Romanticism'.<sup>2</sup> What Siskin is here suggesting is that the rise of the novel parallels the rise of Romanticism, that most potent expression of modern consciousness, making it clear that the novel (and here is where that often misleading differentiation between the 'serious' and the 'popular' begins to come in) is not a separate or peripheral part of the conversation of Romanticism, but central to it. Until recently, the Romantic novel has been largely ignored because, for the most part, it has been seen as mere 'popular fiction'—'popular fiction' being a catch-

all term for any fiction that presumably does not have the psychological depth of 'serious literature'. This supposedly makes it more accessible to the 'masses' and therefore it can't possibly have much to say.

What I have tried to suggest in these opening paragraphs is that the Romantic period is the time when the novel began to take shape as a principal form of cultural expression because it initiated the process of wedding the psychological realism of Richardson with the imaginative sublime of Walpole, thus helping to define modern consciousness. Certainly with a writer like Dickens this becomes quite clear. Unfortunately, imagination has too often taken a back seat to realism and form in literary studies. Consequently, works described as 'imaginative literature' are deemed 'popular' and therefore vulgar and/or shallow. As a result, most of the fiction of the Romantic period has been glossed over or just plain forgotten. But the Romantic period is in truth one of the most fertile periods in the development of the novel.

Working within this novelistic ferment were a number of female novelists, subsequently ignored because of their gender, not the quality of their work, and who are now re-emerging on the scholarly scene. Not the least of these is Mary Meeke, whose output of thirty-four novels (including many four-deckers that would amount to a 700-plus-page novel today) and numerous translations from French and German over a twenty-year period is in itself worthy of study simply for the insight it can provide regarding the literary marketplace. Indeed, Roberta Magnani has shown that Meeke was likely the most prolific novelist in the Romantic period, even exceeding Sir Walter Scott.<sup>3</sup> Meeke would certainly qualify as a writer of 'popular fiction' and it is unfortunate that because of this label she has all but disappeared from literary history. Thomas Babington Macaulay was immensely fond of her work, as was Mary Russell Mitford, but beyond that she was already forgotten by the Victorians (at least as indicated by those canonical figures who wrote and published literary memoirs and letters). Nevertheless, Meeke clearly had a readership in her day given her output; and since most people don't write about what they read, at least not for publication, who is to say that Meeke's readers didn't extend on through the nineteenth century? Today, for example, Grace Livingston Hill's romances of the 1920s and '30s still circulate frequently at public libraries in the United States, but seldom is she mentioned in literary circles. We could say that there is no 'scholarly discourse' surrounding her work. But any series of observations at a public library, systematic or casual, would reveal what we could describe as a 'popular discourse'. Arguably, Meeke's work may have had similar cultural distribution, except, unlike Hill, she has fallen out of print.

Most of Mary Meeke's novels were published under the by-line 'Mrs. Meeke', but since her output was so prolific, she also published many under the pseudonym 'Gabrielli' and some of her works were published anonymously, though they are traceable by references to other titles on the title page. Magnani has investigated Meeke's by-lines in her recent *Cardiff Corvey* article 'The Mysterious Mrs Meeke', suggesting that Meeke may have used the 'threefold authorship'

as a way to combat criticism regarding the repetitiveness and contrivance of the plots.<sup>4</sup> But this argument suggests that Meeke is trying to deflect the harsh opinion of reviewers rather than simply using pseudonyms as a way to get her works on the fiction market. Many prolific writers today still use this tactic, sometimes as a way to distinguish two different styles of their writing, often so as not to over-saturate the market. Meeke, then, can be seen as a case study on how the institution of the literary marketplace first developed at the end of the eighteenth century. Although Meeke has a lot to offer as a sociological study of the literary marketplace, literacy, and the development of popular fiction, her actual fiction deserves analysis too. What kind of stories was she telling and why did people read them? Was her 'popular' approach to the imagination merely 'pure trash of the commercial variety',<sup>5</sup> or did her novels 'play their part in expressing something of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of the age which produced the Romantic poets'?<sup>6</sup> Finally, did she contribute anything to the development of the novel and is she still worth reading today?

Let us consider Meeke's four-decker novel *Something Strange*, published by the Minerva Press in 1806, when Meeke's production was in full swing. First, some background. *Something Strange* is one of the later 'Gabrielli' novels; Meeke was by this time moving away from the Radcliffean gothics of her earlier career into fiction that is more about the concerns of the emerging commercial class, an important consideration in *Something Strange*. The novel hinges on what has been called 'the basic inheritance plot',<sup>7</sup> which Meeke employed again and again in her novels and which I will describe in full later in this essay. In a more sophisticated manner, Meeke's contemporary Jane Austen wrote her canonical novels around the same basic concern. By the time she published *Something Strange*, Meeke had already published at least half of her thirty-four novels. The novel received one notice in James Mill's *Literary Journal*, in which the reviewer gives a fresh response, suggesting that he has not previously encountered any of the other 'Gabrielli' novels and is not therefore jaded by the repetitious plot structure. He writes: 'It is written with some spirit and humour, and will not suffer by a comparison with most of the novels of the day'.<sup>8</sup> From this we can see that the reviewer found Meeke's novel satisfying and that John Garrett is correct in saying that while Meeke's works 'may often fail to move, they seldom cease to entertain'.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the reviewer also reveals his own elitist perspective in differentiating the 'popular' from the 'serious': 'The person who chose the title seems to have understood the taste of the multitude. Let them have something strange, and they will never inquire whether it be in the smallest degree consonant to nature or common sense'.<sup>10</sup> Here we see the standards of literary taste being put into place that will shape the canon for the next two centuries. Such standards have silenced many voices and lost many texts that are only now re-emerging in the cultural conversation.

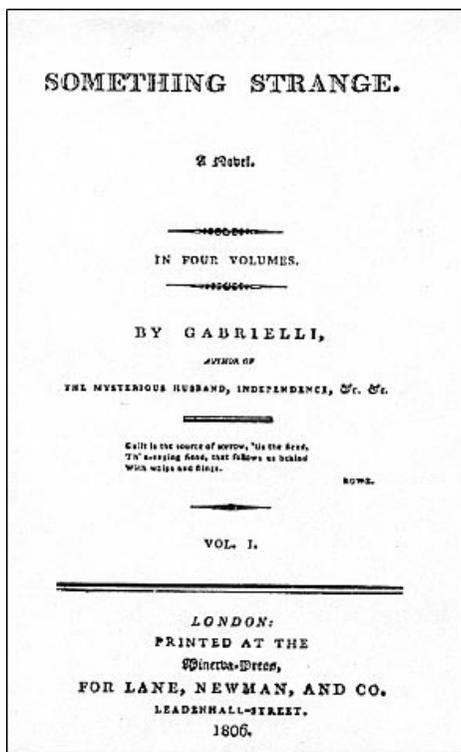
Indeed, *Something Strange* is an extremely rare title. In Frederick Frank's bibliography, *The First Gothics*, it is not among the nine Meeke novels surveyed. The gothic enthusiast Montague Summers described the problem inherent in gothic bibliographic research as long ago as the 1930s in *The Gothic Quest*, re-

peatedly alluding to the rarity of titles even then before the disasters of the Blitz. The books just simply no longer existed either through attrition (meaning they were read to tatters); through disinterest (meaning they were simply thrown out); or through the inherent problems of the multi-volume format (meaning there are difficulties in keeping a complete set together over time—if you lose volume two, why keep volumes one, three, and four?). Curiously, *Something Strange* is one of the handful of titles mentioned in the Meeke entry in the recent *Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*, which suggests that the contributor simply selected titles from Meeke's *oeuvre* at random, or had read extensively and *Something Strange* had left an impression as one of her best works. Whatever the case may be, *Something Strange* is simply unavailable in book form: there is no copy listed in the OCLC WorldCat database.<sup>11</sup>

Fortunately, Die Fürstliche Bibliothek (Princely Library) at Schloss Corvey in Germany and the invaluable Corvey Microfiche Edition have reintroduced this and many other lost works from the Romantic period to the scholarly community.<sup>12</sup> In *The Size of Thoughts* (1996) and *Double Fold* (2001), novelist Nicholson Baker has campaigned passionately for the necessity of library preservation and conservation, arguing why we must do our best to save cultural documents in their original forms.<sup>13</sup>

For Baker these documents are the very lifeblood of culture, no matter how obscure, and to lose one is to silence a voice and diminish the voices of those to come. The library in Schloss Corvey is a testament to why these issues and Baker's passionate arguments are so important. Without the Corvey Library, *Something Strange* would simply not exist and that aspect of the conversation of which this essay, Roberta Magnani's article, the text of the novel, and the entry in the *Cambridge Guide* are a part, would be rendered silent. Luckily, it is possible not only to preserve this forgotten novel, but to reintroduce it into the cultural conversation.

One way to reintroduce a forgotten writer into the cultural conversation is to trace that writer in the conversations of canonical figures. Meeke's reputation has largely been sponsored by Thomas Babington Macaulay's enthusiasm for her works: 'I wish that I knew where my old friend Mrs. Meeke lives. I would



certainly send her intelligence of the blessed effects of her writings'.<sup>14</sup> In several letters to his sisters, Macaulay makes numerous references to Meeke as one of his favourite writers. Subsequent biographical entries on Meeke in various literary encyclopaedias have too often read these anecdotes in a negative light, giving the impression that Macaulay's enthusiasm for Meeke was merely a guilty, vulgar pleasure and not a true reflection of his own literary tastes.<sup>15</sup> This reading arises from a passage in *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (1876) by Macaulay's nephew G. O. Trevelyan who quotes his mother's (the former Hannah Macaulay) reminiscences of her brother's fondness for Mrs Meeke:

Macaulay thought it probable that he could rewrite 'Sir Charles Grandison' from memory, and certainly he might have done so with his sister's help. But his intimate acquaintance of a work was no proof of its merit. 'There was a certain prolific author,' says Lady Trevelyan, 'named Mrs. Meeke, whose romances he all but knew by heart; though he quite agreed in my criticism that they were one just like another, turning on the fortunes of some young man in a very low rank of life who eventually proves to be the son of a duke.'<sup>16</sup>

Here we are also introduced to the notion of the basic inheritance plot that has led critics to dismiss Meeke as an uninteresting hack—hack she may be, but far from uninteresting. This criticism in fact becomes less problematic if we approach a novel like *Something Strange* by itself. Alone, *Something Strange* is compelling and satisfying, as is an individual work of Austen or Dickens. Certainly if we were to read many of Meeke's novels consecutively it might prove tiresome, but isn't that the case with any writer? Take Hemingway, for example. In other words, even the most specialised reader of fiction likes variation from time to time because otherwise the imagination becomes dulled. At the same time, there is something to be said for stories that are 'one just like another'. This is, after all, part of the attraction of detective fiction, for example. With this in mind, Meeke can be seen as a proto-genre writer. Through her and her many contemporaries we see the emergence and development of popular genre fiction which holds much more cultural currency than we like to give it credit for. Many readers return to the same type of story again and again—be it horror (Stephen King), thriller (John Grisham), romance (Barbara Cartland), western (Louis L'Amour), action (Tom Clancy), science fiction (Anne McCaffrey), mystery (Agatha Christie), or even 'serious literature' (Salman Rushdie)—because *the fiction translates into how they shape their own personal identity and how they interpret the world around them*. Macaulay clearly saw Meeke's novels in this light. His incessant reading of her work most certainly was a touchstone as to how he saw himself in the world.

In many ways *Something Strange* reads like a Dickens novel. The narrative style seems to anticipate the methods of Victorian fiction and is unlike the canonical and semi-canonical novels of the Romantic period. It particularly anticipates Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Nicolas Nickleby*, which are easily

identifiable as inheritance plot novels. *Martin Chuzzlewit* has been Dickens's most ignored novel for various reasons, not the least of which being his scathing criticisms of America and Americans. Nevertheless, *Chuzzlewit* contains some of Dickens's most delightful characters—Pecksniff, Sari Gamp, Tom Pinch, immediately come to mind. David Lodge describes his own experience with *Chuzzlewit* while adapting it for a television serial: 'it so happened that *Martin Chuzzlewit* was, at that date, the only one I had never read—partly because it is not highly rated by modern critics of Dickens and seldom studied in English Literature courses'.<sup>17</sup> This from a man who had taught courses on Dickens. Lodge goes on to tell how he found *Chuzzlewit* ideally suited for cinematic adaptation, the structure being more akin to the visual medium, and how he discovered that despite some flaws, the novel more than stood up to Dickens's usual list of 'best' books: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*. One gets the same sense from *Something Strange*. My point is that Meeke's popular fiction is anticipating the decades in which the novel would totally eclipse poetry as the primary medium of cultural expression. *Chuzzlewit* has been ignored because it falls between Dickens's early work, like *Oliver Twist* (also an inheritance novel), and the later, darker novels, like *Great Expectations* (also a sort of inheritance novel). But *Chuzzlewit* is the beginning of Dickens's great middle period when he was still closer to an idealistic Romantic than a defeated Victorian. This Romanticism runs throughout the novels beginning with *Chuzzlewit*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, and even on to *Hard Times*. These novels in particular can be seen to be operating in a manner similar to Meeke's *Something Strange*. So, in this respect, what makes *Something Strange* such a good novel is that it bridges the gap between the leisurely storytelling that makes so many eighteenth-century novels slow going and the faster paced modern narrative much more suited to today's reader. Few can deny that one of Dickens's 800-pagers is far easier (and much more fun) to read than Goldsmith's 150-page *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Something changed between Goldsmith's 1760s and Dickens's 1830s, and Meeke's narrative gives us a great deal of insight as to when that change took place.

Lady Trevelyan's plot description does, however, succinctly describe the plot of *Something Strange*. Nonetheless, Meeke's inheritance plot seems to be moving forward beyond the Gothic and anticipating something new, something more modern: that is what we see in Dickens during Lord Macaulay's own time. I will briefly summarise the story here. Theodore Seymour is the principal student at Atherstone House school in Wakefield, Yorkshire. Abandoned by his profligate father while still an infant, following the unfortunate death of his misused mother, Theodore has been maintained by his miserly Uncle Benjamin, who manages a small legacy left for the boy by his mother's family. As events unfold, we find out that Theodore's mother was the daughter of a Portuguese Marchioness and an English Duke, who were divorced due to religious incompatibilities and sexual infidelity on the part of the Marchioness. Raised incognito away from her zealous mother, the daughter, Theodora St Germain, was seduced by Henry Seymour, an English soldier driven by a

desire for fortune. From this ill-fated liaison Theodore was born and in order to keep the boy's legacy out of the hands of his grasping father and his soul out of the hands of his fanatical grandmother, his grandfather, the Duke of Ravensburgh, leaves him in the condition of anonymity until his coming of age when he will no longer be legally bound to his father. The plot hinges on the intrigues, deceits, and turns of fate that reveal the circumstances and ultimate claiming of the legacies to which Theodore Seymour is entitled.

Sound at all familiar? Harry Potter? Indeed, the same story elements that have made the Harry Potter novels so compelling for children and adults alike are present in *Something Strange*, and by inference in Meeke's other novels that hinge on the inheritance plot. As Magnani puts it, 'The theme of the abandoned child, whose virtuous life and fine education are finally rewarded with the improvement or restoration of his rank, and his social and economic status, is reprocessed in a variety of shapes'.<sup>18</sup> What then is the inheritance plot other than a variation of the archetypal messiah theme: the gifted chosen one come to save the world. Meeke's novel is not quite as boldly archetypal as, say, Arthurian Romance, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, or Harry Potter: Theodore's is not the task to save the world from the forces of evil, but only to lay claim to his rightful place in society. Or so it seems. If we consider *Something Strange* within the context of its times, perhaps the story is closer to the messiah archetype than one might initially suspect.

Consider the historical and social context of *Something Strange*: the novel was published in 1806 and one of its appeals is the amount of unencumbered travel that the characters engage in throughout England and Continental Europe. The characters are constantly on the move and there are few barriers placed in their path. It seems that they are able to move around at will and no one, most notably M. Bonaparte, seems to stand in their way. One must ask, though, what about Napoleon? What about the aftermath of the French Revolution? Have the events of the last twenty years had no effect upon the Europe of *Something Strange*? The story is clearly meant to be contemporary, yet the world is strangely untouched by current events. It is indeed something strange. We must step back for a moment and ask why? Why in this realistic novel (realistic in that there are no supernatural events) have the realities of the contemporary world been left out? This was not unusual in the fiction of the time, as Stephen Behrendt has pointed out:

The Romantic novel offered its readers very desirable choices among *alternative* realities, whether those alternatives took the form of gaudy Gothic romances set in remote times and places or sentimental social romances into whose edenic settings no 'ancestral voices prophesying war' were admitted. In this respect some of the most signal Romantic novels may be said to reflect their time by their specific and systematic banishment of those times from their pages.<sup>19</sup>

What Behrendt is suggesting is that the imaginative flight into *alternate* realities is in some sense a political response to the upheavals of Europe. We need to look at the situation with Napoleon very closely for a possible explanation for what Meeke is doing in her novel.

Napoleon was proclaimed emperor in the spring of 1804. By 1805, he had made himself King of Italy, formed an alliance with Spain, and provoked England, Austria, and Russia into an alliance to thwart his further expansionist agenda. In October of that year, Nelson's fleet was victorious at Trafalgar, securing the seas for the English and forcing Napoleon to pursue his aggressions on land alone. Nelson's death at the moment of victory created a hero that defined stability and tradition in opposition to the demonic, revolutionary, anti-hero that Napoleon had become.<sup>20</sup>

By writing about English aristocrats and ignoring the political and social upheavals in Europe, Meeke is actually expressing patriotism and cultural stability—the superiority of English society and its institutions over Napoleon and his regime—at a time when the security and safety of England was at risk of being overwhelmed by the French threat. Her fiction was no doubt comforting to readers whose anxiety about the future was certainly great. Thus, *Something Strange*, and works like it, were instrumental in shaping English identity—what it meant to be English—when the future of that identity was in crisis. In his autobiography *Voyage to a Beginning*, present-day novelist and philosopher Colin Wilson expressed the importance of the BBC broadcasts of Shakespeare and Shaw during the Blitz because it instilled a sense of courage and fortitude through cultural identity; people found comfort in their own identity with these great writers and their work.<sup>21</sup> The same argument can be made for *Something Strange* and other novels of the Romantic period in that they helped shape a clearly defined English cultural identity in opposition to that of their French adversary.

Meeke's novel is also providing an emotive release from the realities of the world, not unlike fiction and film today. Fiction (and poetry) may also function as an emotional outlet, a stimulus for catharsis. Fiction and the reading experience are often just as much about feeling as about thinking. Great works are able to combine the two, but for many readers the emotive values are all they are looking for, and this serves an important social function. An interesting study on recent romance fiction, Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), offers a great deal of insight into this phenomenon. While studying the reading habits of a group of women in a midwestern American city, Radway discovered that the *act* of reading was more important to the readers than the meaning of the text, and that the fiction needed to be investigated in light of these values (reader response) rather than by critical values (textual analysis):

Because the women always responded to my query about their reasons for reading with comments about the pleasures of the act itself rather than about their liking for the particulars of the romantic plot, I soon realized I would have to give up my obsession with

textual features and narrative details if I wanted to understand their view of romance reading. Once I recognized this it became clear that romance reading was important to the Smithton women first because the simple event of picking up a book enabled them to deal with the particular pressures and tensions encountered in their daily round of activities. Although I learned later that certain aspects of the romance's story do help to make the event especially meaningful, the early interviews were interesting because they focused so resolutely on the significance of the *act of romance reading* rather than on the meaning of the romance.<sup>22</sup>

It is easy to make the argument that this is to be expected because of the apparent depthlessness of the stories, but I would counter-argue that one could extrapolate Radway's conclusion to all types and all levels of reading. Whether one is reading Tolstoy or Batman, Sartre or Seuss, the act of reading is significant to how we create meaning, even when the act itself is the meaning. And this very act of reading, employing the imagination as opposition to the realities of the social world, can be seen as a subversive act in and of itself. (It can also be a conservative act of cultural, mental, and moral stasis, as Radway also suggests.) Seen in this light, Meeke's apparent conservatism—'They enforce passive obedience and assert the values of the aristocracy, and can be connected with the increasing dominance of conservative values in the fiction of the early 19th century' (Lorna Sage)—suddenly appears far less assertable.<sup>23</sup>

Was Meeke, then, a conservative? In a political sense the answer, perhaps, is yes. But this must be qualified when we consider the embedded opposition to Napoleon's aggressions. Economically, perhaps; though I have only implied it here, Meeke clearly favours the old aristocracy and has suspicions and doubts about the emerging commercial world as witnessed by the chicanery of the brothers Seymour, though this is tempered by Theodore's worthy companions Lambert and Chenvier, both sons of commercial figures. At the same time however, Meeke, as popular novelist, is herself a member of this emerging commercial class: her critics have consistently denigrated her for her playing to the whims of the literary marketplace. And as novelist, she champions the imagination as a valuable and necessary mode of expressing human consciousness and self-identity, and this, in an age when literacy was on the rise, is difficult to call conservative. Contemporaneous with Meeke, the Marquis de Sade had this to say about the novel as imaginative expression:

Of what use are novels? Of what use, indeed! Hypocritical and perverse men, for you alone ask this ridiculous question: they are useful in portraying you as you are, proud creatures who wish to elude the painter's brush, since you fear the results, for the novel is—if 'tis possible to express oneself thuswise—the representation of secular customs, and is therefore, for the philosopher who wishes to understand man, as essential as is the knowledge of history.<sup>24</sup>

As literacy increased and the social world became more complex, the possibilities of the imagination expanded dramatically. No longer was human consciousness locked into a narrow tunnel: ideas were in ferment on all levels of society and change was inevitable. As De Sade suggests, the novel became the medium through which this new consciousness was explored. The novel becomes the project of the imagination, and it is through imagination that the social world is transformed. Charlotte Smith's *Desmond* (1792) contains this insight on the novel voiced by her female heroine Geraldine Verney:

It may be said, that, if they do no good, they do no harm; and that there *is* a chance, that those who will read nothing, if they do not read novels, may collect from them some few ideas, that are not either fallacious or absurd, to add to the very scanty stock which their usual insipidity of life has afforded them.<sup>25</sup>

This discourse runs throughout the novels of the period; they are rife with intertextuality, the supposed reserve of 'postmodern' novels. But novelistic self-reflectivity is there from the very beginning, as seen in Smith and De Sade. Though not directly engaging this discourse as did Smith and De Sade, Meeke participated by the very production of novels within the marketplace of ideas. Like these more notable contemporaries, Meeke's novels are part of the foundation upon which this discourse can take place. Her work extends the discourse into the future so that one can very well imagine a volume of Meeke, perhaps *Something Strange*, providing comfort, fortitude, and instruction to little David Copperfield (let alone Lord Macaulay) as he suffered at the hands of the indifferent and malicious Murdstone's:

My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs, to which I had access (for it adjoined my own), and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time—they, and the *Arabian Nights*, and the *Tales of the Genii*—and did me no harm, for whatever harm was in some of them was not there for me; I knew nothing of it.<sup>26</sup>

Like Dickens in this, one of his most moving passages, Meeke achieves with *Something Strange* that rare quality of taking the reader on a delightful imaginary tour of one aspect of the early-nineteenth-century novelistic discourse on the imagination. By telling her tale well and providing all of those cathartic, emotive moments one gets from really effective fiction, Meeke is able to expand our notions of literature and the imagination. This in itself is a worthy legacy for a novel, alas long forgotten. Though *Something Strange* does not reach the level of a great novel like *David Copperfield*, it is, nevertheless, a valuable reading experience. In the end, Mary Meeke's legacy, as one of many representative popular writers from the Romantic period who have until recently been lost

under the weight of the canon, may simply rest on how she sheds light on the development of the novel as a forum for the formation of personal and cultural identity. As further recovery efforts proceed, and more scholars examine her works, we will begin to determine which of her many novels are most significant. It may turn out that *Something Strange* is given this honour, but there is much more work to be done. 

## NOTES

1. 'Zola as Romantic Writer', in *The Literary Criticism of Frank Norris*, ed. Donald Pizer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), p. 72.
2. 'Eighteenth-Century Periodicals and the Romantic Rise of the Novel', *Studies in the Novel* 26:2 (Summer 1994), 26.
3. 'The Mysterious Mrs Meeke', *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 9 (Dec 2002). Online: Internet (Oct 2003): <[http://www.cf.ac.uk/lencap/corvey/articles/cc09\\_n04.html](http://www.cf.ac.uk/lencap/corvey/articles/cc09_n04.html)>, § 6.
4. *Ibid.*, § 6–9.
5. Stanley J. Kunitz, *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1936), p. 583.
6. John Garrett, 'Introduction' to Mary Meeke, *Count St Blancard or the Prejudiced Judge* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), p. xxix.
7. Janet Todd, *British Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 460.
8. *Literary Journal* 2 (Aug 1806), 218.
9. Garrett, p. xxvi.
10. *Literary Journal* 2 (Aug 1806), 218.
11. For further details of WorldCat see <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/default.htm>.
12. The Corvey Microfiche Edition holds twenty-three out of Meeke's twenty-seven original works.
13. *The Size of Thoughts: Essays and Other Lumber* (New York: Random House, 1996); *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (New York: Random House, 2001).
14. *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ed. Thomas Pinney, 6 vols (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), 1, 219.
15. See e.g. the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Kunitz, *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century*; Joanne Shattock, *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers* (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1993); Todd, *British Women Writers*.
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26. Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1849–50; New York: Signet, 1962), p. 65.

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# WRITING FOR THE SPECTRE OF POVERTY

## Exhuming Sarah Wilkinson's Bluebooks and Novels

*Franz Potter*



### I

IN 1803, a curious account was appended to a short Gothic tale that appeared in the *Tell-Tale Magazine*; it was published anonymously and narrated the distressing and dismal 'Life of an Authoress, Written by Herself'. It was published as a

warning [to] every indigent woman, who is troubled with the itch of scribbling, to beware of my unhappy fate [...] and beg her to take this advice; that, whatever share of learning or wit she may have, if she has nothing better to recommend her to public favour, she must be content to hunger and thirst all her days in a garret, as I have done.<sup>1</sup>

The unfortunate 'authoress', after a series of distressing circumstances, had found herself alone in London and determined to subsist as a writer of novels. Reduced to her last five guineas, by 'scribbling night and day' she finished a four-volume novel. She approached a bookseller, but the naïve 'authoress' was greatly shocked at his terse response:

A novel! Nothing of this kind is *now* read, I assure you. Novels are a drug; a mere drug: they are as dead a weight upon our hands as *sermons*. Surely, Madam, you must know that this kind of writing is perfectly exploded! No such things are read now-a-days. (p. 32)

Distressed to the find the novel out of fashion and further reduced to poverty, the authoress is compelled to

undertake the most slavish of all employments, that of translating [...] for the booksellers. The life of a galley-slave is even preferable to my state of slavery: I am a beggar, without enjoying air and liberty: I have the confinement of a servant, with the regular diet and wages which a servant receives, and am condemned to perform a severe task, by a certain period of time, which, when with the utmost difficulty it is performed, I am often obliged to transcribe the whole work again [...] To add to my distresses, I have written myself almost blind, with continually poring on the old authors I have been so long engaged with; and have, besides, from the constant posture of writing, contracted a disorder in my

lungs, which, I imagine, will soon put an end to a life of pain and misery. (pp. 33–34)

The ‘authoress’, concluding her own tale, admonishes other women to ‘apply themselves sooner to the *spinning-wheel*, than the *pen*, that they may not be pining, with hunger and cold, in a wretched garret’ (p. 34). The ‘authoress’ in this case was Sarah Wilkinson and her life and texts illustrate the unique diversification of Gothic fiction that occurred during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Her vast output of varied fiction—some twenty-nine volumes and above a hundred smaller publications—illustrates the demanding conditions ‘trade’ authors, who produced fiction as part of a profitable industry rather than an art form, endured living by the pen.<sup>2</sup>

Born on 14 December 1779 to William and Hannah Wilkinson, Sarah Carr Wilkinson, like many of her contemporaries including Eliza Parsons, Charlotte Smith and Frances Burney, ‘lived by the pen’; but unlike these authors, she never had the comfort of literary or economic success. Her life was unmistakably difficult and fraught with hardship and illness. Little is known about Wilkinson’s early life or education, apart from that she was ‘selected by Mrs. [Frances] Fielding as one of the young persons who read to her mother Lady C[harlotte] Finch when deprived of sight’.<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Finch (1725–1813), daughter of Thomas Fermor, Earl of Pomfret, was the Governess of the children of King George III between 1762 and 1792. The relationship between Wilkinson and the Pomfrets would indeed last throughout her long life; many of her works are dedicated to members of that family. However, the publication of three textbooks for schools strongly suggests that she was well educated and was perhaps a governess or educator.<sup>4</sup>

Sarah Wilkinson’s literary career began in 1803 with several short works appearing in Ann Lemoine’s *Tell-Tale Magazine*, a periodical specialising in short stories that were simultaneously sold as bluebooks: typical examples include *The Subterraneous Passage; or the Gothic Cell* and *Lord Gowen; or, the Forester’s Daughter*. Robert Mayo, in *The English Novel in the Magazines 1740–1815*, speculates that the amount of ‘short stories’ published by Wilkinson in the *Tell-Tale* suggests that she was actually the ‘editor’ of the magazine, though there is little evidence beyond an extraordinary production of sixteen ‘tales’ to substantiate this claim.<sup>5</sup> Between 1803 and 1806 she published at least sixteen bluebooks with Lemoine including *Horatio and Camilla: Or, the Nuns of St Mary* (1804) and *The Water Spectre; or, An Bratach* (1805); most of these bluebooks, but not all, appeared in the *Tell-Tale Magazine*. However, Wilkinson’s literary relationship with Lemoine was not exclusive, and she simultaneously published at least nine bluebooks with five other publishers: for example, *The Ghost of Golini; or, the Malignant Relative. A Domestic Tale* (1820) was published by Simon Fisher; *Zittaw the Cruel: Or, the Woodman’s Daughter* [n.d.] with Mace; *Monkcliffe Abbey* (1805) with Kaygill; *The Spectre; or, the Ruins of Belfont Priory* (1806) with J. Ker; and *John Bull; or the Englishman’s Fire-side* (1803) with Thomas Hughes.

Sarah Wilkinson, however, did not confine herself entirely to bluebooks. In 1806 she published *The Thatched Cottage; or, Sorrows of Eugenia, a Novel* by subscription with Thomas Hughes. The novel is dedicated to Mrs Frances Fielding (1748–1815) and the subscribers include the Princesses Sophia (1777–1848) and Amelia (1783–1810), the Duchess of Gloucester, the Margravine of Anspach, Lady Mary Coke (to whom Horace Walpole inscribed the sonnet which fronts *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)), Lady Crespigny, the Right Honourable Earl of Pomfret, and perhaps, most intriguingly, a Mr Scadgell.

The financial success of her first novel enabled Wilkinson to commence in the library business in Westminster at No. 2 Smith-Street; and the following year she gave birth to a daughter Amelia Scadgell, though it is unclear whether or not she married Mr Scadgell. It was about this time when the name on many of her publications began to appear as Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson. There is no proof that the misspelling of her name, however, was an attempt to use a pseudonym. Many of her works which appear with Scudgell are published by Dean & Munday; other publishers did not adopt the middle name.<sup>6</sup> Achieving relative success with her library, Wilkinson continued to publish novels including *The Fugitive Countess; or, the Convent of St Ursula, a Romance* (1807), *The Child of Mystery, a Novel* (1808), and *the Convent of the Grey Penitents; or, the Apostate Nun, a Romance* (1810). The modest success of her novels, however, was offset by the failure of the library sometime after 1811; to survive, Wilkinson was compelled to take lodgers into her home, an arrangement which lasted some years ‘till overwhelmed with losses by lodgers due to sickness and domestic troubles’, she returned to teaching and living by the pen (RLF, 10 February 1824).

Wilkinson began teaching at the White Chapel Free School on Gower Walk, sometime after 1812; and writing for periodical publications (‘Torbolton Abbey’ in *New Gleaner* in 1810), and only occasionally publishing Gothic bluebooks such as *Priory of St Clair; or, Spectre of the Murdered Nun* (1811) and *Edward and Agnes* (1812), both with Arliss. After 1812, however, she began to exclusively focus on writing children’s books; these included

a vast number of books, of which she can pretend no merit but their moral tendency amongst the later ones, are local geography, William’s Tour, or, a peep into numbers, Jack and his Grandmother, or, Pounds, Shillings, and Pence, Moral Emblems, Aunt Anne’s Gift, Mary and her Doll, or, the new A, B, C, and the whole forming a set for the nursery and may be purchased at Mr. Bailey’s 116 Chancy Lane [...] (RLF, 15 November 1820)

In 1819, Wilkinson returned to the Gothic, publishing the novel *The Bandit of Florence* (re-titled *New Tales* (1819) by the publisher Matthew Iley). That same year, on the recommendation of a Mrs Lovell, the Headmistress of the White Chapel Free School, she was engaged to be the ‘Mistress of the [Free] School at Bray in Berkshire, at a very good salary, coach and a house to live in and my child to be with me and expect to be sent for with every prospect of being comfortable for life’ (RLF, 1819). But her health, which had been steadily

declining since 1816, forced her to resign just nine months later; cancer had developed under her right arm.

Wilkinson returned to Westminster in May of 1820, but deprived of a constant income, she again turned to the pen, publishing at least seven bluebooks, four Valentine Readers,<sup>7</sup> serving 'several persons regularly with periodical publications and some small shops with small books wholesale which is at present until I can get some employment to occupy my time and only means of subsistence' (RLF, 15 November 1820) and also publishing *Lanmere Abbey*, in two volumes, re-titled *The Spectre of Lanmere Abbey; or, the Mystery of the Blue and Silver Bag, a Romance* (1820) with William Mason. Later that year she opened a parlour which sold small books and pictures for children (RLF, 15 November 1820), but found it increasingly difficult to procure books and almanacs. The small profits from sales were barely enough to support herself and Amelia.

In March 1821, however, Wilkinson's desperate situation was somewhat alleviated; she was engaged by the publishers Dean & Munday to 'conduct' a part of the *Lady's Monthly Museum*. Her small parlour, though, continued to fail, and in a letter to the Royal Literary Fund she bitterly lamented that she was not 'able to earn enough by a business I follow independent of my pen to procure the most common necessaries of life' (RLF, March 1821). In June she lost both her business and her home and was again forced to support herself with regular periodical publications, bluebooks and Valentine Readers. For the next decade, she had no permanent home, but was forced to occupy boarding houses.

Unfortunately, Wilkinson's difficulties only continued to increase, an accident of a shutter blowing in high wind, which broke two segments of glass, causing an unexpected debt of one pound nine. Unable to pay, she was summoned to court, and advised to 'expect nothing else but confinement and to be taken from [her] home and Daughter' (RLF, 12 December 1821). In desperation she again petitioned the Royal Literary Fund for assistance, but they twice rejected her plea. Increasingly frantic, she sought out a former patron, Lord Pomfret, who interceded on her behalf with two letters, but only upon receipt of a letter from her daughter Amelia Scadgell did the Royal Literary Fund vote her two pounds.

But as Wilkinson's ill health continued, more for the want of necessities (proper food, clothes and medical attention), than from illness, she persisted in writing bluebooks, short pieces for periodicals, children books and 'moral' novels. Unable, however, to support herself, she complained:

I have not the least income for me and my child and my only certain dependence half a guinea a month derived from the Ladys Monthly magazine, called the Museum, repeated confinement from illness during the last twelvemonths has not only rendered my poverty more severe, but compelled me to part with my wearing apparel,

also expecting every hour my few remaining goods to be seized  
for arrears of rent [...]

(RLF, 11 December 1822)

Her distress, however, was further increased as she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1824 and forced to write, once again, to the Royal Literary Fund for assistance, this time for an operation at the Westminster Hospital. Augmenting her misfortune, her new manuscript entitled *The Baronet Widow*, in three volumes, had not yet been published—

a novel but of strict moral tendency dedicated by permission to Lord Pomfret, and having several copies of his Lordship and other noble families I have fair prospect from the produce should God think it proper to spare my life to be enabled once more to commence in the Book trade—the failure of a Bookseller with whom I had made arrangements has caused a fatal delay to me, of at least two or three months but it is now placed at a most respectable house.

(RLF, 14 January 1824)

These unfortunate circumstances combined to compel Wilkinson to solicit actively the support of her publishers in obtaining assistance from the Royal Literary Fund. Most of her applications after 1824 were endorsed by individual publishers and two separate letters were subsequently included in her petitions:

The Publishers & c. c. whose names are Undersigned begs permission to recommend to the consideration of the Honourable Society that confers the Literary Fund, Mrs. Sarah Scudgell [*sic*] Wilkinson as a deserving Unfortunate individual, deprest by a long and increasing illness, and the poverty attending thereon. Also esteeming her worth their notice, from her Abilities and general deportment while in their occasional employ as a writer of Original works, Abridgements, c. c.

Dean and Munday, G. Martin, Hughes, Dimanche.

(RLF, 1824)

The obliging publishers included a Mr E. Langley (whom she had known for eighteen years), Thomas Hughes, George Martin, Dimanche, and Dean & Munday—all of whom continually supported Wilkinson's application, specifically underlining her illness and poverty. Another intervention, this time by Dr Holland and Sir James Mackintosh, assisted in placing her daughter Amelia with a Lady residing in Henley on Thames (RLF, 14 January 1824).<sup>8</sup>

During 1825 Wilkinson's cancer worsened, and frustration mounted at continued delay in the publishing of her novel. The same publishers sent another letter of support to the Royal Literary Fund, not only underlining her illness, but emphasising the decline in the bluebook industry.

Gentleman, The undersigned Publishers beg to recommend to your consideration Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson as a respectable industrious person of considerable abilities who has been occasionally employed by us during a long series of past years but latterly owing

to the introduction of a small period works in which no original matter is required the line of literature in which she principally engaged has been completely stagnated which has materially tended to increase her distress.

Signed: Mr. Langley, Hughes (35 Ludgate) and  
Dean and Munday.

Wilkinson's applications increasingly point to the significant decline in the general book trade and the distress this induces: 'I need not point out to you that the depression in the Book trade and consequently scantiness of employ in Juvenile works has been great [...] *Forsake me and I perish*' (RLF, 12 December 1825). Her application was again endorsed by Dean & Munday and George Martin. Once more, she attempted to find work outside of the book trade, taking embroidery lessons, in the hope that it would eventually enable her to procure a more substantial subsistence.

However, the state of Wilkinson's health continued to decline between 1826 and 1827; she underwent two more operations at St George's Hospital. During these difficult times she was 'chiefly employed in poetry for the composers of music which I have derived small endowments' (RLF, 8 January 1828). That same year the consequences of the 1826 book trade crisis cost Wilkinson her one constant employment:

she long conducted a part of the Ladies Museum a magazine published by Dean and Munday, Threadneedle (for a series of years) and by its discontinuation was denied of a Guinea a month which added to the stagnation of trade and the introduction of cheap periodicals where no original matter is required has materially tended along with her personal afflictions to a state of poverty she did not in the least anticipate [...] (RLF, 12 February 1828)

In her last application to the Royal Literary Fund in 1830, Wilkinson was overwhelmed by illness and poverty, 'incapable of procuring the merest trifling employment', but had recently finished *The Curator's Son* 'a novel of moral and improving tendency' (RLF, 12 April 1830).<sup>9</sup> It was endorsed by Dean & Munday, E. Langley, George Martin and Mrs Wellington (her landlady, to whom she owed three months' rent). Sometime after April 1830, destitute and ailing, Sarah Wilkinson became a resident of St Margaret's Workhouse, Westminster. She died 19 March 1831, aged fifty-two. In 'The Life of an Authoress', written twenty-eight years earlier, Wilkinson had once expressed the fond hope that a hospital for 'decayed' authors would be established:

I remember to have read in a periodical paper, some years ago, a proposal for building an hospital for decayed authors, which gave me real satisfaction; as I was in hopes some part of so charitable an institution might perhaps be appropriated to the relief of decayed authoresses likewise. If the aged, the sick, and the blind, are universally esteemed objects of compassion, how much more so are those who have so intensely used their understanding for the

benefit of others, that they are thereby rendered unfit for every self pursuit! How many sublime geniuses (as a celebrated writer remarks) do we daily see, who have so long feasted their minds with pierian delicacies, as to leave their bodies to perish with hunger and nakedness (p. 28).

For Sarah Wilkinson, living by the pen was not only financially fraught, but physically burdensome. She continually sought to break away from living by the pen, whether it was through teaching, running a library, a parlour, or the needle: the pen never brought the financial reward or personal success she had so desired.

## II

### *The Bluebooks*

Sarah Wilkinson is primarily remembered as the author of well over one hundred 'short tales', chapbooks, or bluebooks, at least fifty of those, Gothic. The majority of these bluebooks were composed between 1803 and 1812; and, after 1820, published with at least twenty-five publishers. Wilkinson's most important attribute as a bluebooker was the ability to construct clear and simple story lines free from dense subplotting that often encumbered Gothic novels. Her bluebooks are derived from a mixture of Lewisite horror and Radcliffean terror with equal proficiency and familiarity with both branches of Gothic fiction. What Wilkinson does is to blend the pleasing aesthetics and the enticing suspension of terror found in Radcliffe and the rapidity of horrifying shocks distinctive of Lewis. Her heroes and heroines are archetypal Radcliffe: not only are they noble, they are sensitive; prone to appreciate the aesthetics of ruins, quick to haughtily dismiss any suggestions of the supernatural; nevertheless, they are predictably positioned in a Lewisite landscape of spectres and blood. Her stories, though, never divest themselves of the genteel trappings of the Gothic in favour of gratuitous horror. In *The Spectre; or, the Ruin of Belfont Priory* (1806), for instance, it is the noble Theodore Montgomery and Matilda Maxwell, compelled to reside in the haunted Belfont priory, who are confronted by two horrific, albeit noble, spectres, yet the hapless Harmina in *The Castle of Montabino; or, the Orphan Sisters* (1809), the daughter of a jeweller, though confined to a turret, never sees a ghost. In *The Mysterious Novice; or, Convent of the Grey Penitents* (1809),<sup>10</sup> for example, the narrative is clear and compelling, nevertheless, it possesses an overwrought, abbreviated style and a simple clichéd setting. However, this example does not justify the common complaint that 'horror in all of the shilling shockers is rapid, crude, and where Sarah Wilkinson's bloody pen is involved,—an arrant act of Gothic plundering'.<sup>11</sup>

On the contrary, Wilkinson's handling of horrific wandering spectres (murderers and murdered), like those whose 'body [was] covered with wounds, and one large gash in his forehead, from which the blood still appeared to flow in copious streams',<sup>12</sup> is measured and leisurely, never hurried or vulgar. While Sarah Wilkinson is at her most Gothic in bluebooks, it is in these works that

she also comes the closest to parodying the mode. For example, in *The Eve of St Mark; or, the Mysterious Spectre. A Romance* (1820), published by J. Bailey, the heroine, Margaret, daughter of the Steward of the De Clifford Family, utilises well-known Gothic strategies (for instance, the animated portrait) to deceive her parents about her attachment to the Earl De Clifford. The character of Margaret was readily identifiable to the readers of Gothic fiction: ‘Margaret was very romantic, and well skilled in all legendary tenets, nor was there a tale of horror or interest on the shelves of the circulating library in the next town but what had passed through her fair hands.’<sup>13</sup> As Jane Austen gently derided Catherine Morland’s longing for ‘Gothic’ adventures in her visit to the Tilneys’ country home in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Wilkinson’s Margaret is similarly portrayed as unable to discern fiction from reality, steeping herself in local legend and tales of castles.

Margaret frequently dressed her head so as to resemble the picture, and, in fact, almost fancied herself a Lady Bertha. She sighed for the young Hubert of the Glen Cottage, a lover as romantic as herself, but, of course, wished for a happier denouement of their love, and that Hubert of the nineteenth century might not prove like his name-sake of old, and stab the resemblance of Bertha to the heart should her truant fancy prefer another. (p. 6)

A working knowledge of Gothic motifs, however, allows Wilkinson (and Margaret) to exploit and exaggerate the familiar experience of the animated portrait:

Accordingly, at the appointed hour, the earl assembled his family in the room so long known as Lady Bertha’s; some were very loath indeed to come, and their footsteps moved very tardily, but my lord would be obeyed, and no one was excused except Mr. Cavendish, from this domestic assemblage. Earl De Clifford heard some of them whispering that there ought to be a clergyman present. ‘You are mistaken, my good friends,’ said he, ‘I am not going to exorcise the spirits in a common way; such a charming creature must not be treated like a common ghost. No, I will woo her for a bride—descend, my gentle Bertha, and fill these adoring arms.’

Obedient to his call the lovely figure stepped out of the frame upon a table that stood close to it, from thence on a chair, and thence, by the aid of a foot-stool, to the ground.

Her ladyship descended with cautious slowness, when most of the domestics took to flight, precipitating one another down the back stairs, without ceremony, as if they thought the old saying held good, of woe be to the hindmost—as for those that remained, their good sense led them to perceive a happy termination to the romance of real life.

Lady Bertha glided to the outstretched arms of the earl, while the canvass shewed that the painted figure had been cut out and

a niche behind the frame had opportunely served to place in its room a breathing resemblance of the angelic form.

'I will not banish this fair spirit from the castle,' said the earl, 'I cannot think of enriching the red sea with her; no, she shall reign in this mansion its adored, its benevolent mistress. Look not so anxious, my good friends,' continued he, addressing Mr. and Mrs. Oakley; 'Margaret is my legal wife.' (pp. 23–24)

This is a rather coarse version of the 'explained supernatural'—in which the Earl sets his wife up as a spectre to thrill his neighbours. Wilkinson here seems to be offering a more pragmatic approach to the Gothic, relying on readers to discriminate between reality and romance.

Significantly, Wilkinson wrote at least seventeen adaptations and translations: one implied 'translation' from German, *Albert of Werdendorff; or, the Midnight Embrace. A Romance from the German*, and one from the Spanish *Love and Perfidy; or, the Isolated Tower from the Spanish* (1812). Both of these bluebooks were published by Angus & Son and not translated at all, only marketed as such. On the other hand, *Therese; or, the Orphan of Geneva; an Interesting Romance* (1821) was translated from Henri Joseph Brahain Ducange's 1821 original and *The White Pilgrim; or, Castle of Olival* (1820) from the French novel, *Le Pèlerin Blanc*; both were published by Dean & Munday.

As well as novels, plays, operas, and melodrama were deftly adapted into bluebooks by Wilkinson: in fact, she redacted at least seven such productions. Among these is *The Wife of Two Husbands Translated from the French Drama and Formed into an Interesting Story* (1804) published by Lemoine, which claimed to be a translation from the French drama of the 'La Femme à Deux Maris' by René-Charles Guilbert, though upon textual comparison I found that it is actually a redaction of the English translation of 'The Wife of Two Husbands; A Musical Drama' by James Cobb. *Inkle and Yarico; or, Love in a Cave* (1805) published by Lemoine, was redacted from the opera of the same name by George Colman the Younger (1762–1836), while *The Travellers; or, Prince of China* (1806) published by Lemoine is a redaction of the opera 'The Travellers' by Domenico Corri, libretto by Andrew Cherry, first performed at Drury Lane on 22 January 1806. *The Water Spectre; or, An Bratach. A Romance*, is founded on the popular melodrama by Charles Dibdin (1768–1833), as performed at the Aquatic Theatre, Sadler's Wells (1805) published by Lemoine. *The Ruffian Boy; Or, the Castle of Waldemar, a Venetian Tale* (1820) was based on the popular melodrama, itself taken from Mrs Opie's celebrated tale of that name, published by J. Bailey; while *Conscience; or the Bridal Night. An Interesting Venetian Tale Written from the Tragedy of J. H.* (1820) was adapted from the tragedy of James Haynes and published by Dean & Munday. Wilkinson also adapted two versions of Matthew Lewis's melodrama 'The Castle Spectre' publishing *The Castle Spectre; or, Family Horrors* in 1807 with Thomas Hughes, and *The Castle Spectre; an Ancient Baronial Romance* in 1820 with John Bailey.

Wilkinson not only adapted dramas, she redacted 'popular' novels including: *The Pathetic and Interesting History of George Barnwell. Founded on Facts. Carefully Abridged from Mr Surr's Celebrated Novel* (1804) published by Lemoine. John Bailey, who published her adaptation of *The Castle Spectre*, also published another redaction of Lewis's *The Monk: The Castle of Lindenberg; or, the History of Raymond and Agnes* in 1820. It appears that Wilkinson was probably commissioned by Bailey to produce redactions of Lewis, as these made up the bulk of works published with him.

Dean & Munday, on the other hand, published Wilkinson's redactions of other 'popular' novels (non-Gothic) including: *The Pastor's Fireside; or, Memoirs of the Athelstan. Abridged from the Popular Novel by Jane Porter* (1822), *The Pirate, or the Sisters of Burgh Westra: A Tale of the Islands of Shetland and Orkney Epitomized from the Celebrated Pirate of Sir Walter Scott* (1820) and *Waverley; or, the Castle of Mac Iver [sic]: A Highland Tale, of Sixty Years since from the Pen of the Celebrated Author of 'Kenilworth' &c.; Epitomized from the Original* [n.d.]. What is interesting about the redaction of these novels is that Wilkinson includes the author of the original work in the title indicating that there was no attempt to hide or disguise the fact that these were redactions. The title's inclusion, in fact, was as much a selling-point as its abridgement.

### *The Novels*

Wilkinson also wrote novels and while she found no critical (and limited financial) success with her novelistic attempts, they are however, useful insights into the Gothic novel from the view point of a bluebook author. Her novels demonstrate a clear assimilation of bluebooks into Gothic novels as a direct consequence of the tremendous outpouring of such productions in the early nineteenth century.

Of all Wilkinson's novels *The Fugitive Countess; or, the Convent of St Ursula, a Romance* (1807), most clearly illustrates this assimilation of bluebooks into the form of a legitimate Gothic novel. Like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *Sicilian Romance* (1790), and Eliza Parsons's *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), *The Fugitive Countess*, centres on the crimes of the past which return to threaten the present and is essentially a novel of retribution and reconciliation. As in all of her novels and most bluebooks, the central figure is a rejected wife, Magdalena, Countess of Ottagio, who unwittingly discovers her husband's crimes and is forced to become a fugitive in the Convent of St Ursula. Throughout the novel, Wilkinson is fascinated by the possibilities of adapting bluebooks for their simple and straightforward moral story unhindered by complicated subplotting. In *The Fugitive Countess*, Wilkinson not only develops simple subplots which would eventually compose the matter of her bluebooks, she carefully integrates a well-known drama she had earlier redacted into the text. The flexibility of the bluebook plot was such that it could be utilised by Wilkinson and reworked into subplots that often

diverted the readers' attention from the main story, affording Wilkinson the appropriate opportunity to moralise and educate.

The novel centres on Magdalena, who is tyrannised and victimised by her cruel and capricious husband, the Count Ottagio. Like her aristocratic progenitors, Magdalena is a victim of her father's debt, her husband's greed and the duplicity of an evil agent, Stefano. Similarly, she shares with her antecedents formidable morals which are only second to her (obligatory) compassion for the sufferings of others.

*The Fugitive Countess* opens with Magdalena in extreme distress. The Count is attempting to murder her, for it would seem on the onset that the Countess's morals are not only in doubt, but in serious danger. The bitter exchange between the Count and Countess immediately draws the readers' attention to a pronounced moral division, common in Wilkinson's works, between a husband and his wife:

'Spare me—for heaven's sake—for your *own* sake—spare me!—Plant not the horrors of unavailing remorse within your bosom; should you be allowed to escape the vengeance of your fellow creatures, and your crimes remained concealed from human knowledge; yet, remember, there is, above, an all-seeing eye, from whom no secret is hid. O strike not, suspend your uplifted arm—I have yet another plea to offer—*Innocence*.'

'Innocent!' repeated the Count, with a malignant sneer,—'then you are better prepared to meet your impending doom.'<sup>14</sup>

For Wilkinson, the issue of moral disparity within a marriage, is invariably the basis for an immediate and often permanent separation. A well-timed knock at the door distracts the Count, allowing a disguised Magdalena to flee the Castle of Ottagio to seek sanctuary in the Convent of St Ursula under the protection of her maternal aunt, Lady Viola Del Serina.

The horror of secret, arranged, or forced marriages is another theme commonly found in Wilkinson's novels and bluebooks. For Wilkinson such marriages will inevitably remain loveless where 'the first duties, next to chastity, in a female is filial and connubial obedience; and nothing more hateful in her than a spirit of argument and contradiction' (II, 28). Like Lady Emily de Cleve in *The Subterraneous Passage; or, Gothic Cell* (1803) and Rosalthe di Zoretti in *The Convent of the Grey Penitents; or, the Apostate Nun* (1809), Magdalena has been forced into a marriage with the Count of Ottagio to whom she feels both 'aversion' and 'horror'. In Wilkinson's bluebooks such as *The Subterraneous Passage*, her characters are often delivered by deception into the hands of a nefarious suitor: Emily de Cleve is kidnapped by Dubois, the leader of banditti with the assistance of Madam Rambouillet, Emily's governess. Rambouillet and Dubois were partners in vice; Dubois wanted Emily's money and Madam Rambouillet wanted the daughter out of the way, that she might not hinder her designs on the father, the Marquis de Cleve. Marriage is forcibly performed with Emily the unwilling partner: 'In vain she shrieked, and implored for mercy: no friendly

hand was near to give her aid; and the servile priest performed the office in spite of her resistance, and pronounced them man and wife'.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Magdalena's father, the Count di Verona in *The Fugitive Countess*, having squandered her inheritance at the gaming table, has arranged to settle his debt with Ottagio by offering the hand of his daughter. However, unprepared to counter Magdalena's aversion to the Count, Di Verona challenges his daughter to prepare for the loss of his life (and soul) as consequence of what he bitterly terms her 'caprice'. In a dramatically staged confrontation, the Count di Verona contemptuously invites Magdalena to 'exult over the ashes of a parent' (II, 9–10)

Despite deploring forced and arranged marriages, Wilkinson fundamentally supports the traditional importance of duty within that marriage, a quality which Magdalena (despite her name) not only upholds but strictly separates from affection. Throughout *The Fugitive Countess*, Wilkinson clearly delineates between Magdalena's duty to her husband and her love for the Count, and she extends this throughout the novel in her refusal to disclose the crimes of her husband, which would free her from her hated marriage vows. Safely secreted in the Convent, the Countess is able cautiously to unveil the Count's crime through a series of fragmentary documents and personal histories. The first disclosure, in fact, is related through Magdalena's servant, Laura who fled the castle with her mistress.

The suddenness and gravity of Magdalena's flight overwhelms the 'fugitive' Countess, who almost immediately succumbs to illness. During the long hours, Laura's attention shifts to the book-press where she searches 'for some work of imagination, that should be adapted to her taste, which it must be owned rather bordered on the romantic' (I, 19). For Wilkinson, the most unassuming and obvious method of reintegrating the bluebook is through the inclusion of a fragment of manuscript. The fragment's ominous opening naturally reflects the Countess's position as a 'fugitive':

The storm sill raged—the gusts of wind were repeated with, if possible, increased violence—Eudora pressed her babe to her woe-worn breast—'Alas! my child, but for thee,' exclaimed the wretched mother, 'the warring elements might pass unheeded—the drenching rain—the lightning's glare—the thunder's tremendous peal—could not affect a wretch like me. The storm within my breast makes me callous to that without. (I, 21)

The overtly moralistic plot of the inset tale centres on the consequences of Eudora's seduction, betrayal and the deception of Lord Willibald. '[S]educ'd from the paths of virtue, to the precipice of vice', Eudora and her young son Willibald, endeavour in vain to remind him of his promised pledge just days after his wedding to the Heiress of Passenger. In anger, he murders both the baby and Eudora and eventually takes his own life. The fragment ends with a typical Wilkinson punishment of the lecherous and 'unnatural Baron':

Every night, at the exact hour Eudora was murdered, the isolated castle is supernaturally illumined;—lord Willibald, the self-de-

stroyed Baron, can be distinctly seen through the gothic windows, by those who have the courage to gaze thereon, flying from chamber to chamber,—pursued by the shrieking Eudora, clasping her infant to her bleeding bosom, and demanding heaven's vengeance on the head of their destroyer. (II, 60)

The moral of the tale is simply: '[b]eware, lest a vile villain's insidious arts should destroy both thy body and thy soul' (II, 42). Wilkinson's fragment, concentrates on the quick administration of morality and the horrific.

Wilkinson's use of personal histories, like fragmentary documents, are essential to reveal the Count's crimes; therefore, individual histories are only disclosed in order to influence the present as well as underlining the moral. According to Wilkinson, to elucidate the mysteries attending to Magdalena's behaviour, it is requisite to inform the reader of her history. Raised by her father, Magdalena was initially educated by a governess and then sent to the Convent of St Ursula. Like Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Elena in *The Italian* (1797), Magdalena initially appears unsociable, if not withdrawn, and is attracted to the demanding life of the nuns, even contemplating taking vows. Her aunt, Viola, the abbess, however, while sympathetic to her desires, admonishes her to avoid such a life and in doing so narrates her own story.

The abbess, as a young woman, although the elder of two sisters, was forced into the convent, due in part to the fact that her mind was of a more serious nature than her worldly sister.—'My *boudoir* was filled with select authors, globes, and drawing utensils. I wrote essays on various subjects, poems, &c. &c. corresponding with the tone of my mind, which was unfortunately sensitive to a painful degree' (II, 91–92). Though disappointed, Viola thrived until an accidental meeting with Horace Beverly, the brother of Sister Frances. Love inevitably followed as did an escape from the convent. Fleeing to a castle, Viola was discovered by her father instead of her lover. Horace, imprisoned by the Count Del Serina, eventually dies and Viola is returned to the Convent.

The Abbess's story, like the fragment, is intended by Wilkinson as instructional. The tale anticipates Magdalena's most distressing challenge, that of unfeigned filial duty to her father. After several years of disinterest in his daughter, the Count di Verona, arrives to take Magdalena to Ottagio castle. As I have already indicated, Magdalena was offered to Ottagio in lieu of Verona's debt. On the night of the wedding, Magdalena discovers the Count and his accomplice Jacintha as they enter the library, and, following, she watches them descend through a trapdoor in the chapel. Resolved to discover their secret, the following night she descends down the trapdoor and discovers Thomasina, the housekeeper, who promises to reveal their secret. The Count's dreadful secret is, of course, that the Count's first wife, Lady Clementina di Lusini, and their daughter, Adeline are alive, immured in a subterranean dungeon. The plot element of the imprisoned wife is familiar enough in Gothic romance; it had been much utilised by writers in the eighteenth century and was in common use in nineteenth century Gothic. To a contemporary reader, this scene would

have recalled memories of many others: perhaps the key scene in Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1785), or Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), in which Julia discovers her mother, Marchioness Mazzini, imprisoned in the deserted wing of their decaying mansion.

Wilkinson, it appears, was particularly practised in the confinement of distressed females: in *The Subterraneous Passage* Emily de Cleve discovers Madame Dubois, the wife of the murdered Count Dubois, imprisoned by her brother-in-law to obtain her property and, in *The Priory of St Clair; or, the Spectre of the Murdered Nun*, Julietta, a young nun, is kidnapped from her Convent by the Count de Valve, and imprisoned in the dungeon beneath his castle until her ignominious death. Similarly, Clementina di Lusini's distressful tale, as related to Magdalena, parallels many of Wilkinson's bluebook plots. Clementina's tale, narrated over several trips to the subterraneous dungeon, confirms Magdalena's suspicions regarding the Count and prefigures certain elements in Magdalena's future or textual past. The tale is an adaptation of an earlier Wilkinson bluebook *The Wife of Two Husbands* and a subplot in Eliza Parsons's *Mysterious Warnings* (1796). Wilkinson's *The Wife of Two Husbands* (1804), which (as previously mentioned) claimed to be a translation from the French drama of the 'La Femme à Deux Maris' by René-Charles Guilbert and 'formed into an interesting story', was actually based on the musical adaptation of James Cobb as performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. The bluebook, like the drama, relates the story of Eliza, whom marries Isidore Fritz against her father's wish. Fritz is a man of deceit, who whilst in prison, fakes his own death. Believing that she is a widow, the Count Belfior marries her. Years later, Fritz returns to claim his wife, as well as her property. Eliza, caught between duty to a husband whom she loves and one whom she despises, concedes that she should leave the Count, but his friend recognises Fritz as a deserter and has him immediately arrested. Spared the death penalty through Eliza's intercession, Fritz repays her kindness by attempting to murder the Count, but is himself slain.

Wilkinson has reworked her adaptation of Eliza's tale into Clementina's. There are many similarities between the bluebook and the inset tale: both Eliza and Clementina marry against the wish of their father; both mistakenly believe their first husbands to be dead; and both are confronted by the horror of their contrasting duties. As I have already argued, for Wilkinson, the traditional importance of duty within a marriage is fundamental. By placing Eliza and Clementina in a situation which brings them into direct conflict with this duty, Wilkinson underlines a woman's imprisonment in an institution that binds one party by certain rules and restrictions which are flouted by the other. However, despite these broad similarities, there are important differences in presentation and emphasis between Eliza's and Clementina's tales, and these can be understood as a response to changes from bluebook to a tale within a novel.

While Wilkinson took the basic plot structure from her dramatic adaptation, she simultaneously drew from other popular themes found in Gothic novels, most notably from Eliza Parsons's *The Mysterious Warning*. The inset

tale, which was later extracted verbatim and published anonymously as *The Horrible Revenge; or, the Assassin of the Solitary Castle* by Fairburn in 1828, contained the memoirs of Baron S—— which records, with exacting detail, the imprisonment of his wife and ‘husband’. Baron S—— saves Count Zimchaw and his daughter Eugenia from banditti. In gratitude Zimchaw offers the Baron Eugenia’s hand in marriage, and though she appears hostile to the union, the father’s will prevails and they are united. That night, Eugenia disappears from her room; all searches prove futile. This humiliation drives the Baron to distraction: ‘[f]or my part, neither time nor disappointment had abated my passion; I still loved to a degree of fury, for rage, and a desire of revenge on her and her paramour, went hand in hand with my inclination for her person.’<sup>16</sup> Eventually, the Baron discovers Eugenia and her lover, Count M——. Baron S—— accuses his wife: ‘you, who at the altar gave me your hand and faith, and now live as an adultress with the man you swore never to be join with without your father’s consent; know you are still my wife, and I will prove my right by my power of punishing you’ (p. 18). This threat is similar to the threats of Count Ottagio: ‘I regard not your marriage, unsanctioned by parental consent, as any bar to my wishes,’ said Ottagio, fiercely, ‘but look on you in the light of a base adulterer, striving to dishonour my name’ (*Fugitive Countess*, II, 151). But as with Clementina, Eugenia had secretly married Count M—— before meeting the Baron. The Baron moved the family, consisting of the Count, Eugenia and young daughter, to a dungeon. In an act of unadulterated evil, Baron S—— dashes the family’s water to the floor, just as their young daughter is dying from thirst. The cruel Baron eventually dies and the Count M—— and Eugenia are freed from their prison.

Again, the similarities between Parsons’s and Wilkinson’s inset tales are consistent: second marriages, cruel revenge, and conflicting duty (though more focused on the tension between filial and matrimonial). Wilkinson’s attraction to this inset tale though is directly associated with its male perspective. There are broad similarities between Count Ottagio and Baron S—— which link the two texts. While *The Wife of Two Husbands* focuses on the dreadful circumstance from the viewpoint of the wife, Parsons’s inset tale (extracted as *The Horrible Revenge*) illustrates the viewpoint of the Baron. In similar terms, Wilkinson’s inset tale focuses on Clementina’s perspective of discovering that Leonardo still lives, while Ottagio’s cruel revenge, seen from his perspective, is defending his honour. The amalgamation of the two perspectives allows Wilkinson to contrast their individual roles within marriage. For the Count it is honour, for Clementina (and Magdalena) it is merely duty.

The bluebook incidents such as these are utilised by Wilkinson to moderate the pace of the narrative, often allowing characters the time and ability to reflect on circumstances in the past. For example, in the case of Magdalena, Clementina’s distressful confinement in a dungeon confirms all of her growing suspicions about the Count. Throughout *The Fugitive Countess*, Wilkinson is continually experimenting with assimilating bluebooks, as inset tales, into her novels as a method of both moralising and revealing the past. Recycling her

'trade' into novels is not unexpected, but they indicate a fluidity and connection to the larger Gothic market that is politely ignored by critics who view the Gothic merely as an art form.

Sarah Wilkinson's diverse literary corpus reflects not only the perilous pitfalls of living by the pen, but also the shifting readers' interest in Gothic fiction in the early nineteenth century. Her enormous output of bluebooks underlines the existence of a distinct bluebook 'trade', separate from the book publishers, one where morality, decency and education was equally important as sensational and horrific. Her novels, while relying on recycled scenes and motifs, uniquely show the amalgamation of the bluebook and the novel. 

## NOTES

1. 'The Life of an Authoress, Written by Herself', Tale 57 in *Tell-Tale Magazine* (London: Ann Lemoine, 1803), p. 28. Further references to this tale are given in the text.
2. The tale is attached to *The Eastern Turret; or, Orphan of Navona. A Romance*, which, though not attributed, has the distinct characteristics and language found in Wilkinson's other *Tale-Tell* stories. Particularly, Wilkinson's discussion of female wit is found verbatim in later novels of hers, such as *The Convent of Grey Penitents* (1810).
3. Letter to the Royal Literary Fund, 10 Feb 1824: Loan No. 96 (Case 375), British Library. Hereafter referred to as RLF and accompanied by the date of the letter.
4. These textbooks comprised: *A Visit to London: Containing a Description of the Principal Curiosities in the British Metropolis* (1810), *A Visit to a Farm-House* (1805) both published at the Juvenile and School Library by M'Millan, and *The Instructive Remembrancer: Being an Abstract of the Various Rites and Ceremonies of the Four Quarters of the Globe. For the Use of Schools* (1805) published by M'Kenzie.
5. Robert Mayo identifies eleven works by Wilkinson, though, my research indicates at least sixteen. See Mayo's *The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740–1815* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962), p. 368, which lists the following tales, all of which appeared in the *Tell-Tale: The Adopted Child, or the Castle of St Villereagh, The History of George Barnwell, Lissette of Savoy, or the Fair Maid of the Mountains, Lord Gowen, or the Forester's Daughter, The Maid of Lochlin, or Mysteries of the North, The Marriage Promise, Monastic Ruins, or the Invisible Monitor, The Mountain Cottager, or the Deserted Bride, Orlando, or the Knight of the Moon, The Sorcerer's Palace, or the Princess of Sinadone, The Wife of Two Husbands*.
6. For example, the name Sarah Wilkinson appears on the title page of *The Spectres; or, Lord Oswald and Lady Rosa* published by Langley in 1814 and Sara Scudgell Wilkinson appears on the title page of *The White Pilgrim; or, Castle of Olival*, published by Dean & Munday in 1820.
7. Valentine Readers were collections of poems written, generally, for the working class, often for specific occupations and events such as proposals of marriage.
8. 'Mackintosh, Sir James (1765–1832), British writer and public servant, b. Scotland. His *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), a spirited reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, was the leading Whig statement in favour of the French Revolution, but from 1796 he grew hostile to French radicalism. His writings

include several historical works.’—*Dictionary of National Biography: Index and Epitome* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1906), p. 819.

‘Holland, Sir Henry (1788–1873), physician, son of Peter Holland, medical practitioner, and the medical attendant on the Princess of Wales (afterwards Queen Caroline). He became one of the best known men in London society, the friend and adviser of almost every man of note. In 1837 he was appointed physician extraordinary to Queen Victoria, in 1840 physician in ordinary to the prince consort, and he declined a baronetcy offered by Lord Melbourne in 1841. He was made physician in ordinary to the queen in 1852, and accepted a baronetcy in 1853.’—*ibid.*, p. 631.

9. The novel almost certainly remained unpublished at her death.
10. The bluebook *Mysterious Novice; or, Convent of the Grey Penitents* should be distinguished from her two-volume romance, *Convent of Grey Penitents; or, the Apostate Nun* (London: J. F. Hughes, 1810).
11. Frederick Frank, *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel*, (London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), p. 412.
12. ‘The Spectre; or, the Ruins of Belfont Priory’, in *The Lifted Veil*, ed. A. Susan Williams (London: Xanadu, 1992), p. 16.
13. Sarah Wilkinson, *The Eve of St Mark; or, the Mysterious Spectre* (London: J. Bailey, 1820), p. 5. Further references to this tale are given after quotations in the text.
14. Sarah Wilkinson, *The Fugitive Countess; or, the Convent of St Ursula. A Romance* (London: J. F. Hughes, 1807), I, 1–2. Further references to this novel are given in the text.
15. Sarah Wilkinson, *The Subterraneous Passage; or, Gothic Cell. A Romance* (London: Anne Lemoine and J. Roe, 1803), p. 15.
16. *The Horrible Revenge; or, the Assassin of the Solitary Castle* (London: Fairburn, 1828), p. 11.

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# SUBSCRIBING FICTION IN BRITAIN, 1780–1829

*Peter Garside*



## I

IN A LETTER to the poetess Anna Seward on 30 November 1802, Walter Scott surveyed the various methods of publication open to a budding author, including one that was definitely not suited to himself:

The mode of publishing by subscription is one which in itself can carry nothing degrading & which in many of the more extensive & high priced publications is perhaps essentially necessary. Still however it is asking the public to become bound to pay for what they have not seen, & carries with it if not the reality at least the appearance of personal solicitation & personal obligation.<sup>1</sup>

Scott was in a buoyant mood, having just sold the copyright of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* for £500, and was keen to impress on Seward that he for one was unlikely ever to indulge in the vanity of affecting to despise literary profit. As he started so he proceeded, achieving sums through the sale of his poems huge enough to purchase and start rebuilding Abbotsford, and then with fiction turning to the alternative method of taking half profits on editions (where the rake-off was proportionately larger, partly through the insistence that the printing be done by his own firm). Throughout his life Scott would only be on one side of the subscription fence. In 1817 we find him soliciting subscriptions from the great and good for the fifth edition of James Hogg's poem *The Queen's Wake*, though it is impossible to think of a similar engagement in support of 'poor Hogg' as a novelist.<sup>2</sup> Scott does however appear as one of the 'benefactors' in Mrs Frederick Layton's *Spanish Tales* (1816), whose Preface pointed to a new respectability gained by fiction since the days of Wollstonecraftian heroines.<sup>3</sup> In 1824, he appears among a mass subscription by the Scottish legal establishment to *Adolphe and Selanie*, by Henri Dubois, self-styled 'teacher of French language' in Edinburgh. Dubois in his Preface observed that he had served as an officer in the French Imperial army, and (somewhat disingenuously, it would seem) expressed anxiety that this might affect the reception in Britain; though one can only imagine this gave extra piquancy for Scott himself, just about to embark on his mammoth *Life of Napoleon*. Dubois popped up again in London four years later with another subscription title, *The History of a French Dagger*, this time describing himself as 'late surgeon of Cavalry in the Imperial

Army'. His dedicatory 'To my Subscribers' there unabashedly acknowledges 'pecuniary profit' as a motive (an interesting echo of Scott twenty years earlier),<sup>4</sup> and a list of some 320 subscribers, mainly from London addresses and many of them surgeons, indicates that Dubois successfully pulled off the feat of making a killing in both Edinburgh and London.

Another perspective is added if we shift to a small village in Hampshire, where at an early stage Jane Austen caught sight of the subscription method as a way of bringing female novelists into the public eye. 'Miss J. Austen, Steventon' appears as one of 1058 subscribers in the list prefixed to Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796). Tradition has it that Jane Austen was dependent on her father for the guinea fee, but, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> news of the subscription probably came through her maternal relations—the vicar at Great Bookham, where Burney completed the novel, was the Revd Samuel Cooke, Jane Austen's godfather, whose wife Cassandra (née Leigh) was a cousin of Jane Austen's mother (also born Cassandra Leigh). In this way could subscription lists grow by spreading through the grid of gentry society. Jane Austen almost certainly must have fantasised about such a list emanating outwards from herself, and her *First Impressions* was begun only three months after *Camilla's* appearance in July 1796. In the event, as we know, the Revd Austen wrote directly to Cadell and Davies, the publishers, and this early version of *Pride and Prejudice* got no further. Launching a subscription from a country rectory was a different matter from one sponsored by the Queen's court, and besides there was no way in which a young woman in the arms of a protective family could claim victim status (*pace* some Austenian feminist interpretations). Like Scott, though in their own way, the Austens stayed firmly on the donor side of subscription fence. 'Miss Austen, Steventon, near Overton' appears on the subscription list in *The Traditions* (1795), written by the young Mary Sherwood, who, like Jane and her elder sister Cassandra, had been a pupil at the Abbey School in Reading.<sup>6</sup> The Austen family in Kent—brother Edward, his wife, and Mrs Knight (Edward's patroness)—also subscribed to a now extremely rare novel, *Wareham Priory* (1799), along with more than 280 other subscribers, many of them connected with militia forces stationed in SE England to counter a threatened French invasion. Jane Austen herself waited another twelve years to publish, and then did so privately at her own risk; though these interventions in subscription probably gave her a useful early glimpse of the public readership now available for fiction.

As the cases of Austen and Scott indicate, there were a number of factors militating against the use of the subscription method by authors, not least in the case of fiction, which some modern commentators have characterised as the most commercial form of publication in the period. Publishers, too, such as William Lane of the Minerva Press, were unlikely to see much advantage in the small guaranteed sale subscription usually offered, compared with a quick purchase of the copyright and an unimpeded assault on the open market. Those authors who did venture forth on their own met numerous pitfalls on the way, as their subscriptions lists and accompanying preliminaries frequently tell. So-

licitation could mean public humiliation; subscribers were sometimes quicker to sign up than to pay; delays occasionally left the projector facing rising costs for paper and print. Some projects evidently never got off the ground;<sup>7</sup> while other disappointed (especially male) novelists ended up by writing works which noisily announced their status as ‘not a subscription novel’.<sup>8</sup> The low standing of fiction, notably earlier in our period, was also evidently an impediment; and it is noticeable that both Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson benefited by large subscriptions to their poetry, but always published their fiction commercially. Even so the method had its advantage in providing a way for novice authors to test the water, especially at a time when large numbers of women, often without direct means of approaching the London trade, were entering the genre. Provincial writers could use a list as a lever with a local bookseller, who then in turn might contact his London publishing connection. The novel also lost some of its leper status during a few heady years in the later 1790s, a premium time for subscription novels, and then again more generally with the influence of the moral evangelicals and of Scott from the mid-1810s.

Even so one would be hard put to claim any significant advance from the available guides to subscription literature as a whole. F. J. G. Robinson and P. J. Wallis’s *Book Subscription Lists* (1975), a pioneering tool in the sociology of readership, notes for example in its Introduction a shift during the later eighteenth century to smaller texts published by subscription, but does not specify fiction.<sup>9</sup> Scanning the annual lists in this work, novels of any kind seem few and far between: I counted 15 roughly classifiable as fiction up to 1780, a single novel in the 1780s, and then a small flurry of nine more in the 1790s. This paucity, however, was not substantiated by my own experience when embarking on a study of novel production between 1780 and 1830 approaching twenty-five years ago. Work in the Bristol University Library’s Early Novels Collection led to several titles, with considerable lists, which had not been included in Robinson and Wallis: *Burton-Wood* (1783), with 212 subscribers; *The Contradiction* (1796), by the Revd William Cole, with 237 subscribers; and *Wareham Priory*, with its 287 subscribers. New titles also came into view with the progress of the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), and I remember how a trial query, requested at a Conference held to publicise that project, threw up five more novels of whose subscription status I had been unaware. These and further titles were subsequently included in *Eighteenth-Century Subscription Lists: A Check-List*, compiled by R. C. Alston and others,<sup>10</sup> though like its electronic base this does not offer generic guidelines.

From such sources it was possible by 1987 to build up and report on a file of some 25 subscription novels between 1780 and 1799 inclusive, 20 of these in the 1790s, 16 bulked between 1795 and 1799 (representing it seemed about 5 per cent of the output of fiction).<sup>11</sup> In following years more came into view, extending this particular file to 32: with 6 titles belonging to the 1780s, and the remainder to the 1790s. It should be added, however, that these totals for titles from the pre-1800 years (as described in the following Checklist) clearly underestimate the full number of works with lists. In fact, volume one of *The*

*English Novel 1770–1829* (2000) has disclosed a further 8 such titles belonging to the 1780s and an additional 28 in the 1790s, suggesting that the true sum-total for new novels with subscription lists between 1780 and 1799 is as high as 68 titles.<sup>12</sup>

With the period 1800–29 the results have been more spectacular still. When writing in 1987 I reported ‘an immediate drop’ of subscription novels with the new century, stating that in using similar means of retrieval it had only been possible to find a handful of relevant titles.<sup>13</sup> It has since become clear that this was more a reflection of the inadequacy of *sources* after 1800 than a true representation of the situation. This changing viewpoint came largely through first-hand work on the Corvey collection, while actively compiling the second volume of *The English Novel 1770–1829*, combined with investigations in a number of other leading collections (including those at Aberdeen University, the Houghton Library at Harvard, the Beinecke at Yale University, the University of Illinois at Urbana, and the Special Collections Department in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Library). As a result it has been possible to trace a further 70 novels with subscription lists published 1800–29 inclusive: comprising 34 titles in the 1800s, 25 in the 1810s, and 11 in the 1820s. Comparison with existing records of subscription lists makes this tally appear especially spectacular, even taking into account the more recently-published ‘Extended Supplement’ to *Book Subscription Lists*, completed by Ruth Wallis.<sup>14</sup> Of the 70 discovered just 7 were picked up by the original 1975 *Guide*; to which the new Supplement adds a further 11, only occasionally supplying details of numbers of subscribers, total copies, and female subscribers. It is more than likely too that this new grand total still underestimates the number of novels whose publication was aided by subscription. Some copies of a title can be found lacking a list that subsequently appears in another copy discovered in a different source.<sup>15</sup> In other cases lists were gathered by authors and then not attached to any of the copies distributed, giving these titles (not included in the present survey) a kind of half-way status between subscription and commercial fiction.<sup>16</sup>

The overall result is a collection of materials presently relating to over one hundred subscription novels between 1780 and 1829 inclusive, all seen at first hand, and the Checklist of titles appended attempts to provide particular information about their publication history and individual significance. Each entry there begins with details of title, authorship and imprint, based on actual title-pages, albeit with an element of standardisation (e.g. publisher’s addresses are usually omitted). In bold is then given a breakdown of the lists, in the following order: number of male subscribers (M); number of female subscribers (F); gender-unidentified subscribers (U); sum total of subscriptions (S); additional copies (A); total number of copies subscribed (T). This line is completed with the name of the holding library where the copy was seen (BL for British Library, and so on). Three separate lines after this then record: i) main locations of subscribers as evident or inferable from the lists; ii) the social composition of the lists, again insofar as this can be deduced; iii) an indica-

tion of type (say Gothic or Sentimental), and, where relevant, special features (such as reference to the French Revolution). After this a general Notes field gives details concerning prefatory matter, the positioning of the lists, etc., on an optional basis. Entries are concluded, where appropriate, with information concerning in-period further editions published in mainland Britain. It will be noticed that these, when they occur, not uncommonly prove to be reissues by other publishers, notably the Minerva Press, usually made up from the residue of copies left unsold after the original subscription, with replacement title-pages inserted.

A breakdown of the entries based on authorship shows a large proportion of female as opposed to male subscription novels: 75 novels by women, 23 by men, and 4 gender-unknown. This division embraces a number of gender-implied titles ('By a Lady', 'By a Bengal Officer', etc.), and also takes on board information found in prefaces (where an author, though absent on the title-page, might sign his/her name); it also involves prioritising translators over original foreign authors. The same preponderance is found within most decades: all six titles in the 1780s being written by women; followed by a proportion of 18 female- to 7 male-authored novels in the 1790s; 27 to 6 in the 1800s; and 19 to 5 in the 1810s; with the 1820s alone showing a more even balance (5 apiece). No doubt this reflects a larger movement towards female authorship of fiction, beginning in the later 1780s and sustaining itself until at least the mid-1810s; but the prevalence of women authors in the case of subscription novels is striking, and in general terms significantly exceeds the ascertainable gender balance relating to output generally. Owing to the circumstances of subscription, authors could hardly hide their identity; whereas in the case of commercial fiction anonymity was always an option—one result of this being the resilient body of unidentified anonymous works which helps make gender analysis more problematic across the full range of fiction writing.

Subscription fiction, through prefatory materials such as Dedications and Addresses to the subscribers, also provides an unusually full picture of the circumstances underlying authorship. Of the female-authored novels, more than half include personal dedications, all but a handful to other women, the bulk of these being members of the royal family or aristocratic. The incidences of this if anything are higher in the earlier period, with a greater inclination evident later to make more general addresses to the subscribers and sometimes to the public at large. One common factor is a tendency to foreground the plight/tremulousness/abjectness of the authoress. A prevalent type here is the vulnerable young lady at the outset of her literary career. This is actually inscribed in the title in some cases (as in Entry 3, which thus signals 'the first literary production of a young lady'; or in Entry 9, 'the first literary attempt of a young lady'). Others used their Prefaces to the same purpose: that to Mrs Yeates's *Eliza* (1800: Entry 35), presents its author as 'tremblingly alive to all the fears which the first attempt naturally excites' (1, [v]); while Mrs A. Duncombe's 'To the Public', in *The Village Gentleman, and the Attorney at Law* (1808: Entry 65) excuses a number faults, including an absence of chapter divisions, on ac-

count of the novel's representing a 'first offering to the World'.<sup>17</sup> In fact, in a large number of cases (some 30 as far as can be ascertained) the first attempt proved to be the last. Of course there are strong exceptions here—the most striking perhaps being Sarah Wilkinson, whose *The Thatched Cottage* (1806: Entry 56) generated funds for the purchase of a library, the launching-pad for more novels and a multitude of chapbook condensations.<sup>18</sup>

Another interesting case is provided by Eliza Parsons' *The History of Miss Meredith* (1790: Entry 8), the first of what was to prove a chain of novels, but whose Preface nevertheless expresses 'trembling anxiety' at first facing the public eye. Mrs Parsons, who had been left destitute with eight children to support, is representative of another common female type in subscription fiction: the widowed/separated woman or bereft daughter, with a dependent family. Under this heading might be included one (professedly at least) male-authored novel: *Munster Abbey* (1797: Entry 21), 'by Sir Samuel Egerton Leigh', which attracted the largest number of subscribers among those novels listed, mostly from the residential squares of Edinburgh and London. Its putative author, a scion of a noble family (and remotely connected with the Austen Leighs), had died at an early age (twenty-seven) in the Edinburgh New Town. In the 'Advertisement' Lady Leigh stated that the novel had been found among her deceased husband's papers; but since an earlier announcement in the Edinburgh papers refers to its having been left uncompleted,<sup>19</sup> one wonders whether at least some of the story, including its unrealistically sunny end, actually came from the widow herself. More spectacularly bereft, in the following year, was Emily Clark, styled in the title of her *Ianthé* (1798: Entry 24) as 'grand-daughter of the late Colonel Frederick, son of Theodore, King of Corsica'. In her 'Introduction' the authoress outlines a somewhat shaky royal ancestry, and alludes briefly to the 'melancholy fate' of her father. Colonel Frederick had shot himself in the porch of Westminster Abbey, having spent time on the Continent trying to raise money for the Prince of Wales and his brothers. The royal princes head the subscription list, followed by an unusually motley crew of other subscribers. The work was published 'for the author' by the fashionable West End publishers Hookham and Carpenter, who at the end of the work placed an advert for 'Suicide Rejected, an Elegy [...] to which is prefixed A Moral Discourse against Suicide', 'published for the benefit of Mrs Clark and her children'. Surviving records of the publishers' transactions indicate that ultimately Mrs Clark made only a pound from *Ianthé*.<sup>20</sup>

Later works in the Checklist give a general impression of older, sadder women soliciting subscriptions, at least compared with the tremulous young ladies of the 1780s. In the Introduction to her *The Prior Claim* (1813: Entry 78), Mrs Iliff offered a dialogue between allegorical figures (Benevolence, Prudery, etc.) concerning the suitability of subscription fiction for a woman wishing to provide for her family, in which the full ghastliness of having to ply for support is at points nakedly exposed. Just as painful to read, though written from a different vantage point, are the preliminaries to *Contraſt* (1828: Entry 99), by Regina Maria Roche, a veteran (but now sadly out-of-touch) author,

whose *Children of Abbey* (1796) was arguably the most commercially successful circulating library novel of the Romantic period. In her Preface (1, [xii]–xv) Roche describes the subscription (by circular) as ‘a last resource’, thanks her ‘benevolent Subscribers’ for their indulgence, and yet (like other later novelists) appears apprehensive of a less favourable reaction from the general public (‘the majority of her readers’).

It is more difficult to draw conclusions about male subscription novelists, partly because of the relative smallness of the instances provided, partly because of the more resistant positions struck by some of these authors in preliminary matter. Proportionately fewer (8 noted out of 23) made direct dedications, 5 to male and 3 to female sponsors. The familiar tropes of female dependency are likewise hard to find even in parallel forms. Novice authorship is never openly signalled, while the need to look after family dependents is only obtrusive in one clear case. Joseph Wildman’s *The Force of Prejudice* (1799: Entry 29) describes in its Preface the death of a father and the author’s need to support his mother, and thanks Mrs Crespigny for help with the subscription. Mrs Champion de Crespigny (1748?–1812), a novelist herself and an ubiquitous presence in lists of this period, helped bring in some 750 subscriptions, mainly from London residential addresses, the third largest tally found.<sup>21</sup> Other male authors struck attitudes of relative unconcern or even belligerence. In a ‘Preface to the General Reader’ to his *The Contradiction* (1796: Entry 14), the Revd William Cole—only half-facetiously it would seem—offered as his rationale for publication the greater profitability of novels compared with sermons. In *The Creole* (Entry 15), published during the same year, Samuel Arnold, concluding his Preface, asserted that no exertions had been taken on his part to swell the list: an attitude matched by C. D. L. Lambert in *The Adventures of Cooroo* ([1805]: Entry 53), who in ‘The Author’s Apology to the Reader’ notes that the list might have been larger had not a concern for his business (nature of which not stated) prevented him from being actively solicitous. Richard Sickelmore in a Preface of 1798 (see Entry 22) presented his routine Gothic novel as a means of filling in his spare time at Brighton; while, in perhaps the most ‘masculine’ disclaimer of all, the military author of *St Mary’s Abbey* (1801: Entry 43) stated that his novel was written while on solitary duty in the Guard Room. Elsewhere one senses dependency and diffidence being turned into a kind of literary game. The prize for spectacular abjectness goes to the unknown (probably Irish) perpetrator of *Tales, by an Unwilling Author* (1822: Entry 93), where even the ‘Errata’ list is used as a means of conveying the plight of the author: ‘The writer of these pages is contained within four walls!!!’ Whether the walls belong to a hospital, prison, or asylum is not stated.

One subscription novelist whose immurement was genuine will be found in the case of Entry 62, *The British Admiral: A Novel* (1808), ‘by A Naval Officer’, where the author in a continuation to his dedication to Admiral Sir Home Popham describes how he has received donations from the persons listed while imprisoned more than ten months for ‘a debt of thirty pounds only’.<sup>22</sup> This first work can be seen as one of several subscription novels which drew attention to

active service (see also as instances Entries 43, 'by an officer in the British Militia', and 72, 'by an Old Naval Officer'). Here there is a clear counterpart in those female titles which intimate authorship by a victim of the war through the loss of a supporting relative (e.g. Entries 32 'by the Widow of an Officer', and 67 'by the daughter of a Captain in the Navy, deceased'). A similar focus for public feeling was provided by the French emigrées in the later 1790s. The success of the subscription to *Camilla* was undoubtedly aided by its author's well-known marriage to the exiled General d'Arblay; that to Mary Butt Sherwood's *The Traditions*, the fourth largest in the Checklist, gathered pace as a result of its being in aid of the similarly disadvantaged M. St Quentin, the son of a French nobleman from Alsace; and the longest list found, belonging to *Munster Abbey*, is co-headed by the most noble emigrée of all, the Comte d'Artois (Charles X to be), who was then residing in the Scottish royal palace as a guest of the government. Such extensive lists bear witness to the determination of the British establishment, both Whigs and Tories, to be seen as closing ranks in the light of the perceived threat from France. In fact, there is a suggestion that a number of smaller, somewhat contrived-looking lists, as found in slightly later Minerva publications, were placed there to give an added cachet to what were essentially commercial articles.

Subscription novels also, of course, have great potential for what they can tell us about the *audience* for fiction, and it is here that the greatest amount of work remains to be done. Due attention in any analysis needs to be given to possible distorting factors: the probability, for example, that male heads of households who feature in lists were often not the true readers (Richard Lovell Edgeworth appears alone in *The Traditions*, but one suspects it was Maria who consumed the novel). Even so, some features of the gender composition of lists are striking, and appear to reflect the flowering of fiction as a female form in the 1790s, followed by the appropriation of the mode by male authors and readers during the 1820s. Four out of six novels in the 1780s, notwithstanding female authorship in each case, have lists in which male outnumber female subscribers. In the 1790s the situation is reversed, with 15 lists having larger female subscriptions—one of them, Entry 20, entirely female—compared with 11 male-predominant lists; and, perhaps more telling still, only 6 cases (from 18) where a female-authored novel has a larger male subscription. During the first two decades of the new century the position tends to even out. In the 1800s from the 34 lists analysed, the ratio of male to female is 18 to 16; though this decade includes some fairly hefty female subscriptions (see, e.g., Entries 39 and 63). In the 1810s the proportion is 11 male to 14 female, this breakdown incorporating several titles where the number of male and female subscribers are almost even (as in Entries 74 and 75). The 1820s, on the other hand, tend to mirror the male-dominance of the 1780s (the lists in all but two titles show a male predominance), though, unlike the 1780s, the novels subscribed to are sometimes now male-authored as well. Finally, it is worth noting that through the whole fifty years there is only one clear-cut case of a male-authored novel gaining a predominantly female subscription (Entry 29).

The amount of detail given about locations varies from almost blanket coverage to no information at all. Especially difficult to unlock can be lists which provide only a smattering of addresses/places of residence, not least when those given are in all likelihood the exception rather than rule; for instance, Amelia Bristow's evangelical *Emma de Lissau* (1828: Entry 100) mentions no locations except 'Friends at Brighton, 4 copies'; though the probability is most subscribers came from London. Making due allowance for vagaries such as this, it is possible to offer the following breakdown:

- i) *Predominantly London*. 15 lists fit this category, with a greater frequency in the earlier period, and a shift in the later period (especially when viewed with the next category) away from the West End and Central London to include the burgeoning suburban developments.
- ii) *London with satellite areas*. 23 listed match this category: a fairly common pattern here being a combination of a metropolitan subscription with one or two provincial groupings (as might result from a family connection), though some of the larger subscriptions like *Camilla* set off more intricate combinations, and sometimes relatively exotic locations were involved (Jamaica in the case of Mrs Gomersall's two novels, and Oporto for Clark's *Ianthé*). Again this London-dominated category, at its height in the 1790s, tends to tail off in the later period.
- iii) *English provincial*. 25 of those listed evidently emanated from provincial neighbourhoods or towns, rather than London, though London might be involved. Amongst them, with the dominant area in parenthesis, can be counted: Entry 10 (Liverpool); 32 (Essex); 35 (Worcestershire); 43 (Chelmsford); 45 (NW England); 46 (Derbyshire); 48 (Maidstone); 53 (Norfolk); 57 (Sheffield); 63 (Bath); 73 (Gloucestershire); 81 (Nottinghamshire); 83 (Yorkshire); 89 (West Midlands); 90 and 92 (Forest of Dean); 94 (Norwich); 98 (Margate); 102 (East Anglia).
- iv) *Scotland, Ireland and Wales*. The development of a polite reading public in Edinburgh can be sensed in *Munster Abbey*, which offers an early glimpse of the fashionable new-town dwellers who in the next century would turn in increasing numbers to fiction. Eight Edinburgh circulating libraries are listed in Peter Middleton Darling's *The Romance of the Highlands* (1810: Entry 68), published in the same year Scott's *Waverley* was first advertised (though completion of the latter did not come until 1814). Finally in Dubois' *Adolphe and Selanie* (1824), as already suggested, a full array of professional worthies, not averse to having their names associated with fiction, is visible. Predominantly Irish subscriptions can be found in Entries 59 and 93, though in both these cases it is the *absence* of a supporting readership which comes over most strongly: only with *The Neville Family* (1814: Entry 80) can one sense a strong supporting locale, perhaps significantly for this instance in the neighbourhood of Cork. The Cardiff imprint of *Leave of Absence* (1824: Entry 97) is strictly a one-off; though it is interesting to see in the list a mixture of country gentry and professional subscribers characteristic of the still largely rural country districts of South Wales combining with emergent industrialists

and mercantilists; and also there the dominant presence of the Marquess of Bute, whose ownership of the port of Cardiff and land in the coal-rich valleys was to lead to an accumulation of immense wealth later in the century.

In addition to the categories noted above, the Checklist also includes 15 cases in which aristocratic court sponsorship is the dominant factor, 16 more where an absence of locations makes analysis impractical, and one single item (Entry 66) consisting almost entirely of overseas India army officers.

Ascertaining social groupings involves comparable difficulties. Aristocratic subscribers are generally obtrusive: sometimes found in separate clusters at the head of lists, elsewhere granted other forms of privilege such as precedence in alphabetical order or block capital lettering. In a few cases a whole list appears to consist of an aristocratic group followed by dependents and hangers-on. Members of the gentry are also fairly perceptible, through titles (Sir, 'Bart', etc.), territorial designations, and the appendage of 'Esq.' (though the latter appears to have been a somewhat fluid term). A large professional component is inferable through the presence of titles such as Dr, and related factors such as a high proportion of clergymen, administrative post-holders, and serving officers. The status of women subscribers can usually only be guessed at through surrounding males, at least in the case of the gentry and professional classes. Far more difficult to decipher are the 'anonymous' Mr/Mrs/Misses who often form the greater part of medium-sized and larger lists. Often one senses a large 'middle-class' presence of minor professionals and tradespeople. Only occasionally, however, does one find descriptions such as 'Miss Robins, at Mr Robins, grocer, Holborn Hill' (Entry 16) or 'Brown, Mr J. Organist' (Entry 98), though it is not unlikely there were more grocer's daughters if not many organists beneath the surface. An attempt has been made in the Checklist to give some idea of the social formations found, though virtually every instance deserves fuller inspection. It is worth noting in general terms, however, that while aristocrat-dominant lists continue right to the end of our period—witness Roche's *Contrast* (1828: Entry 99)—others which appear to be largely professional and/or middle class in composition can be found from the beginning. Moreover, while there is an overall tendency in subscription fiction towards deference and dutiful morality, a degree of ideological freedom can sometimes be picked up in those novels which appear to have enjoyed a relatively 'middle-class' sponsorship. Noteworthy here is the pro-mercantile attitude found in Ann Gomersall's two titles (Entries 5 and 7); the primitivist liberalism of Samuel Arnold's *The Creole* (1796: Entry 15); the reorientation of Wollstonecraftian feminism in Helena Wells's *Constantia Neville* (1800: Entry 33); and James Amphlett's satirical assault on the patronage system in *Ned Bentley* (1808: Entry 64), itself dedicated to the Whig politician R. B. Sheridan.

This leads to one last question: to what extent did subscription novels parallel generic movements perceptible in fiction output generally? In some cases, the answer must be negative. A fair number in the Checklist are formulaic in the extreme, either through ineptitude or ultra-cautiousness on their author's part,

and a handful were evidently dragged out just for the occasion. A prefatory notice to *Wareham Priory* (1799) observes that ‘As this Novel was written a few years before the French Revolution, the reader will not be surprised to find young men making France and Italy part of their continental tour’; while the ‘relict’ Sarah Cobbe in the Preface to a highly predictable *Julia St Helen* (1800: Entry 39) freely acknowledges that the work ‘*is not mine*, but has been kindly obtained for me by the deceased author’s relatives’ (1, [vii]). In other cases, it is possible to trace a more positive trajectory, which, if ultimately reactive rather than innovative, does nevertheless suggest that subscription authors could be aware of recent trends and fresh expectations. Sentimental domestic novels, in the manner of the early Charlotte Smith, are particularly noticeable in the 1790s and early 1800s, and accompanying lists encourage the view that this type was popular with both fashionable residents in the London West End and southern English provincial neighbourhoods: the former apparently preferring upper-class characters in the key roles, the latter appreciating images of beneficent gentry protection.

Gothic elements first appear in 1795–96, and (though the sample is small) are most prevalent during the years 1798–1803, albeit by 1804 a reaction is also clear (see Entry 51). Contrary to recent claims that that the Gothic genre enjoyed a widespread popularity amongst a female ‘middle-class’ readership, the most common grouping found in these lists is that of Whig aristocratic ladies (see Entries 25, 31, 41, 47, 50). Historical novels, some claiming a ‘documentary’ origin, though invariably sentimental in character, are found virtually from the start: see, for example, Anne Fuller’s *The Son of Ethelwolf* (1789: Entry 6), which rather implausibly offers King Alfred as role model for Prince of Wales. No doubt an air of authenticity helped assuage the fears of subscribers worried about publicly associating themselves with fiction. A distinct shift to ‘regional’/‘national’ subjects is perceptible during the 1810s, with Irish and Scottish settings and/or characters especially popular. This reflects larger successes with ‘national’ tales on the open market, notably by Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, and Jane Porter (with *Scottish Chiefs* (1810)); as well as a more pervasive public enthusiasm for far-flung outposts of loyalty in blockaded Britain. The uncharacteristically rapid response in subscription fiction to this new mode was evidently aided by clientele eager to investigate and promote their own localities: the anonymous *Silvanella* (1812: Entry 73), for example, with a heavy concentration of subscribers in the region of Stroud, grafts Gloucestershire ‘manners’ (including dialect speech) on to the common stock of the sentimental novel. The relatively heavy crop of moral religious novels found in the last two decades likewise must have benefited from the development of other kinds of subscription within evangelical groups, often consisting primarily of middle-class women, as in support of shorter didactic tracts or good works generally.<sup>23</sup> A broad shift in the ideological climate is also evident in an increasing tendency among subscription novelists (particularly women) to foreground religious credentials: the Preface to Roche’s *Contrast*, for example, is insistent on its author’s intention ‘to inculcate, under a pleasing form, pure morality’.

It has only been possible in this account to skim the surface of the materials to hand, though hopefully enough has been glimpsed at to suggest a fuller potential. While our knowledge of the authorship, production, and distribution of novels during the period in view has advanced usefully in recent years, the nature of reading audiences is still something of a grey area. If, as Maurice Couturier has stated, 'It is not yet possible to draw a reliable picture of the novel-reading public [in the eighteenth century]',<sup>24</sup> how much more of a puzzle is presented by the diverse and shifting audiences of the British Romantic period.<sup>25</sup> It is hoped that the following Checklist will throw some further light on the sponsorship of fiction and its readers, especially in the neglected years early in the nineteenth century. With the online publication of *British Fiction, 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation and Reception History*, as being developed in the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research at Cardiff, and scheduled for release in Autumn 2004, researchers will also have access to full transcriptions of all seventy lists discovered from 1800 as presently digested in the Checklist below.

## II

### SUBSCRIPTION FICTION, 1780–1829: A CHECKLIST

Each entry begins with details of title, authorship and imprint, based on actual title-pages, albeit with an element of standardisation (e.g. publisher's addresses are usually omitted). In bold is then given a breakdown of the lists, in the following order: number of male subscribers (M); number of female subscribers (F); gender-unidentified subscribers (U); sum total of subscriptions (S); additional copies (A); total number of copies subscribed (T). This line is completed with the name of the holding library where the copy was seen (BL for British Library, and so on). Three separate lines after this then record: i) main locations of subscribers as evident or inferable from the lists; ii) the social composition of the lists, again insofar as this can be deduced; iii) an indication of type (say Gothic or Sentimental), and, where relevant, special features (such as reference to the French Revolution). After this a general Notes field gives details concerning prefatory matter, the positioning of the lists, etc., on an optional basis. Entries are concluded, where appropriate, with information concerning in-period further editions published in mainland Britain.

#### 1783

(1) *Burton-Wood: In a Series of Letters*, by a Lady [Anna Maria Mackenzie], 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, by W. Flexney, Holborn), 1783.

**M127 F85 S212 A37 T249. Bristol.**

London (inner City, Islington, West Ham); Home counties; North England.

Military, professional, trade (1 Distiller).

Moral sentimental; epistolary; digressions on British liberty, military virtues, female education (semi-apologetically).

‘To the Subscribers of Burton-Wood’, 7pp. end of vol. 1, defends novel as means of promoting virtue.

## 1785

(2) *Maria: A Novel*, by the author of George Bateman [Elizabeth Blower], 2 vols, London (T. Cadell in the Strand), 1785.

**M165 F91 S256 A57 T313. Bristol.**

No locations, presumably London.

31 titled; literary and theatrical.

Domestic sentimental melodrama, with older-style satirical elements.

Dedication to the Honourable Mrs Ward, stating design to ‘inculcate the principle of *Active Benevolence*’, signed St James’s Place, 10 May 1785. Subscribers inc: Richard Cumberland, Charles Macklin [actor], Mr [Samuel Jackson] Pratt, Sir Joshua Reynolds, R. B. Sheridan, Josiah Wedgwood.

## 1786

(3) *St. Bernard’s Priory: An Old English Tale*, being the first literary production of a young lady [Martha Hugell], 1 vol., London (Printed for authoress, and sold at Swift’s Circulating Library), 1786.

**M53 F76 U1 S130 A18 T148. BL.**

No locations, presumably London.

No high-ranking nobility; one-third ‘Miss’.

Sentimental historical, touches of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*.

Dedication to the Duchess of Devonshire (to whom she is ‘personally unknown’), signed No 25 Duke Street, St James’s, 1 May 1786. Large format, with ‘Price 3s’ on title-page. Mr Swift takes 6 copies.

Further edn: 1789 as *Priory of St Bernard*, 2 vols, Minerva Press.

## 1788

(4) *The History of Lady Caroline Rivers, in a Series of Letters*, by Miss Elizabeth Todd, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author), 1788.

**M76 F69 S/T145. BL.**

Predominantly London, with strong Westminster contingent, also fashionable squares.

Prince of Wales and Duke of York head list; smattering of aristocrats; well-placed commoners; 3 Admirals.

Burneyesque sentimental comedy, aristocratic characters; epistolary.

Prefatory ‘To the Ladies’, begging indulgence towards a 17-year old author, signed No. 21, Queen Street, Westminster. Subscribers inc. ‘Miss Burney, Queen’s Palace’.

## 1789

(5) *Eleonora, a Novel, in a Series of Letters*, written by a female inhabitant of Leeds in Yorkshire [Mrs Ann Gomersall], 2 vols, London (Printed for the authoress, by the Literary Society and the Logographic Press, and sold by J. Walter; and W. Richardson), [1789].

**M83 F101 U33 S217 A5 T222. BL.**

70 London and suburban; South and South West (ports); Leeds area; Jamaica contingent.

Middle class professional and presumably also trade; titled and some literary women.

Social domestic epistolary (wide class spectrum); pro-mercantile; scenes from Leeds.

Dedication to Viscountess Irwin of Temple Newsam, Yorkshire.

(6) *The Son of Ethelwolf: An Historical Tale*, by the author of Alan Fitz-Osborne [Anne Fuller], 2 vols, London (Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson), 1789.

**M297 F271 S568 A180 T748. Bristol.**

Locations only infrequently (London, Bath, Hotwells, Ireland).

86 aristocrats (several Irish titles); 50 military; 26 clergy.

Dramatic sentimental historical.

Dedication to His Royal Highness, George Prince of Wales. Subscribers inc: Mrs Crespigny; Master of Ceremonies at Bath; Miss Gunning.

Further edn: 1800.

#### 1790

(7) *The Citizen, a Novel*, by Mrs [Ann] Gomersall of Leeds, author of Eleanora, 2 vols, London (Printed for Scatcherd & Whitaker; and sold by Binns, Leeds, and Edwards and Son, Halifax), 1790.

**M98 F112 U37 S/T247. BL.**

London suburban; Home counties; Leeds and Whitby; Jamaica contingent.

Minimal aristocratic: presumably fair component professional and trade.

Social domestic epistolary; pro-mercantile.

Dedication to Right Honourable Viscountess Irwin.

(8) *The History of Miss Meredith; a Novel*, by Mrs [Eliza] Parsons, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by T. Hookham), 1790.

**M160 F285 S445 A118 T563. BL.**

London West End; Surrey; East Anglia; Wessex.

High aristocratic (headed Prince of Wales and royal Dukes); Oxbridge contingent; female literary.

Moral sentimental genteel: twin female correspondents marry unhappily.

Preface gives address as No. 15, East-place, Lambeth. Subscribers inc: Mrs Bonhote,

Bungay, Suffolk; Miss Harriet Bowdler, Bath; Mrs Crespigny, Camberwell, 6 copies.

Further edn: 2nd edn, 1790.

#### 1791

(9) *The History of Georgina Neville; or, the Disinterested Orphan: A Novel*, being the first literary attempt of a young lady, 2 vols, London (Printed for the authoress: sold by T. Hookham; and J. Carpenter), 1791.

**M79 F143 S222 A4 T226. BL.**

London West End; small NW England element.

Headed 8 Dukes/Duchesses; high proportion female aristocrats.

Moral sentimental genteel (well-bred heroine, destitute, has notion of funding

herself by playing guitar!).

Dedication, 'with permission', to the Hon Lady Warren: stresses the potential usefulness of novel of manners as an 'inducement to virtue'. Adv. for Hookham's Circulating Library, Old Bond Street, on last page. BL copy (12611.c.27) has book plate of Viscountess Bulkeley (one of the subscribers).

(10) *The Sword; or, Father Bertrand's History of his Own Times, from the Original Manuscript*, by Eliza Clarke [afterwards Cobbold], 2 vols, Liverpool (Printed for the author by A. Smith, and sold by R. Faulder, London), 1791.

**M216 F44 U2 S262 A62 T324. Bristol.**

Liverpool; East Anglia (mostly Ipswich); London.

Professional men (medical, mercantile); clergy; middle-rank military.

Historical-sentimental, antiquarian (12th-century Norman times).

Subscribers inc: Warren Hastings, Esq., London; William Roscoe, Esq., Liverpool.

#### 1795

(11) *Orwell Manor: A Novel*, by Mary Elizabeth Parker, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, at the Minerva Press), 1795.

**M118 F60 S178 A45 T223. BL.**

London; Sussex; English provincial.

Minor aristocracy and gentry; Surrey militia.

Sentimental domestic, shades of Gothic (discounted).

(12) *The Traditions, a Legendary Tale*, written by a young lady [Mary Martha Butt, afterwards Sherwood], 2 vols, London (Printed for William Lane, Minerva), 1795.

**M347 F390 U3 S740 A199 T939. Yale.**

Berkshire; West Midlands; London.

Nobility and gentry; clergy; militia officers; 49 Oxford fellows; 11 MPs; high proportion 'Miss'.

Historical (English medieval) sentimental, with Radcliffean Gothic elements.

Prefatory statement from Mr St Quentin, thanking the author and subscribers, dated Hans Place, Brompton, 10 May 1795. Subscribers inc: Miss Austen, Steventon, near Overton; [Richard] Lovell Edgeworth, Esq., Edgeworth's-town; James Mill, Esq; Miss Mitford, Reading; Miss Seward, Lichfield.

Further edn: 1796 (no list).

#### 1796

(13) *Camilla: or, a Picture of Youth*, by the author Evelina and Cecilia [Frances d'Arblay, née Burney], 6 vols, London (Printed for T. Payne; and T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies), 1796.

**M431 F609 U18 S1058 A136 T1194. Bristol.**

London (16 only named); Home Counties (69); East Anglia (29); Midlands (25); Wessex (19); North of England (17); Scotland, Ireland, Wales (15).

Wide band of nobility and gentry (headed Duchess of York and Duke of Gloucester); official postholders; clergy; book societies; high proportion women subscribing singly.

Moral social comedy (broadly non-political).

Dedication to the Queen, signed F. d'Arblay, Bookham, 28 June 1796. Subscribers inc: Edmund Burke (5 sets); James Beattie; George Canning; Miss Edgeworth; Warren Hastings; Thomas Holcroft; Miss [Sophia] Lee and Miss Harriet Lee; Hannah More; 'Miss J. Austen, Steventon'.  
Further edn: 1802 (altered, no list).

(14) *The Contradiction*, by the Rev. William Cole, 1 vol., London (Printed for T. Cadell, jun., and W. Davies), 1796.

**M162 F75 S237 A38 T275. Bristol.**

No locations.

Gentry and clergy; female subscribers usually part of family clusters.

Moral and literary in flavour; shades of *Tristram Shandy*.

(15) *The Creole; or, the Haunted Island*, by S[amuel James] Arnold, 3 vols, London (Printed for C. Law; Hookham; and Bell), 1796.

**M91 F38 S129 A121 T250. BL.**

Central London; SE England; Glasgow contingent.

Professional and naval.

Primitivist fable, with philosophical touches.

Preface signed Duke Street, Westminster, Sept 1796. Additional copies inflated by Mr Greenhill, Gracechurch-street (100 copies).

(16) *Memoirs of the Princess of Zell, Consort to King George the First*, [by Sarah Draper], 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, by William Lane, at the Minerva Press), 1796.

**M108 F169 U3 S280 A43 T323. BL.**

City of London and suburbs; Hertfordshire; East Anglia (16 Ely, largely ecclesiastical).

Minor professional; presumably tradespeople (one grocer's daughter).

Fictionalised monarchist royal memoirs.

Dedication to Her Serene Highness, the Margravine of Brandenburg Anspach, signed Sarah Draper, Hammersmith. 'To the Reader' disclaims any political intention or direct contemporary reference.

(17) *The Mystery of the Black Tower, a Romance*, by John Palmer, jun., author of *The Haunted Cavern*, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, by William Lane, at the Minerva-Press), 1796.

**M82 F33 S115 A4 T119. Yale.**

London theatres (31 Drury Lane, 6 Covent Garden); London residential addresses.

Actors and actresses, some well-known; theatre-goers?

Gothic horror romance.

(18) *Woodland Cottage: A Novel*, 2 vols, London (Printed for Hookham and Carpenter), 1796.

**M128 F179 S307 A43 T350. BL.**

Most without locations (presumably London); Portsmouth element; some Scots.

120 aristocrats (many 'Hon' female); 35 military (high-ranking).

Sentimental domestic; *beau monde* versus country virtues.

Dedication to Right Hon. Lady Elizabeth Drummond, stressing author's gratitude,

diffidence before the Public with her ‘first essay’, and family’s ‘pecuniary distress’. Subscribers inc. Mrs Crespigny.

## 1797

(19) *Charles Dacre: or, the Voluntary Exile: An Historical Novel, Founded on Facts*, 2 vols, Edinburgh (Printed by John Moir), 1797.

**M15 F17 S/T32. BL.**

No locations.

19 aristocrats (Duke of Buccleuch and family prominent); 13 commoners (one Writer to the Signet).

Picaresque adventures, male sentimentalism; disappointed hero retreats to Switzerland.

‘Address to the Reader’ states author’s inexperience, and claims that friend prevailed on him to publish.

(20) *Clara Lennox; or, the Distressed Widow: A Novel, Founded on Facts, Interspersed with an Historical Description of the Isle of Man*, by Mrs [Margaret] Lee, 2 vols, London (Printed for the authoress, by J. Adlard; and sold by J. Parsons), [1797].

**Mo F68 S/T68. BL.**

No locations, presumably Court.

Aristocratic female (headed Princes of Wales and Duchess of York): high proportion in other lists.

Sentimental moralistic (effusively pro-virtue); epistolary.

Dedication, ‘by permission’, to the Duchess of York.

Further edn: 2nd edn, 1797.

(21) *Munster Abbey, a Romance: Interspersed with Reflection on Virtue and Morality*, written by Sir Samuel Egerton Leigh, 3 vols, Edinburgh (Printed by John Moir: for W Creech; Hookham and Carpenter [sic], [and] Vernor and Hood, London), 1797.

**M841 F376 S1217 A279 T1496. BL.**

London 617 (high density West End squares); 333 Scotland (ibid., Edinburgh New Town).

Aristocracy and baronetcy; senior military; 37 MPs (inc. William Wilberforce); professional.

Moral domestic; virtue rewarded, after some anxieties.

Dedication (by the author) to Duchess of Marlborough. List co-headed the Duchess and ‘His Royal Highness Monsieur, Holyroodhouse’.

## 1798

(22) *Edgar; or, the Phantom of the Castle: A Novel*, by R[ichard] Sickelmore, 2 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for William Lane), 1798.

**M57 F9 S/T66. Corvey.**

No locations, presumably Brighton (see Preface).

Largely male untitled; 3 females share author’s surname.

Routine Minerva Gothic.

(23) *Heaven's Best Gift: A Novel*, by Mrs Lucius Phillips, a near relation to Major General Phillips, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by W. Miller; and Lloyd), [1798].

**M31 F53 S/T84. Corvey.**

No locations.

Large aristocratic element (56 titled, including 'Lady').

Sentimental domestic; pecuniary worries passim.

(24) *Ianthé, or the Flower of Caernarvon, a Novel*, dedicated by permission to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, by Emily Clark, grand-daughter of the late Colonel Frederick, son of Theodore, King of Corsica, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author; and sold by Hookham and Carpenter), 1798.

**M106 F90 U1 S197 A74 T271. BL; Corvey lacks list.**

No locations, apart from Oporto (c. 30); but presumably London.

Royal princes head list; mixed bag follow.

Domestic sentimental ('poor Willoughby' proves a deceiver!).

(25) *Mort Castle: A Gothic Story*, 1 vol., London (Printed for the author; sold by J. Wallis), [1798].

**M32 F41 S73 A14 T87. BL.**

No locations.

Court aristocracy, headed Princess of Wales; 28 male commoners follow 19 female ones.

High Gothic terror.

Dedication, unusually effusive, to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York. Subscribers inc. R. B. Sheridan, Esq., MP.

(26) *The Rock; or, Alfred and Anna: A Scottish Tale*, by a young Lady [Mrs Barnby], her first literary attempt, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by Lee and Hurst; Harding), 1798.

**M60 F44 S104 A6 T110. BL.**

No locations.

Primarily Mr and Mrs (no aristocrats); occasional army officer.

Historical-sentimental, Scottish medieval (lost manuscript).

Further edn: 2nd edn, 1799 (Corvey, with list).

(27) *A Welsh Story*, [by Mary Barker], 3 vols, London (Hookham and Carpenter), 1798.

**M75 F89 S164 A11 T175. Cardiff City Library.**

London (West End); Bath (4 booksellers); Midlands (Stafford or near); Wales (mainly S. Glamorgan); Ireland (Dublin and Newry).

Middling aristocratic (but headed Duke and Duchess of York); gentry and professional.

Sentimental domestic; country setting.

Dedication to the Duchess of York, signed Mary Barker.

1799

(28) *Eva: A Novel*, dedicated by permission to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester, by Isabella Kelly [afterwards Hedgeland], author of *Madeline*, Abbey of St. Asaph, Avondale Priory, &c., 3 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for William Lane), 1799.

**M36 F33 S/T69. Corvey.**

No locations, presumably Court.

Female aristocrats (inc. Duchess of York); military; 26 plain Mr(s)/Miss.

Sentimental melodrama, virtuous aristocrats rewarded; post-Revolutionary incidents.

(29) *The Force of Prejudice, a Moral Tale*, [by Joseph Wildman], 2 vols, London (Printed by J. Barfield, for the author, and to be had of him, No 18, West-Street, Soho), 1799.

**M273 F476 S/T749. Bristol.**

545 locations, of which 533 London residential addresses (West End, Bloomsbury, Finsbury etc.).

In-town aristocracy; 25 MPs; military and professional.

Moral sentimental domestic: the bereft find security.

Dedication to Lady Howard, signed Joseph Wildman, West-Street, Soho, 19 Dec 1799. 'Advertisement to the Reader', also dated 19 Dec 1799, apologises for mistakes made in haste to complete. Another notice, dated 25 March 1800 (following supplementary list dated the same) apologises for late delivery, blaming the increased price of paper; 250 sets remain unsold, and the list will remain open for a while longer. Further edn: 1800 (BL 1507/854 has MS additions to subscribers).

(30) *He Deceives Himself: A Domestic Tale*, by Marianne Chambers, daughter of the late Mr. Charles Chambers, many years in the service of the Hon. East-India Company, and unfortunately lost in the *Winterton*, 3 vols, London (Printed for C. Dilly), 1799.

**M91 F102 S193 A14 T207. BL.**

London (city addresses, and south of the river); West Country (chiefly Bristol).

Merchant navy (21 Captain, only 1 RN); minor professional and trade.

Moral sentimental domestic; anti fashionable world.

Dedication to Mr Thomas Powell, of Bristol (her grandfather).

(31) *The Heiress di Montalde; or, the Castle of Bezanto: A Novel*, by Mrs. Anne Ker, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by Earle and Hemet), 1799.

**M9 F43 S52 A3 T55. BL.**

No locations.

Female aristocratic sponsorship (10 titled or 'Lady'), headed Duchess of Gloucester. Radcliffian Gothic.

Dedicated, by permission, to her Royal Highness the Princess Augusta Sophia (t.p. and dedication). Preliminaries include Notice, thanking 'the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general, who have honoured her first publication', and announcing her *Adeline St. Julian*, to be published in November.

(32) *Wareham Priory; or, the Will: A Novel, Founded on Facts*, by the Widow of an Officer [?Mrs Adams], 2 vols, London (Published by J. Barker), 1799.

**M147 F138 U2 S/T287. Bristol.**

Essex; London; Kent; Hull; Liverpool.

Army and navy; militia; country gentry.

Moral domestic; old-fashioned epistolary.

Subscribers inc: Edward Austen, Esq.; Mrs E. Austen; Mrs Knight, Canterbury.

#### 1800

(33) *Constantia Neville; or, the West Indian: A Novel*, by Helena Wells, author of "The Step-Mother," &c, 3 vols, London (Printed by C. Whittingham, for T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies; and W. Creech, Edinburgh), 1800.

**M188 F187 U4 S379 A60. T439. BL.**

South London suburban; Scotland; English towns.

Professional; colonial trade and military; some Americans.

Moral domestic; post-Revolutionary feminist elements.

Preface dated Little Park-Street, Westminster, 15 Apr 1800. Main 'List of Subscribers' (as totalled above) followed by 'Subscribers on the Continent' (13 'Berlin' names, 28 more 'At Hamburgh'), and 'Subscribers in Charleston, South Carolina' (55 listed).

Additional copies purchased by those 96 extra subscribers amount to 23, making overall totals of 475 subscribers and 558 copies.

Further edn: 2nd edn 1800 (Corvey, no list).

(34) *Edwardina, a Novel*: Dedicated to Mrs. Souter Johnston, by Catherine Harris, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, at the Minerva-Press, by William Lane), 1800.

**M24 F36 S/T60. Corvey.**

London residential; English provincial.

Male military (3 Generals); respectable female.

Sentimental domestic; epistolary.

Dedication (effusively sentimental) to Mrs Souter Johnson.

(35) *Eliza, a Novel*, by Mrs. Yeates, Daughter of the late Holland Cooksey, Esq. of Braces Leigh, in the county of Worcester, 2 vols, Lambeth (Printed and published by S. Tibson; and sold by C. Chapple, Pall-Mall; J. and E. Kerby; J. Lee; and West and Hughes), 1800.

**M69½ F53½ U2 S125 A50 T175. Corvey.**

Worcestershire; London (West End); Oxford.

Country gentry; Master of the Rolls and 3 MPs.

Sentimental domestic-melodramatic.

Dedication 'to the amiable and humane Mrs. Bland, of Ham-Court in the County of Worcester'. Includes rare instance of husband and wife joint subscription ('Mack-aughland, Col. and Mrs.').

(36) *Elliott: or, Vicissitudes of Early Life*, by a Lady [Mrs Burke], 2 vols, London (Printed and published by Geo. Cawthorn, Bookseller to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales; sold also by Messrs. Richardson; H. D. Symonds, J. Wallis West and Hughes; and J. Wright), 1800.

**M70 F144 S215 A36 T251. Corvey.**

London residential; North Wales; English provincial; Edinburgh cluster (at end). Aristocracy (headed Duke of Gloucester and Scottish Argyll family); country gentry; Edinburgh polite.

Sentimental domestic melodrama.

Last item 'Messrs. Manners and Millar, Parliament-square, Edinburgh, 6 sets'.

(37) *Ermina Montrose; or, the Cottage of the Vale, with Characters from Life*, by Emily Clark, grand-daughter of the late Colonel Frederick, and author of "Ianthé; or, the Flower of Caernarvon", 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by James Wallis), 1800.

**M66 F43 S109 A48 T157. Corvey.**

No locations.

Mixed bag generally.

High sentimental domestic: tribulations of heroine.

Dedication to the Right Honorable Countess of Shaftesbury, signed Emily Clark, No 4, Cockspur-street, Haymarket. Subscribers inc. Maria Edgeworth (20 copies).

(38) *Idalia: A Novel, Founded on Facts*, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, at the Minerva-Press), 1800.

**M71 F76 S147 A123 T270. Corvey.**

No locations.

Unaristocratic; occasional Revd/middle rank officer.

Routine Minerva domestic sentimental; epistolary.

(39) *Julia St. Helen; or, the Heiress of Ellisborough: A Novel*, published by Sarah Cobbe, Relict of the Rev. Richard Chaloner Cobbe, Rector of Bradenham in Buckinghamshire, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable The Earl of Moira, 2 vols, London (Printed by J. Nichols; sold by Earle and Hemet), 1800.

**M149 F254 U6 S409 A21 T430. BL.**

No locations.

Headed Prince of Wales; aristocracy and gentry; clergy; 2 book clubs.

Sentimental domestic; orphan heroine and London incidents.

Dedication to 'the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira, Baron Rawdon', dated 15 June 1800. Adv. for 'Original French and English Circulating Library, W. Earle' after list. Subscribers inc. Mrs Crespigny.

(40) *The School for Fashion*, by Mrs. [Ann] Thicknesse, 2 vols, London (Printed by H. Reynell, for Debrett and Fores; Hookham; and Robinsons), 1800.

**28M 16F S44 A10 T54. Yale.**

No locations.

High society (headed Duchess of Marlborough and Duke of Buccleuch); also the ubiquitous Mrs Crespigny.

Fashionable novel *à clef*.

'Dedication. To Fashion', signed 'A. T.'. Frontispiece portrait of 'Mrs Thicknesse', opp. t.p. in vol. 1; similar portrait of 'Philp Thicknesse Esq' opp. t.p. in vol. 2. Subscribers inc. Mrs Crespigny.

## 1801

(41) *The Castle of Villeroy, a Romance*, by Frances Mary Mills, 1 vol., London (Printed by D. N. Shury; and sold by T. Hurst), 1801.

**M93 F174 U1 S268 A72 T340. Corvey.**

No locations, but presumably London and environs.

Titled aristocracy (including Duchess of Marlborough); respectable society (the Crespignys *en bloc*).

Radcliffian sentimental Gothic.

'Dedication to the Subscribers', signed 14, Blenheim's Buildings, Camberwell; this gives drastically changed fortunes and 'the pressure of adversity alone' as motivation. Subscribers inc. Mrs Crespigny (8 copies). BL has a variant copy (C.192. a.219) bearing the imprint of J. Skirven, Ratcliff-Highway, but otherwise identical (includes list).

(42) *Ruthinglenne, or the Critical Moment: A Novel*; dedicated, by permission, to Lady Dalling, by Isabella Kelly, author of Madeline, Abbey of St. Asaph, Avondale Priory, Eva, &c. &c., 3 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for William Lane), 1801.

**M28 F35 S/T63. Corvey.**

No locations.

Flecked with upper-crust names.

Sentimental domestic à la Charlotte Smith; North of England setting, ancient abbey.

Dedication to Lady Dalling, thanking her for her patronage and alluding to the author's family misfortunes. Subscribers inc: Mrs Crespigny, Duchess of Gloucester, M. G. Lewis, Duchess of York (last entry, under York).

(43) *St. Mary's Abbey: A Novel*, by an officer in the British Militia, 2 vols, Chelmsford (Printed for the author, by R. C. Stanes, and Co.), 1801.

**M72 F27 U1 S/T100. Corvey.**

No locations, but most probably in region of Chelmsford (see imprint), warding off Napoleon!

Minor aristocracy; 42 militia officers (mostly Royal Bucks); female commoners.

Historical-sentimental: 2 female cousins escaping persecutions of Henry VIII (*Children of the Abbey* spin-off?).

## 1802

(44) *The Bride's Embrace on the Grave; or, the Midnight Wedding in the Church of Mariengarten*: Taken from the German [of Ignaz Ferdinand Arnold], by Maria Geisweiler, 2 vols, London (Printed by G. Sidney; for Constantine Geisweiler), 1802.

**M69 F90 U2 S161 A103 T264. BL.**

London (West End and Central); Kent; Glasgow.

Headed Princess of Wales, Duchess of York, Duke of Cumberland; smattering aristocrats; booksellers.

Trans. of *Der Brautkuß auf dem Grabe, oder die Trauung um Mitternacht in der Kirche zu Mariengarten* (Rudolstadt/Arnstadt, 1801).

Notice by the author, dated 20 Mar 1802, in which she apologizes 'for the delay

in publication; owing to some very unpleasant occurrences at the printing-office where it was first began, and from which it was necessary to remove it to another for its completion'. The author was the wife of Constantine Geisweiler, a bookseller specialising in German books in London: see also Entry 84.

(45) *Celina; or, the Widowed Bride: A Novel, Founded on Facts*, by Sarah Ann Hook, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold No. 14, Warwick Court, Holborn. A. Paris, Printer, Rolls' Buildings), 1802.

**M112 F77 S189 A31 T220. Urbana.**

NW England (Lancaster prominent); Staffordshire; other English towns; London and Bath.

Middle ranks (clergymen, military, country gentry, probably tradespeople). Females listed first alphabetically.

Sentimental domestic melodrama.

'Humbly Dedicated to the Public'.

Further edn: 1803 as *The Widowed Bride, or Celina* (Corvey—a reissue by Lane and Newman; but no list).

(46) *The Rules of the Forest*, by Susanna Oakes, 3 vols, Derby (Printed by J. Drewry, and sold by all Booksellers in the three Kingdoms), [1802].

**M56 F36 S92 A20? T112?. Corvey.**

South Derbyshire.

Full 'neighbourhood' spectrum (Duchess of Devonshire, country gentry; town-dwellers).

Sentimental pastoral domestic; some 'high life' characters.

Frontispiece depicts the authoress as 'keeper of the circulating library at Ashborne in the County of Derby'. 'Advertisement' at the end vol. 1 offers an apology for 'the repeated delays during the process of the foregoing pages', and promises that the remaining vols will be 'brought forward as expeditiously as possible'. List of 'Subscribers Names' (4pp. unnn.) at the beginning of vol. 3; sums donated (most commonly 10s 6d) range from £5 to 5s. Vol. 3 t.p. is dated 1802. Novel proper ends on p. 462, followed by a final 'Advertisement' stating that the length of the final vol., and expence on paper, has necessitated raising the price: 'First Subscriptions, 10s. 6d.—with additions, 13s. 6d.'.

### 1803

(47) *The Cave of Cosenza: A Romance of the Eighteenth Century*; altered from the Italian, by Eliza Nugent Bromley, author of *Laura and Augustus*; dedicated, by permission, to his Royal Highness the Duke of York, 2 vols, London (Printed by W. Calvert; for G. and J. Robinson; and Hookham and Ebers), 1803.

**M75 F33 S108 A31 T139. Corvey.**

London residential; English provincial.

Aristocratic (headed royal dukes and Duchess of York); military.

Radcliffian Gothic.

Dedication, dated London, Dec 1803, presents author 'as an officer's widow, [and] as a lineal descendant of soldiers'.

(48) *Kerwald Castle, or, Memoirs of the Marquis de Solanges*: Translated from the French [of Jean-Auguste Jullien], by Mrs. Barnby, author of *The Rock*; or, *Alfred and Anna: A Scottish Tale*, 2 vols, Maidstone (Printed for the author by D. Chalmers, and sold by Wilkie, Symonds, and Hurst, Paternoster Row, London), [1803].

**M141 F39 U6 S186 A6 T192. BL.**

Maidstone; Kent; Essex; Norfolk.

Townsppeople of Maidstone (1 wine-merchant); military personnel (depôt at Maidstone); 2 book societies.

Pre-revolutionary France; epistolary.

Trans. of *Mémoires du Marquis de Solanges* (Amsterdam, 1766).

Further edn: 1804 (Corvey—a Minerva reissue, but no list).

(49) *Miranda; or, the Mysterious Stranger: A Novel*; dedicated, by permission, to the Rt. Hon. Viscountess Bulkeley, by Esther Holsten, author of “Ernestina”, 2 vols, London (Printed by J. Cundee, for M. Jones), 1803.

**M66 F61 S127 A18 T145. Corvey.**

London and suburban (Cheapside, Whitechapel; Lambeth, Kennington).

Headed Duchess of York and Duke of Cumberland: mostly untitled follow (4 Dr).

Sentimental domestic: imperilled heroine.

Dedication effusively acknowledges ‘high patronage’.

(50) *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle: A Romance*, by Anne Ker, 2 vols, London (Printed by D. N. Shury, for the Author, and sold by Crosby and Co.), 1803.

**M5 F23 S28 A2 T30. Corvey.**

No locations.

High aristocratic female (headed Princess of Wales); 14 untitled follow.

Sentimental melodrama, with some Radcliffean terror elements; pre-Revolutionary France.

#### 1804

(51) *Casualties: A Novel*, by Mary Goldsmith, author of *The Comedy* entitled *She Lives!* or, *The Generous Brother*, 2 vols, London (Printed by Roden and Lewis; for T. Hughes; and sold by Jordan Hookham; Harding; Lloyd; and J. Ridgeway), 1804.

**M6 F21 ST27 A3 T30. BL; Corvey lacks list.**

No locations.

High aristocratic female (headed Duchess of Devonshire), followed by 10 commoners (women first).

Moral sentimental domestic.

Dedication to the Honorable Mrs A. M. Egerton. T.p. carries the following statement: ‘No Subterranean Caverns—Haunted Castles—Enchanted Forests—Fearful Visions—Mysterious Voices—Supernatural Agents—Bloody Daggers—Dead Men’s Skulls—Mangled Bodies—Nor Marvellous Lights, form any Part of the present Work; but will be found, on Perusal, to arise out of Natural Incidents.’

(52) *Galerio and Nerissa, including Original Correspondence, the History of an English Nobleman and Lady; several Poetical Effusions, and a Few Domestic Anecdotes*, [by John Gale Jones], 1 vol., London (Printed for the author, and sold by Messrs. Jordan and Maxwell), 1804.

**M146 F16 S162 A34 T196. BL.**

London residential (Soho, Chelsea, Bloomsbury, Strand etc.); 3 Americans.

Professional (medical, naval administrative); trade (2 coachmakers, 1 engraver, 1 linen draper).

Pastoral allegory.

‘Price four shillings in boards’ on t.p.

## 1805

(53) *The Adventures of Cooroo, a Native of The Pellew Islands*, by C. D. L. Lambert, 1 vol., Norwich (Printed and sold by Stevenson and Matchett; sold also by Scatcherd and Letterman, London, and all other Booksellers), [1805].

**M67 F14 U4 S85 A1 T86. BL; Corvey lacks list.**

Presumably local Norwich; one London address.

Smattering of minor aristocracy; predominantly Esq. and Mr; 3 book clubs.

Trans-cultural satire: Cooroo in England.

Dedication to Lady Harriet Berney.

## 1806

(54) *Delmore, or Modern Friendship: A Novel*, by Mrs. [D.] Roberts, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by R. Faulder), 1806.

**M79 F30 S109 A1 T110. Corvey.**

No locations.

(Whig?) aristocracy (headed Princes of Wales and Duchess of York); 13 MPs.

Domestic moral; fashionable characters.

Dedication to the Princess of Wales, expressing ‘vast debt of obligation’, signed D. Roberts, Clarence Place. Subscribers inc. ‘Mrs. Opie’. ‘Additional Subscribers’ (7 more names, included above) at end of vol. 3.

Further edn: 1809.

(55) *The Strangers; a Novel*, by Mrs. Norris, author of *Second Love*, &c., 3 vols, London (Printed by W. Glendinning; and published for the Author, by Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe), 1806.

**M110 F131 S241 A16 T257. Urbana.**

About 20% Irish (places or militia affiliations); remainder without locations.

Military; some East India men; English sponsors (inc. Duchess of Devonshire).

Moral social domestic.

‘To The Reader’, dated London, Apr 1806: this states that the Duchess of Devonshire had accepted the dedication, before her recent death; it also describes the author as being separated ‘from her native country, and consequently from friends and connections’ (p. vi).

Further edn: 1807 as *Olivia and Marcella; or, the Strangers* (Corvey—a reissue by B. Crosby and Co., without list).

(56) *The Thatched Cottage; or, Sorrows of Eugenia: a Novel*, by Sarah [Scudgell] Wilkinson, 2 vols, London (Printed for T. Hughes, by Dewick & Clarke), 1806.

**M59 F95 S154 A40 T194. Corvey.**

No locations.

Royal princesses (4, along with Margravine of Anspach, head list); court and circle. Sentimental domestic; aristocratic figures. Dedication to 'Mrs. [Isabella?] Fielding', signed 10, William-Street, Pimlico, thanking her for 'reiterated favours'. Subscribers inc. Lady Crespigny, Lady Mary Coke, Earl of Pomfret, and 'Mr. Scadgell'.

1807

(57) *Helen; or Domestic Occurrences: A Tale*, [by Augusta Ann Hirst], 2 vols, London (Printed for the author: sold by W. Bent), 1807.

**M 270 F296 U2 S568 A140 T708. Bodleian.**

Sheffield and North East; London; English provincial.

Middle ranks (high proportion Mr/Mrs/Miss); 6 aristocrats only (inc. Countess Fitzwilliam).

Sentimental domestic; epistolary.

Dedication to Countess Fitzwilliam', signed Augusta Ann Hirst, London, 6 Apr 1807.

Further edn: 1808 (Corvey—a reissue by the Minerva Press with the author's name on t.p., but no list).

(58) *The Mysterious Wanderer: A Novel*; dedicated, by permission, to the Right Hon. Lady Elizabeth Spencer, by Sophia Reeve, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, by C. Spilsbury; and sold by Richardson and Son; J. Highley; and Didier and Tebbett), 1807.

**M142 F61 U1 S204 A14 T218. Harvard.**

No locations, but Norfolk preponderance likely.

Spencer family; minor aristocracy and gentry; c. 50 Esq.; otherwise Mr/Mrs/Miss common.

Fashionable sentimental melodrama.

'Advertisement', dated 1 Feb 1807. Dedication to Lady Elizabeth Spencer. Book-Club, Norwich, subscribes.

(59) *A Peep at our Ancestors: An Historical Romance*, by Henrietta Rouviere [afterwards Mosse], author of Lussington Abbey, Heirs of Villeroy, &c, 4 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co.), 1807.

**M38 F8 S/T46. Corvey.**

Dublin and Irish towns; London polite residential.

Irish aristocratic; 5 MPs Dublin; professional and commerce?

Historical (12th-century England).

Frontispiece portrait of the author. Dedication to 'His Grace the late Duke of Leinster', dated London, 1 Oct 1807. 'Address' states that the work intended originally to have appeared (in Dublin) 'by subscription' in Feb 1805, but was deferred through the the death of Duke of Leinster then of the author's mother; the Dublin sponsors had proved better at promises than execution, and the present names are from 'her own private list that she personally received *here*, and which she thinks necessary to subjoin'.

1808

(60) *Alzylia, a Novel*, [by Miss Weimar], 4 vols, London (Printed for the author, by T. Collins; and published by C. Chapple, 1808.

**M49 F52 S/T101. BL.**

No locations.

Minor aristocracy and respectable middle rank (5 MPs, 6 Revds).

Sentimental domestic: highly coloured writing.

(61) *Artless Tales*: by Mrs. Ives Hurry [née Margaret Mitchell], 3 vols, London (Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme), 1808.

**M126 F195 S321 A115 T436. Corvey.**

Hackney; Clapham; East Anglia; Liverpool.

Middle class; 12 Revd; high proportion of 'Mrs' (alone).

Moral domestic, partly in the manner of Amelia Opie (one of the subscribers).

(62) *The British Admiral: A Novel*, by A Naval Officer [Lieut Arnold], London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co.), 1808.

**M21 F3 S/T24. Corvey.**

No locations.

Princess of Wales; the royal Dukes; leading nobility; Covent Garden actors and actresses; also 'Mr, Chapple, 66, Pall Mall, (who is so good as to receive subscriptions)'.  
Social domestic satirical: naval central character.

Dedication 'to Sir Home Popham, Knight, Commander of His Majesty's Squadron at the Glorious Capture of Buenos Ayres, on the 27th of June, 1806', dated 1 May 1808.

(63) *Herbert-Lodge; a New-Forest Story*, by Miss [Ellen Rebecca] Warner, of Bath, 3 vols, Bath (Printed by Richard Cruttwell, St. James's-Street; and sold by Wilkie and Robinson, London), 1808.

**M280 F445 U2 S727 A159 T886. Bristol.**

9 named location (3 London); the remainder presumably Bath-dominated.

Aristocracy (headed Duchess of York) and gentry; high proportion 'Esq.'; 38 Revd; 5 MPs. Family groupings common.

Sentimental domestic: French Revolution scenes and guillotining of high society anti-heroine!

In Preface author mentions 'the latter days of an infirm parent' and 'the sick couch of an only sister'; she hopes to deserve patronage received by 'endeavouring to make her volumes the medium of mental improvement, and moral and religious instruction'. Subscribers inc: Miss J. Baillie; Professor Playfair; W. Roscoe, Esq., and W. Roscoe, jun., Esq. Main list is followed by 'Names sent too late for insertion in the List', p. [xxi]. Imprint of Yale copy differs by reading: '[...] and sold by Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, London, 1808'.

(64) *Ned Bentley, a Novel*, by J[ames] Amphlett, 3 vols, Stafford (Printed by J. Drewry; and published by Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, London), 1808.

**M179 F46 U6 S231 A36 T267. Corvey.**

Staffordshire; Midlands generally; London; Liverpool.

Middle ranks; professional; book club/libraries.

Male picaresque: struggle for survival.

Dedication 'to the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan', stating work to be written 'in the spirit of those principles which you have uniformly approved, and which are characteristic of genuine English society'. Preface, alluding to the irregular manner in which the work was written, dated Stafford, 2 Oct 1808. Subscribers inc. 'Roscoe William, esq. Liverpool'.

(65) *The Village Gentleman, and the Attorney at Law; a Narrative*, by Mrs. [A.] Duncombe, 2 vols, London (Printed for J. Hatchard, Bookseller to Her Majesty), 1808.  
**M21 F33 U2 S/T56. BL.**

No locations.

High aristocratic (18, headed Prince and Princess of Wales, royal Dukes and Princesses); 2 Revd; remainder untitled.

Moral domestic.

Dedication to the the Countess of Albemarle, signed A. Duncombe.

#### 1809

(66) *Edward And Laura: A Novel*; translated from the French, by a Bengal Officer, 2 vols, London (Printed by J. Dean; for R. Ryan), 1809.

**M277 F54 S331 A38 T369. UCLA.**

4 locations only (all Indian).

India army officers (many of junior rank); East India Company officials.

High sentimental.

Trans. of *Les Aventures d'Edouard Bomston* (Lausanne, 1789), itself a trans. of *Begebenheiten Eduard Bomston in Italien* (Altenburg, 1782), by Friedrich August Clemens Werthes. 'The English Translator's Address' (pp.[ix]-xii), dated Camp near Saoronj, 20 May 1807. Text proper ends vol. 2, p. 168; pp. [169]-188, contains 'List of Subscribers'.

#### 1810

(67) *The Officer's Daughter; or, a Visit to Ireland in 1790*, by the daughter [Miss Walsh] of a Captain in the Navy, deceased, 4 vols, London (Printed by Joyce Gold, Shoe Lane), 1810.

**M109 F115 U1 S225 A27 T252. Urbana.**

West Country, especially ports; occasional London; Dublin Castle.

Army and navy; militia; naval administrative.

Sentimental domestic: Irish regional.

Dedication to the Hon. Mrs Fane, offering 'this first effort of my imagination to you'. Note at foot of list apologising for any omissions of names caused by late arrival at the press.

(68) *The Romance of The Highlands*, by Peter Middleton Darling, 2 vols, Edinburgh (Printed by George Ramsay and Co. for the author; and sold by Peter Hill and J. Sutherland; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, London), 1810.

**M124 F13 S137 A2 T139. Corvey.**

Largely Edinburgh (though professional/territorial designations rather than ad-

dresses usually specified).

Legal professional; Scots aristocracy and lairds; tradesmen (9 merchants); 8 circulating library proprietors.

Sentimental melodrama: Highland backdrop.

## 1811

(69) *Glencarron: A Scottish Tale*, by Miss [Sarah] Wigley, 3 vols, London (Printed for Henry Colburn), 1811.

**M50 F37 S87 A15 T102. Corvey.**

No locations.

Aristocratic and gentry (Scottish elements); non-titled.

Scottish historical (medieval): Gothic trace elements.

Dedication to the Marquis of Huntly, thanking him for patronage, signed Sarah Wigley, High Street, Mary-le-bone, 15 May 1811, at beginning of vol. 3; followed by ‘Subscribers’ (inc. ‘Miss Owenson, 2 copies’).

(70) *Julia de Vienne: A Novel*, imitated from the French, by a Lady, 4 vols, London (Printed for Henry Colburn), 1811.

**M27 F16 S/T43. Corvey.**

No locations.

Headed Prince of Wales, royal Dukes and Duchess of York; aristocrats and court.

Sentimental fashionable.

Dedication to the Prince of Wales, introducing ‘this my first attempt’.

(71) *Like Master Like Man: A Novel*, by the late John Palmer, (of the Theatre Royal, in the Haymarket:) son to the deceased and celebrated John Palmer, of the Theatre Royal Drury-Lane, and of the above mention’d theatre; with a Preface, by George Colman, the Younger, 2 vols, London (Printed for the Relief of the Author’s Widow, and sold by W. Earle), 1811.

**M67 F20 S/T87. BL.**

No locations, presumably London

Headed Prince Regent and Duke of York; aristocratical; theatrical/literary.

Domestic melodrama.

Preface, signed ‘George Colman, The Younger’ and dated 10 Apr 1811, describes how the manuscript had been purchased by Mr Earle before the author’s death for 15 guineas, and how the bookseller had agreed to its publication by subscription instead. It also quotes from the proposal and describes how the author’s widow has been living on subscriptions during more than a year’s delay preparing the work. Subscription against names vary between £5.00 and £1.00; 20 names have no amount, pointedly indicating non-payment. Subscribers inc: Thomas Dibdin, Charles Kemble, ‘M. G. Lewis, Esq.’

## 1812

(72) *A Peep at the Theatres! and Bird’s-eye Views of Men in the Jubilee Year! A Novel*, satirical, critical, and moral; by an Old Naval Officer, 3 vols, London (Printed for C.

Chapple), 1812.

**M21 F9 S/T30. Harvard.**

No locations, but presumably London.

List headed by three Dukes (Kent, Marlborough, Bedford); actors and actresses evident amongst commoners.

Fashionable scandal novel.

'Prefatory address 'To the Subscribers', dated Pall-Mall, Feb 1812. Individual dedications to the Prince Regent, vol. 1, to the Duke of York, vol. 2, and to the Duke of Kent, vol. 3. Individual subscribers inc. Mrs Siddons and Charles Kemble.

(73) *Silvanella, or the Gypsy; a Novel*, 4 vols, Gloucester (Printed by Joseph Wood, for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne, Pater-Noster-Row, [London;] Brisley, Stroud; and Washbourn, Gloucester), 1812.

**M99 F88 S187 A162 T349. BL.**

Gloucestershire, with concentration immediately south of Stroud; London and environs; English provincial; Bath.

Headed Dukes of Clarence and Cumberland; local aristocracy; clergy; 70 'Esq'.

Sentimental domestic melodrama.

Poem after t.p., 'To a Friend': 'These lines were contributed by a literary friend of the Authoress.' List in BL copy includes some ms additions (included in above count).

Further edn: 1812 (Corvey—a reissue by A. K. Newman, with list).

### 1813

(74) *The Faithful Irishwoman, or the House of Dunder*, by Captain S[parow] S. De Renzy, 2 vols, London (Printed by J. Gillet; and sold by Sherwood, Neely, and Jones), 1813.

**M34 F33 S67 A11 T78. UCLA.**

No locations.

Smartish aristocracy; the surviving Crespignys *en bloc*; 3 jointly 'Hon. and Rev.'.

Domestic sentimental: Irish dimension.

Dedication to 'my Uncle, Sir Solomon Dunder, Bart.' signed 'Your affectionate Nephew, S. S. Dunder'.

(75) *Jane De Dunstanville; or, Characters as They Are: A Novel*, by Isabella Kelly, author of Madeline, Abbey of St. Asaph, Avondale Priory, Joscelina, Eva, Ruthinglenne, Modern Incident, Baron's Daughter, Secret, Literary Information, French Grammar, Poems, &c. &c., 3 vols, London (Published for the author, by J. Souter; and sold by Mr. Mozley, Gainsborough; Messrs. Wilson and Co. York; Messrs. Doig and Sterling, Edinburgh), 1813.

**M28 F29 S57 A32 T89. Urbana.**

Presumably most London.

Military professional; minor aristocratic.

Sentimental melodrama.

Dedication 'to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales', signed Isabella Hedgeland, York Place, Brompton, 1 Sept 1813. Subscribers inc: M. G. Lewis, General/Mrs Souter Johnstone (5 copies each).

Further edn: 2nd edn 1819 (Corvey—a reissue by A. K. Newman, with list).

(76) *The Lady of Martendyke; an Historical Tale of the Fifteenth Century*, by a Lady [?Mary Phibbs], London (Published for the author, by Henry Colburn), 1813.

**M157 F170 S327 A25 T352. Corvey.**

No locations: Bath subscription likely.

Polite society: middling aristocracy, gentry, MPs, Revds, medical doctors.

Historical (late Medieval European), with religious element.

Dedication 'to the Most Noble the Marchioness of Ely', dated Laura House, Bath, Dec 1812. Preface stresses concern for historical veracity, and mixture of confidence and diffidence engendered by such 'a catalogue replete with rank, talents, and virtue'. Subscribers inc: Miss Edgeworth, 2 copies; Mrs Hannah More—both names in italics.

(77) *Liberality and Prejudice, a Tale*, by Eliza A. Coxe, 3 vols, London (Printed by E. & H. Hodson, Cross-Street, for B. & R. Crosby & Co.), 1813.

**M133 F21 S154 A9 T163. BL.**

No locations.

Headed Princess of Wales, Duchess of York and royal Dukes; Whig aristocracy; 22 MPs.

Domestic social; political satire of electioneering; enlightened Whig view.

Subscribers inc. D. Ricardo, Esq.

(78) *The Prior Claim: A Tale*, by Mrs. [Maria] Iliff, 2 vols, London (Published for the author, by J. Burch), 1813.

**M70 F115 S185 A7 T192. Corvey.**

South London suburban; English provincial (especially Nottinghamshire).

Headed Duke of Kent: thereafter Miss/Mrs prevalent.

Domestic moralistic (Amelia Opie-like).

Dedication. 'To my Friends! And who, it may be asked, are they?', dated London, 4 Mar 1813: 'It is the first, and will probably be the last attempt of the kind which I shall intrude upon the Public.'

#### 1814

(79) *Conduēt: A Novel*, 3 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva-Press, for A. K. Newman and Co.), 1814.

**M109 F144 U2 S255 A40 T295. Corvey.**

No locations.

Middle ranks: professional; minor aristocracy; 14 Revd.

Domestic moralistic.

'To the Subscribers and the Public', in which author states that the work 'never would have been published, but for the benefit of her seven, now orphan, children'.

Subscribers inc. Sir Eyre Coote, K.B M.P.[ex-governor of Jamaica]. Main list followed by 'Subscribers' Names omitted in the Alphabetical Order'.

(80) *The Neville Family; an Interesting Tale, Founded on Facts*, by A Lady [M. Despourrins], 3 vols, Cork (Printed for the Author, by W. West & Co.), 1814.

**M152 F177 U1 S330 A89 T419. National Library of Ireland.**

Southern Ireland (Kinsale and Cork predominate).

Anglo-Irish aristocracy and gentry; post-holders and military (62nd regiment); pro-

fessional and clergy (19 Revd); fair proportion of Mrs and Miss.  
 Military male leads; moral domestic melodrama, with some epistolary elements;  
 West Indies and Dublin frame plot.  
 Dedication to Lady Kinsale, signed M. Despourrins.  
 Further edn: London 1815 (Corvey—a reissue, without list).

## 1815

(81) *The Life of a Recluse*, [by Ann? Gibson], 2 vols, Newark, (Printed and sold by M. Hage, Stodman-Street: and may be had of all Country Booksellers; and of Messrs. Longman, Hurst, and Co. Paternoster Row), 1815.

**M286 F119 S405 A22 T427. Harvard.**

East Midlands.

Headed 11 (local) aristocrats; country gentry/clergy (alphabetically first); Mr/Mrs/Miss (c. 75%).

First-person trials and tribulations.

'Address to Subscribers', signed A. Gibson, Screveton, near Bingham, 1 Aug 1815.

Last words present novel as 'the *Offspring of Necessity*'.

Further edn: London 1817 (Corvey—a reissue by A. K. Newman, with list).

(82) *Memoirs of the Villars Family; or, the Philanthropist: A Novel*, by Harriett Waller Weeks, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and published by C. Chapple), 1815.

**M11 F60 U2 S73 A25 T98. Corvey.**

London residential; Lincolnshire.

Respectable middle-rank female.

Moral Christian domestic.

Preface describes as 'calculated to answer a more important end than the dissipation of an idle hour': 'the cause of morality was her principal aim'.

(83) *System and No System; or, the Contrast*, by Maria Benson, author of *Thoughts on Education*, 1 vol., London (Printed for J. Hatchard, Bookseller to the Queen; and sold by W. A. Justice, Howden), 1815.

**M42 F54 U1 S97 A29 T126. Aberdeen.**

Yorkshire (Humberside, especially centred on Howden).

Headed Viscountess Pollington (12 copies); local gentry; respectable middle class; clergy.

Moral evangelical domestic.

Dedication 'to the Honourable Viscountess Pollington'. Preface signed Ousefleet

Grange. 'List of Subscribers' is headed by an apology for 'a small addition' to the price owing to 'a considerable advance [...] in the price of paper'. Subscribers inc.

'Rev. Legh Richmond, Rector of Turvey, Bedfordshire'. Preface advises 'young female readers' not to look for 'a *Novel*', 'the work in question being destitute of all the concomitants which usually grace the page of fiction'.

## 1816

(84) *Angelion, or the Wizard in Elis: A Romance*, taken from the German [of Karl Friederich von Benkowitz], by Maria de Geisweiler, 3 vols, London (Published by Sherwood, Neely, and Jones; and Tabart and Co.), 1816.

**M72 F95 U8 S175 A69 T244. BL.**

No locations, presumably most London.

Occasional aristocrat; middle ranks; London booksellers; German connections.

Trans. of *Angelion, der Zauberer in Elis* (Berlin, 1798–1800). Multiples bought by several leading publishing houses.

(85) *Melmoth House: A Novel*, by Mrs. J. Jenner, 3 vols, London (Printed for the author, and sold by G. Austin, Battle; sold also by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, No. 47; Walker and Edwards, No. 44 Paternoster Row, and R. Nunn, No. 48 Great Queen Street), 1816.

**M92 F144 U1 S237 A21 T258. Corvey.**

London residential; Sussex (Hastings, Battle); English provincial (mostly southern). Respectable middle class; naval and military.

Sentimental domestic; epistolary.

Introduction states author to have long passed her youth, and ‘not likely to trespass again on their indulgence’. ‘List of Subscribers’ at beginning of vol. 3. Subscribers inc. ‘Porter, Miss. Cottage, Long Ditton’.

(86) *Spanish Tales*, translated from Le Sage, and selected from other authors, by Mrs. Frederick Layton, 3 vols, London (Printed for Hatchard; Barrett, Bath; and Deighton, Cambridge), 1816.

**M69 F32 U3 S104 A5 T109. BL.**

No locations.

Headed Princess Charlotte of Wales; aristocracy; clergy and professional; 7 MPs. Compilation (inset stories).

Half-title to vol. 1 states: ‘Published for the Benefit of Distressed Clergymen with a large Family’. Dedication to the Earl of Buchan, signed Jemima Layton. ‘List of Subscribers’ (78 names) and ‘List of Benefactors’ (26 listed) at beginning of vol. 1: these are conflated above. Subscribers include Thomas Johnes, Hannah More, William Roscoe, and Samuel Whitbread; benefactors include Walter Scott.

(87) *The Wanderings of a Goldfinch; or, Characteristic Sketches in the Nineteenth Century*, [by Mary Anne M’Mullan], 1 vol., London (Printed by W. Clowes; for Messrs. Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Co.; T. Egerton; and E. Lloyd), 1816.

**M240 F74 S314 A46 T360. BL.**

Few locations, but Thames estuary focus implicit: Greenwich (4), Deptford (1), Sheerness (1).

Royalty and high aristocracy; naval (50 RN); eminent professionals; literary figures. Satirical picaresque.

Dedication ‘to her Royal Highness the Princess Mary’, signed ‘Mary Anne M’Mullan’, London, 22 Apr 1816. Subscription list headed ‘Previous to Publication Copies of this Work were ordered by’. Subscribers inc: Joanna Baillie, John Galt, Sir William Knighton, Mrs Opie, and William Wordsworth.

1817

(88) *Maria, a Domestic Tale*: Dedicated by permission to Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Saxe-Coburg, by Catherine St. George, 3 vols, London (Published by J. Porter, Bookseller to Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte), 1817.

**M80 F112 3U S195 A41 T236. Urbana.**

No locations.

Headed by Princess Charlotte and Prince of Saxe-Coburg (husband); followed by royal Dukes and Duchesses; respectable commoners.

Domestic sentimental moral; epistolary.

Dedication signed Catherine St. George, Douglas, Isle of Man, 4 June 1817.

#### 1818

(89) *Dunsany: An Irish Story*, 2 vols, London (Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones), 1818.

**M63 F70 S133 A36 T169. Corvey.**

West Midlands (especially Shropshire); Wales; SW England.

Country gentry; naval and military officers.

Irish hero's adventures in British society: Edgeworthian.

#### 1819

(90) *Count Glarus of Switzerland: Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry*, by W[illiam] S. Wickenden, the Bard of the Forest; dedicated, by permission, to Edward Jenner, Esq. M.D.F.R.S., 1 vol., Gloucester (Printed by J. Roberts, Herald Office; sold by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster Row, London; Barry and Son, Bristol; and all other Booksellers), [1819].

**M100 F32 S132 A8 T140. Aberdeen.**

Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean; London; Bath and Oxford.

Male professional (medical, legal); country residential.

Historical fable.

Dedication dated Dean-Forest, Apr 1819.

(91) *The Sisters of St Gothard: A Tale*, by Elizabeth Cullen Brown, 2 vols, London (Printed at the Minerva Press for A. K. Newman and Co.), 1819.

**M28 F35 S63 A14 T77. Corvey.**

No locations (except 1 at Boulogne, 1 Winchester).

Random alphabetical list: naval officers (2 Vice Admirals, 3 Captains RN) most prominent feature.

Sentimental Swiss pastoral.

#### 1821

(92) *Bleddyn; a Welch National Tale*, by W[illiam] S. Wickenden, the Bard of the Forest, author of "Count Glarus of Switzerland", 2 vols, London (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy), 1821.

**M82 F12 S94 A2 T96. National Library of Wales.**

Gloucestershire, especially Forest of Dean (Lydney, Newnham etc.).

Country residential; clergymen (11 Revd) and professional.

Welsh historical (Civil war period).

Subscribers inc. Edward Jenner.

Another edn: 1 vol. 1821 (Corvey—with imprint of C. Chapple, from the same sheets, but without list).

## 1822

(93) *Tales, by an Unwilling Author*, 2 vols, Dublin (Richard Milliken, Bookseller to his Majesty, his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, and the University of Dublin), 1822.

**M34 F30 S64 A43 T107. Harvard.**

Presumably mostly Irish; 2 Bath.

Irish titled and ecclesiastical.

Domestic melodramatic, and self-deflatory.

'To the Reader', signed 'Necessity', dated Feb 1818. 'Subscribers' Names' end of vol.

2.

Further edn: reissued London 1825 (Corvey, with list).

## 1823

(94) *Crates and Hipparchia: A Tale, in a Series of Letters*; translated from the German of Christoph M[artin] Wieland, by Charles Richard Coke, 1 vol., Norwich (Printed by and for John Stacy, and sold in London, by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy; G. and W. B. Whittaker; Harvey and Darton; W. Wright; C. H. Baldwin; and Henry Mozley, Derby), 1823.

**M231 F17 U10 S258 A49 T307. BL.**

Norfolk (Yarmouth, Gorleston; presumably most Norwich).

Professional, middle class.

Trans. of *Krates und Hipparchia* (Stuttgart, 1805). Subscribers inc. Mrs Opie (2 copies).

## 1824

(95) *Adolphe and Selanie, or, the Power of Attachment: A Moral Tale, Founded on Facts*, by Henry L[eopold] Dubois, teacher of French language, Edinburgh, 1 vol., Edinburgh (John Carfrae & Son; and Longman & Co., London), 1824.

**M318 F30 S348 A42 T390. BL.**

Nearly all Scottish: mostly Edinburgh and environs.

Edinburgh legal establishment; other professional; clergy and academical.

Story set in France, period of Louis XVI.

Subscribers inc: Sir Walter Scott, Francis Jeffrey, J. G. Lockhart, and John Galt.

(96) *The Faithful Servant; or, the History of Elizabeth Allen: A Narrative of Facts*, [by Amelia Bristow], 1 vol., London: (printed for Francis Westley), 1824.

**M32 F114 U7 S153 A100 T253. Bodleian.**

No locations.

Predominantly Mrs/Miss; 7 aristocrats (all female); clergy.

Evangelical didactic (exemplary story for servants).

Further edns: 2nd edn 1824; 4th edn 1832 as *Elizabeth Allen; or, the Faithful Servant*, 5th edn 1836.

(97) *Leave of Absence*, by the Late Major [Thomas Ajax] Anderson, 1 vol., Cardiff (Printed by R. Lloyd, and sold by W. Bird; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London), 1824.

**M63 F13 S76 A92 T168. Urbana.**

Cardiff and environs; smattering of London and other towns/cities.  
 South Wales gentry; military and professional; industry and navigational.  
 Military adventures and reminiscences.  
 Subscribers inc. Marquess of Bute, 15 copies.

1827

(98) *Tales; Mournful, Mirthful, and Marvellous*, by Mrs.[Sarah] Wilmot Wells, of Margate, 3 vols, London (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green; and J. Denne, Margate), 1827.

**M90 F20 U5 S115 A4 T119. Corvey.**

Margate and Ramsgate; London.  
 Duchess of Kent (under Kent); 4 other aristocrats (also in capitals); otherwise untitled (1 'organist').  
 Mixed bag tales.  
 'Apologetical Preface' signed Sarah Wilmot Wells, Paradise Place, Dane Hill, Margate, Sept 1827. This refers to the author's 'first and unvizored intrusion into the literary hive', and likens the 'pecuniary necessity' compelling her to that of the French emigrées after the French Revolution.

1828

(99) *Contraſt*, by Regina Maria Roche, author of *The Children of the Abbey*; *Discarded Son*; *Vicar of Lansdown*; *Bridal of Dunamore*; *Tradition of the Castle*; *Castle Chapel*, &c. &c., 3 vols, London (A. K. Newman & Co.), 1828.

**M143 F53 U8 S204 A26 T230. Corvey.**

London (polite residential and suburban villas); West Country (11 Falmouth); other English provincial.  
 42 aristocrats (inc. 5 royal, heading list); high clergy (6 bishops); high-ranking military, several retired; 79 'Esq.'  
 Sentimental melodrama, strong religious dimension.  
 Dedication to her Royal Highness the Princess Augusta, pointing to earlier royal support and present exigencies, dated London, 10 Apr 1828. Subscribers inc: 'L.E.L.'; Robert Southey; William Wordsworth.

(100) *Emma de Lissau; a Narrative of Striking Vicissitudes, and Peculiar Trials; with Explanatory Notes, Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Jews*, by the author of "Sophia de Lissau," "Elizabeth Allen," &c. &c [Amelia Bristow], 2 vols, London (Published by T. Gardiner and Son; sold by Hatchard and Son; Simpkin and Marshall, and all other Booksellers), 1828.

**M62 F143 U3 S208 A75 T283. Corvey.**

London most likely.  
 Middling aristocratic; clergy; commoners (Mrs/Miss dominant).  
 Didactic evangelical: Jewish heroine converted (matching the author).  
 Preface dated Pimlico, 30 May 1828. Subscribers inc: Mrs Hannah More; Miss Jane Porter; Miss Anna Maria Porter.  
 Further edns: 2nd edn 1829; 3rd edn 1830; 4th edn 1837; 5th edn 1841; 6th edn 1847.

(101) *The History of a French Dagger; an anecdote of the Revolution*, translated from the French, by Henry L[eopold] Dubois, late surgeon of Cavalry in the Imperial Army, 2 vols, London (Printed for the author, by G. Duckworth), 1828.

M300 F21 U1 S322 A15 T337. BL.

London residential addresses (Chelsea; West End; City; Bloomsbury).

Medical (74 surgeons; 30 M.D.), military professional.

Picaresque anti-revolutionary satire.

Dedication ‘To My Subscribers’. The translated story [original not discovered] depicts ‘in lively colours, such barbarous transactions as were unfortunately too common during the days of *terror* in Paris’ (p. iv).

(102) *The Will; or, Twenty-One Years*, by Mrs. Ann Rolfe, author of “Miscellaneous Poems for a Winter’s Evening;” “Choice And No Choice”, 1 vol., Saxmundham (Printed and sold by L. Brightly), 1828.

M165 F22 S187 A8 T195. Bodleian.

All with locations, mostly East Anglian towns (Ipswich, Saxmundham, Bungay, Colchester etc.).

Middle class professional (5 booksellers, 3 surgeons, 3 solicitors, 1 schoolmaster, 1 confectioner!).

Moral domestic melodrama, high society characters.

Prefatory ‘Author, Reviewer, and Reader’, in the form of a dialogue. The text is in small print, and in word length matches a contemporary three-volumed novel. 

## NOTES

1. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, edd. H. J. C. Grierson et al., 12 vols (London: Constable 1932–37), 1, 163.
2. *Ibid.*, IV, 461. It is noticeable that the Abbotsford Library contains Hogg’s poetry but not his fiction.
3. ‘It is for the advantage of the present generation, that most respectable Writers have undertaken the task of Novelists. A few years since, heroines were disciples of Mary Wollstonecraft, and more suited to the Magdalen Asylum than companions for the drawing-room’ (Preface, 1, viii).
4. ‘I certainly translated the little work which is now submitted to your judgment, with a view to pecuniary profit—it would be vanity to deny it’ (‘Dedication. To My Subscribers’, 1, [iii]). Compare Scott in 1802: ‘you may hold me acquitted of the vile vanity of wishing to hold myself forth as despising to reap any profit’ (*Letters*, 1, 163).
5. P. D. Garside, ‘Jane Austen and Subscription Fiction’, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1987), 175–88.
6. See W. Roberts, ‘Jane Austen and Mrs Sherwood’, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 Nov 1934, p. 780. The use of ‘Miss’ in this subscription points to the possibility that Cassandra, the elder sister, was the nominal subscriber.
7. Yale University Center for British Art holds a copy (c. 1800) of the following one sheet proposal: ‘The authoress of “The mystic cottager” and “Observant pedestrian” begs leave to inform [blank] she is publishing, by subscription, a novel entitled *The victims of error*, in three volumes, interspersed with poetry; and shall esteem it a favour to receive any commands he may please to honour her with, by directing a line for C. L. No. 98, Royal Exchange, where the subscription-lists are now opened, and orders punctually attended to.’ The same (still anonymous)

- author went on to publish at least three more novels, ending with *Human Frailities* (1803); but *The Victims of Error*, at least under this title, apparently never came to fruition. Another instance is found in an advertisement in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 June 1819, for subscriptions to 'The Heiress of the Abbey', by Elizabeth Gest of Salisbury; again, no such published work has been traced.
8. For example, Edward Rose, Seaman, in *The Sea Devil or, Son of a Bellows-Mender* (Plymouth Dock, 1811), whose Preface pointedly notes the absence of a list, and the likelihood consequently of greater criticism of the narrative with its plebeian hero: 'for who will not read, and reading admire, a book patronized by Lord A. B. C. D. and other equally celebrated leaders of taste and fashion' (1, vi).
  9. 'During the eighteenth century there were increasing numbers of much smaller local publications, including particularly text books, sermons and collections of poetry': F. J. G. Robinson and P. J. Wallis, *Book Subscription Lists: A Revised Guide* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Harold Hill & Son, 1975), Introduction, p. ii.
  10. *A Check-List of Eighteenth-Century Books Containing Lists of Subscribers, incorporating exploitations of the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue on Blaise*, compiled by R. C. Alston, F. J. G. Robinson, and C. Wadham (Newcastle: Averro, 1983).
  11. See Garside, 'Jane Austen and Subscription Fiction', p. 177.
  12. *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, general editors Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schöwlerling, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The titles not previously noted (and not described in the present Checklist) can be found under the following numbers: 1780: 13, 1785: 20, 1785: 32, 1786: 21, 1786: 39, 1788: 21, 1788: 73, 1789: 38A; 1790: 21, 1790: 34, 1790: 66, 1790: 70, 1791: 16, 1791: 31, 1791: 35, 1791: 36, 1791: 61, 1792: 21, 1792: 49, 1793: 6, 1793: 29, 1793: 34, 1793: 36, 1794: 36, 1794: 55, 1796: 33, 1796: 39, 1797: 3, 1797: 8, 1797: 30, 1797: 47, 1798: 69, 1799: 4, 1799: 50, 1799: 53, 1799: 62.
  13. See Garside, 'Jane Austen and Subscription Fiction', p. 177.
  14. *Book Subscription Lists: Extended Supplement to the Revised Guide by P. J. Wallis*, completed and edited by Ruth Wallis (Newcastle upon Tyne: Phibbs, 1996).
  15. An instance is provided by Sarah Taylor's *Glenalpin, or the Bandit's Cave*, 3 vols (London, 1828), which contains a 'Preface addressed to the Subscribers', signed Sarah Taylor, 7 April 1828. Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers advertised for sale (Catalogue XCV, Item 1099) a copy with a vi-pp. subscribers' list in vol. 2, but no such list is found in the rare Corvey copy.
  16. The preliminaries to Eliza Frances Robertson's *Destiny: or, Family Occurrences* (1804), for example, include the following noticed headed 'CARD': 'The Author presents most respectful Thanks to those Ladies and Gentlemen who did her the Honor of subscribing for this Work; but being few in number, and some, from a Wish to conceal their Benevolence, having forbid their Names to appear, a List of Subscribers is omitted.' Eliza Robertson was imprisoned for debt, and died shortly afterwards in the Fleet Prison. Another instance is found the Preface (pp. [3]–4) to Amelia Bristow's *Sophia de Lissau* (1826): 'The Author intended to prefix a List of the Subscribers, but as it was found difficult to procure the Names correctly, and many of her immediate Friends requested that their Names might not appear, it is omitted; though she would have been proud to record the distinguished names that have been obtained.'
  17. This relatively unknown Mrs Duncombe should not be confused, though the mistake has been made, with the prolific poet and artist Susanna Duncombe (1725–1812), whose husband's Christian name was John.

18. Other authors whose subscription novel was followed by a larger commercial output include: Anna Maria Mackenzie (Entry 1); Richard Sickelmore (22); Emily Clark (24); Anne Ker (31); and, of course, Mary (Butt) Sherwood (12). Henrietta Rouviere Mosse's *A Peep at our Ancestors* (59), the third of her novels by date of publication, was actually projected first, though delayed as a result of difficulties with the subscription.
19. 'It may not be uninteresting to the *feeling* and *compassionate* to say, that the anxiety of his mind in wishing to complete it [...] brought on so serious an illness previous to his decease, that it stopped the progress necessary for the completion of the work' (*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 11 Feb 1797).
20. Jan Fergus and Janice Farrar Thaddeus, 'Women, Publishers, and Money, 1790–1820', *Eighteenth-Century Culture* 17 (1987), 191–207 (p. 193). In a footnote the authors note the possibility that Clark might have gained more through delivering books herself. The papers examined, relating to the dissolution of the partnership of Hookham and Carpenter, survive in the Public Record Office.
21. Mary Champion de Crespigny was married to Claude Champion de Crespigny, an Admiralty official (later baronet), and cultivated a naval and aristocratic circle whose members included the Prince of Wales. She published *The Pavilion: A Novel* (1796) with William Lane. Her name features in numerous subscription lists, including Entries 6, 8, 18, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 56.
22. See Dedication, I, xii. A Minerva Library catalogue of 1814 later identified the author as Lieut. Arnold: see Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939). The same author went on to publish two further novels with the Minerva Press, the second of these, *The Irishmen* (1810), describing him as 'a native officer' (i.e. an Irishman himself).
23. An example of the former is found in the subscription list appended to my own copy of Ann Catharine Holbrook's *Realities and Reflections, in which virtue and vice are contrasted* (2nd edn, 1822). This includes c. 420 names grouped under a number of Midland towns and neighbourhoods.
24. Maurice Couturier, *Textual Communication: A Print-Based Theory of the Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 45–46. For commentary on the subscription method of publication in the eighteenth century, see also James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1770–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 27, 56; and Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) especially pp. 258–85. Amongst individual subscription titles, Frances Burney's *Camilla* has received a fair amount of attention: for a recent example, see Sara Salih, 'Camilla in the Marketplace: Moral Marketing and Feminist Editing in 1796 and 1802', in *Authorship, Commerce and the Public: Scenes of Writing, 1750–1850*, edd. E. J. Clery, Caroline Franklin and Peter Garside (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 120–35.
25. Pioneering work, largely in theoretical terms, can be found in Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); and in Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). William St Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (forthcoming, 2004) is eagerly awaited, and will no doubt add a good deal of fresh evidence.

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# ANNE KER (1766–1821)

## A Biographical and Bibliographical Study

*Rachel Howard*



### I

ENGLISH NOVELIST ANNE KER (PHILLIPS) was born in 1766 and published several works of popular fiction between the years of 1799 and 1817.<sup>1</sup> She was a commercial writer whose desire to sell aligns her with many other female writers of the time. Lacking the literary innovation or coherent morality to be praised by the reviewers or remembered today, the works of authors like Ker represent fiction as it both existed in and influenced its society, subsequently offering valuable insights in to that context. Ker is of additional biographical interest: she seems to have been a determined and outspoken character whose bold opinions on fiction contributed to contemporary debates about women's writing and reading. As becomes apparent through Ker's correspondence with the Royal Literary Fund, her life also exemplifies some of the hardships experienced by female authors of the Romantic period.

Anne Ker was the daughter of John Phillips, a native of Essex who trained as a builder before becoming a noteworthy surveyor of canals.<sup>2</sup> Phillips documented and disseminated his practical work in a series of popular reference books, beginning in the 1790s with *Crosby's Builder's New Price Book* (1790) and *A Treatise on Inland Navigation* (1792), and ending with *A General History of Inland Navigation, Foreign and Domestic* (1809). Phillips appears to have been a man deeply committed to his career and guided by an interest in the progressive potential of the construction of canals that affected his daughter in a number of ways. Ker would claim late in her life that her father's devotion to his work led to a series of expensive endeavours by which the family was left financially embarrassed. In addition, Phillips's perseverance, his visible and vocal participation in society, and his use of print as a means by which to publicise his beliefs, would have a powerful influence on his daughter's character and the way in which she would come to use writing.

By the time of her father's death on 1 December 1813, Anne Ker was thirty-seven and an experienced author. She had been assisted in her fictional output by the connections of the family into which she had married, which was headed by John Ker, the third Duke of Roxburgh, an avid book-collector associated with a number of Whig aristocrats.<sup>3</sup> Of this family and its circle of acquaintance, certain individuals seem to have been especially prominent in influencing Anne Ker's writing, such as Lady Jerningham, wife of the poet and dramatist

Lord Jerningham, the Princess of Wales, Lady Mary Ker, and Lady Gordon, who lived bitterly estranged from her husband.<sup>4</sup> These were some of the women upon whom Ker depended for subscription to her first and fourth novels during the early and vigorously productive years of her writing life from 1799 to 1804. In total, she wrote and published six novels: *The Heiress di Montalde; or, the Castle of Bezanto: A Novel* (1799), *Adeline St Julian; or, the Midnight Hour, a Novel* (1800), *Emmeline; or, the Happy Discovery, a Novel* (1801), *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle. A Romance* (1803), *Modern Faults, a Novel, Founded on Facts* (1804), and *Edric, the Forester: Or, the Mysteries of the Haunted Chamber. An Historical Romance* (1817).

Ker experimented with a number of the genres circulating in the fertile and changing fictional landscape of the early 1800s. The first two of Ker's publications are recognisably Gothic in style and content. *The Heiress di Montalde* (1799) charts the fate of a persecuted heroine amidst a setting of Mediterranean landscapes, dilapidated castles, mysterious villains, and other tropes associated with the Gothic genre prevalent during the 1790s. *The Heiress di Montalde* is described in the *Critical Review* as another 'imitation in Mrs Radcliffe's manner', suggesting its alignment with the style of Gothic commonly authored by women. Owing to its use of suspense, and to its delineation of a supernatural occurrence that eventually finds a rational explanation, this novel may certainly be classed alongside the predominantly female-authored 'terror' branch of the Gothic popularised by Ann Radcliffe. In contrast, *Adeline St Julian* appears a year later and contains a great deal more violence than its predecessor: scenes of physical torture are conveyed whilst the perceived cruelty and irrationality of the Roman Catholic Church is strongly criticised. These inclusions align *Adeline* more with the male Gothic tradition associated with the evocation of horror rather than terror, exemplified in particular by M. G. Lewis's anti-Catholic and contemporaneously notorious novel, *The Monk* (1796). A number of parallels may be drawn between these two texts in order to illustrate their generic proximity. In *Adeline*, Elinor's pregnancy breaches the rules of the Church and leads to her horrific imprisonment at the hands of the offended nuns in a tiny cell. The father of her child dies unjustly and, though she herself is rescued, Elinor's remaining years are unhappy ones. The events of this subsidiary story echo those occurring in the inset story of Agnes in *The Monk*, and the descriptions used by Lewis and Ker—most notably with regard to the way in which Agnes and Elinor are discovered in an emaciated and deranged state—are also strikingly similar.

Ker's third novel *Emmeline* is set in England and marks the writer's departure in 1801 from the Gothic genre. Ker's turn away from such tales of excess and transgression reflects the wider trend in the wake of the Revolutionary decade towards more conservative, domestic fiction that depicted situations and characters more likely to exist in the young female reader's own life and surroundings. In similarity with Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), one of the novels most important in popularising this style, *Emmeline* places a virtuous orphan girl under the care of a less than moral guardian. Like *Belinda*, *Emmeline* must

negotiate the trials of the fashionable world, such as the false friendship of a coquette and the lecherous advances of a libertine, before her virtue and strength are rewarded. With *Modern Faults* in 1804, Ker tries her hand at the yet more serious didactic genre that was an expanding facet of the contemporary literary landscape. This tale, in which a mistreated heroine endures her misfortunes with religious faith and strength, in many ways anticipates the moral and Evangelical fictions that would come to prominence in the 1810s with the publications of Hannah More and Mary Brunton. *Edric the Eorester* (1817), Ker's only work to appear in three volumes, was published over a decade after her last novel and contains a striking mixture of all of the genres previously used by Ker, being a combination of romance, Gothic, and didacticism. Importantly this novel is set in the time of William the Conqueror, and represents Ker's only attempt at the historical style of fiction that was increasingly popular in 1810s.

In keeping with her traversal of generic boundaries, Ker's novels are stylistically various too, making use of a number of distinct narrative techniques. The *Heiress di Montalde*, for example, is a retrospective account in the first person that also contains a layering of narrative histories recounted in the voices of other characters. *Modern Faults*, on the other hand, is a largely epistolary novel, whilst the remaining four texts use an omniscient narrator. This tendency towards fictional pastiche exhibits Ker's desire to take advantage of the plural state of the contemporary literary market, and in this way points towards her leading and most significant characteristic as a writer: her commercialism. Ker did not stand out for her use of a particular style, her artistic greatness, or her moral messages. Rather, like the majority of women novelists of her time, she wrote cheap and, in many ways, formulaic fiction. Owing to this normative status, Ker represents something of a gauge of what was habitually circulated and received amongst the readers of the Romantic period: a plurality of popular and changing fictional styles. Interestingly, a closer inspection of Ker's fiction reveals that the lack of adherence to any strict style, characteristic of such artistically or morally unremarkable writers as herself, seems simultaneously to have lent their novels a looseness of composition that enabled a surprising degree of moral ambiguity.

In many ways, Ker's texts are admissible spaces in which some fairly taboo subjects, such as that of the clandestine or unconventional marriage, are discussed. In *The Heiress di Montalde*, a secret marriage occurs between Sebastian and Adelaide that gains the narrator's, though not the characters' parents', approval. In the same novel the fact that Count di la Rofa is married, admittedly without his knowledge, to two women at once is glossed over as if unimportant. *Adeline St Julian* also sanctions the clandestine marriage and ensuing pregnancy of a woman to a member of the clergy. Like marriage, identity too is not stable in Ker's novels. The manifold instances of disguise and cross-dressing occurring throughout Ker's writing embody an attitude towards social characteristics which is at least liberal and engaged, if not radical and instructive. In *The Heiress di Montalde*, for example, Count Albani dresses as a woman in order to elicit a private interview with Victoria with a view to her seduction. Victo-

ria, however, is actually a man who has for some time been masquerading as a woman. Similarly Correlia, in *The Mysterious Count*, disguises herself as a priest in order to rescue Albert from a prison.

The representation of servants throughout Ker's *oeuvre* may be seen to culminate in a quite radical discourse on social class. A trope of much Gothic fiction sees serving-people identified by a foolish superstition, which, owing to some contrivance of plot, is corrected by their social superiors. Though in one instance Ker represents servants in this customary way, she may frequently be found to portray the lower classes as more rational and moral than their wealthier counterparts. The heroine of *Emmeline* delivers a bold, 'pretty lecture' espousing this notion when she states that 'virtue is not confined to people of rank' (II, 268). Emmeline is not alone amongst Ker's female characters for her independent and vocal nature. Rather, a number of Ker's heroines are involved in industry and commerce, and many live in a family or even a community devoid of men. Anne Ker's novels also explicitly thematise subjects to which those few of her contemporaries eminent for their literary value or consistently moral purpose make only euphemistic reference. For example Matilda in *The Mysterious Count* is open and remorseless with regard to her sexual promiscuity both before and after her marriage, whilst in *Modern Faults* Rosalie discusses the social ill of prostitution at length. What is perhaps most significant about these ambiguities and seeming non-conformities is the fact that they are present in otherwise unremarkable, typical texts. Ker's amalgamation of genres, themes, and styles substantiates the notion that her goal as a writer was popular appeal and commercial success. Her novels may therefore be taken to exemplify the kind written by the majority of female authors at this time. Lacking the artistic merit or coherent morality to be celebrated by the reviewers or remembered today, these were in fact the novels by which the genre would, by the average reader, have been recognised. The content of Ker's fiction reveals, then, that in a standard encounter with the novel the reader would have been presented with a degree of moral flexibility and a range of possible represented worlds.

In addition to reflecting the fictional context of which she was a part, Ker's novels are of considerable biographical import. In particular, the mode of transmission dominating Ker's *oeuvre* reveals something of this writer's lifestyle and character. The first point to note is that Ker lacked a consistent publisher for her fictions. One implication of this is that her career was somewhat unstable and precarious, and would have led Ker to adopt a certain inflexibility of character. In addition, the fact that she had to deal with a number of publishers rather than with a single concern would have meant that Ker, through her writing, occupied an independent and visible position in society. To clarify, a number of female authors of these years wrote consistently for large publishing houses such as the Minerva Press. Such publishers provided almost total mediation between the author and the public sphere, taking control of the presentation and dissemination of her novels and, in so doing, make the writer invisible.<sup>5</sup> Conversely Ker alternated between a number of publishers and printers, and so was able to use the preliminary space, normally governed by the publisher,

to make direct addresses to, and to engage with, her readership. The nature of Ker's presence in the text's preliminaries, or more expressly the uses to which she put this space, reveals a controversial instatement in the world of print. Her preliminaries disclose a relationship between Ker and her contemporary reviewers indicative of this woman's significant contribution to the wider Romantic-era struggle regarding the contested status of the female-authored novel.

Despite the fact that the novel was a considerable and largely female-authored genre during the years spanned by Ker's career, the male establishment of the reviewers held the authority to publicly name a text as either worthy or poor.<sup>6</sup> Of the novels in circulation, very few received the praise of the reviewers, and these tended to be works of an expressly conservative or religious inclination. Subsequently, the majority of novels—in other words the novel as most readers would have known it—were denied an identity concordant with their popularity. The politics of this situation are clear: the power wielded by the critics was the power of definition, the power to impose and to police a formulation of worthy, readable literature. Ker's novels were of the very kind despised by the reviewers, who certainly saw her as one of the mass of contemporary writers, 'another wretched imitat(or)' of current trends, as the *New London Review's* piece on *The Heiress di Montlade* puts it.<sup>7</sup> The power relation which the reviewers' participation in novelistic discourse aimed to uphold is certainly discernible in their attitude towards Ker. Patronising criticisms belittling her technical skill and competence as a writer are directed at Ker at every stage of her career. The *New London Review's* account of *The Heiress di Montalde* cites in particular Ker's use of language and 'confused' arrangement of plot as points for disapproval, whilst the reviewer of *Adeline* in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* advises Ker to 'peruse Dilworth, Dyche, Fenning, or some other of our minor grammarians'. Correspondingly, the reviewer of *Modern Faults* in the *Critical Review* says very little about the novel that is not an interpretation of how attractive or not Ker appears to be in her frontispiece portrait. The implication of this very common declaration of women's inferior writing ability is that 'our' grammarians, deserving of the authority which writing can confer, belong to the male establishment, with women writers being on foreign territory. The indication is that in the mainstream, dominant public discourse of which the reviews were a part, women writers' identities were prescribed to them by the male discourse within which they were marginalised.

The deeper fear felt by the critics, one suspects, however, and belied by their vitriolic tone, is that the fictions of Ker, and those of the multitude of female novelists with which she is aligned, in some way eluded and so threatened the male power to define asserted in the comments above. Plagiarism, a want of realism, the lack of a coherent overview, and the absence of a distinct moral message, are amongst the main criticisms of Ker. In these respects, the tendency which the critics name either immoral or 'bad' art is clearly the tendency to combine popular styles and values. The *Anti-Jacobin Review's* version of *Adeline* makes this explicit when it refers to Ker's intertextuality and ambiguous message as 'monstrous', a term suggesting an excess which cannot be incorporated

by the mainstream terminology. As there is nothing intrinsically base about such pastiche as a way of writing, the reason behind the reviewers' attempts to silence generically mixed texts can be seen to lie in the capacity of such works for independent self-definition. The role of the reviewers was to assert and to maintain the gendered power relations of society in which definitions are generated from the male discourse. The threat of novels such as Ker's would seem to be that they could exist and flourish outside the framework of the male reviewers and the masculine perspective.

The preliminaries constitute the space revealing the degree to which the author accepts and defers to the male standards. Consequently, Ker's prefatory material is decisive. Many prefaces addressed by women writers of Ker's era exhibit a deference to the opinions of the critics. Correspondingly many publishers encouraged their authors to write anonymously and to refrain from subscription, as the use of a full name on the title page and an open desire to sell were considered indecorous for a woman in this society. In her preliminaries, however, Anne Ker is both scathing and dismissive of the critics with whom many similarly situated authors sought to ingratiate themselves. As we have seen, Ker's first two novels were disparaged by the reviewers. Yet, rather than attempting to compensate for the negative impression created by these works, Ker's remarks in the preface to *Emmeline*, her third novel, exhibit a decided disregard the male-defined conventions of female authorship. In the 'Dedication to Lady Jerningham' (I, iii–iv), her sponsor, Ker aligns her fiction with the mass of other novels which have 'in general' met with a 'favorable reception' and so are, despite the critics' view, worthy.<sup>8</sup> This inflation of the importance of the general, mainly female, public, continues in the subsequent address 'To the Public' (I, v–viii). Here, Ker names the critics 'devouring watchmen' and derides the principles of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* as a 'well known shame'. She also argues that the critics are corrupt, being open to having their 'mouths crammed with a bribe'. She closes by criticising the gender bias that results in fiction known to be 'guided by the hand of a female' being certain to receive a negative review.

More important than the distinct boldness of this attack on the critics, though, is Ker's simultaneous exclusion of them. By describing *Emmeline* as this 'wonderful, absurd, improbable, romantic, *something* which I have written', Ker is mocking the *Anti-Jacobin's* quibbling over the terms by which fiction ought to be identified. This mockery implies the inapplicability of the male critic's yardstick of values to the realm of the female-controlled novel, and in this way undermines the validity of their presence in the novel. Indeed, in her 'Address to the Public', Ker states that she writes 'in conformity to the pleasure of the times. It is to my patronizers, and to the generous public I appeal, and not to those contemptuous open-mouthed devouring critics'. The important people from whom to seek approval in the sphere of the production and consumption of the novel, then, are those providing the funding: the female sponsor and the female readership. Indeed, Ker's gesture of refusing to address either the 'Dedication' or 'To the Public' to the critics to whom she refers powerfully expresses

bypassing and exclusion of them from the definition of the novel. Throughout her writing career, Ker refuses to either solicit the approval of the critic or to express acquiescence to his definitions. The prefatory space reveals that Ker's principal goal was to sell. The fact that two of her novels contain full subscription lists in the preliminaries, that two contain advertisements for subsequent works, and that all list their preceding works, would have given further impetus to the impression made on the reader that the novels they were reading were commodities. A final and telling point to note in the context of Ker's preliminaries is that the opening of *Edric the Forester* contains an unusual poem, entitled 'A Ker-ish Trick', by Ker's husband John Ker. Perhaps aiming to elicit sympathy from the reader, this account of the family's misfortunes reveals the ease with which Ker, in contrast to contemporary views on decorum, was prepared to expose her private life. When considered together, Ker's preliminaries reveal her espousal of a theory of the novel as a commercial enterprise, creating a female space of amusement distinct from the male critics' view of worthy literature, that problematised the broader male social monopoly on definitions.

With the brightest and most prolific period of her writing career over, Ker's life altered greatly. Throughout her later years she suffered from financial hardships and debilitating illnesses to which her several appeals to the Royal Literary Fund, consisting in a correspondence of six applications over fourteen months, testify.<sup>9</sup> In the first of her pleas, dated 21 August 1820, Ker's complaint is that she is 'in want of bread to exist' due to undergoing 'unforeseen accidents in business' and 'that dreadful complaint the gout'. She goes on to state that her 'embarrassments and distress cannot be sufficiently explained by letter', but nonetheless appeals to 'the feeling hearts of the Gentlemen of this Benevolent Fund'. This representation of her dire circumstances earns Ker the payment of £5 for which, on 24 August 1820, she sends a letter of gratitude and a complimentary copy of her most recently published novel, *Edric the Forester* (1817). On 25 November 1820 a similar application is made by Ker: here, we learn of her intention to take up an offer of paid employment in the New Year, with the need to buy the clothes necessary for this position providing the main reason for the present request. The rejection of this entreaty, on the grounds that it comes too soon after her initial application, resulted, Ker would claim, in her having been unable to accept the previously mentioned teaching post. This provokes a further application on 2 January 1821. At this stage Ker is fifty-three years of age and argues that she lacks even 'the commonest necessities of life'. She is so afflicted with the gout that she is losing the use of her right hand, and to add to the hardship of the household her husband has also been ill with 'a very severe cold'. Closing this letter, Ker states that she will pray to God for 'a favourable response'. She receives £5 from the Fund, before applying again on 1 May 1821, complaining of an 'abscess in the breast, which the faculty thought a very singular case. The discharge was immense and reduced her to a deplorable state'. Owing to this illness, Ker had for some time been confined on medical advice to her house. Wanting sufficient funds, however, she had not been attended by a nurse. Receiving no response to this request,

Ker writes, on 12 June 1821, to remind the Fund of her previous letter and to press for a reply. Again obtaining no answer, she persists in writing one final petition on 27 October 1821, which is declined.

Whilst the content of these letters is informative with regard to the physical and financial circumstances of Ker's life at this point (or at least they indicate Ker's representation of her life), their tone and register also contribute to our understanding of Ker's character as worldly, astute, and bold. When writing of her debts and of having traded her furniture, Ker espouses a knowledge of, and competence in, discussing economic issues and practical problems which is at odds with contemporary formulations and concerns in which women of the middling rank ought to have been engaged. Additionally, in describing herself as 'stranded' and 'destitute of friends', Ker plays the role of the helpless female in order to elicit a protective, and hopefully generous, response from the men of the Fund, and in this displays a shrewd capacity to manipulate expected gender roles. This is clearly no more than a performance though: we see further evidence here of Ker's refusal to adhere to such formulations of femininity. In keeping with the unveiling of her identity palpable in the prefaces to her novels, Ker's letters to the Fund demonstrate a willingness to externalise her private life, of which her explicitly detailed disclosure of her breast abscess is a notable example. This period of asperity was experienced by Ker whilst living with her husband at 48 Wellington Street, Newington Causeway, Surrey, and led to her death, aged fifty-four, in 1821.

The fiction that Ker had written throughout her career was part of a body of works which, though denounced by reviewers and largely forgotten today, is nonetheless representative of the novel as it was experienced and engaged with by most women readers of the time. Ker's novels demonstrate that this reading material could be surprisingly questioning and unorthodox in parts, and in this way is worthy of study for its impact upon the reader, if not for its artistic value. We have also seen that Ker was one of a number of Romantic women writers to appeal to the Royal Literary Fund. Her financial hardships and talent for persuading the powerful to come to her aid offers some indication of the life led by many female authors, which, particularly as the period progressed and saw the edging out of women by male writers, was a hard one. On a more personal level, Ker was influenced by a passionate and determined father and connected with a circle of somewhat unorthodox aristocrats, and subsequently became an interesting character controversial for her projection of a public self that was at odds with the norm. Through her writing, she participated in and reflects to us today some of the debates about women's writing and reading that are so important in the history of the novel. Owing to her presence in this discourse, Ker came to occupy an unmasked and worldly position in the communal sphere of the literary market, from which she boldly advocated a view of novelistic discourse at this time as a commercial, female-centred activity.

## II

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ANNE KER'S NOVELS

All of the novels published by Anne Ker are listed in this bibliography, and have been viewed directly from the Corvey Microfiche Edition (CME). The entries below begin with the novel's date of publication and the author's name, with any parts of the name not present on the title page to the novel being given in square brackets. A transcription of the title page follows, omitting any epigraphs and volume specific details. The publisher's imprint is also omitted, as this appears on the subsequent line. The following segment of each entry records pagination, including details of illustrations and prefaces, format, and, where this information has been available, the price of the volume and the source from which this was deduced. The next line of the entry gives the library details of the copy examined (in this case the CME reference number), followed by catalogue entries given in the ECB, the ESTC for works up to 1800, or the NSTC for works 1801–70, and OCLC. Where no entry has been located in these sources for the relevant novels, the source appears preceded by a lower case 'x'. The final part of each entry is comprised of notes of interest followed by transcriptions of reviews.

## ABBREVIATIONS

adv.	advertisement.
CME	Corvey Microfiche Edition.
ECB	R. A. Peddie and Quintin Waddington (eds), <i>The English Catalogue of Books, 1801–1836</i> (London, 1914; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1963).
ESTC	<i>Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue</i> , CD-ROM (London, 1992).
n.s.	new series.
NSTC	<i>Nineteenth Century Short-Title Catalogue</i> , 61 vols (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Averro Publications, 1984–95); CD-ROM (Newcastle, 1996).
OCLC	OCLC Worldcat Database.
ser.	series.
unn.	unnumbered.

**I. THE HEIRESS DI MONTALDE; OR, THE CASTLE OF BEZANTO: A NOVEL. IN TWO VOLUMES. BY MRS. ANNE KER. DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS AUGUSTA SOPHIA.**

London: Printed for the Author; and sold by Earle and Hemet, Frith Street, Soho, 1799.

I vii, 232p, ill.; II 191p. 12mo. 7s sewed (adv.).

CME 3-628-45100-0; ESTC t116100; OCLC 13320508.

*Notes:* Frontispiece. Dedication to Her Royal Highness the Princess Augusta Sophia, pp. iv–vii, in which Ker, whilst expressing her gratitude to her patron for encouraging this ‘first production’, defines the function of the novel as being to ‘amuse’ a reader in the ‘leisure hour’. List of this novel’s 52 subscribers (2 pp. unnn.), many of whom are members of the aristocracy. Appeal for subscriptions for Ker’s next work, *Adeline St Julian; or, the Midnight Hour*, which is due to be published in November, 7s sewed, (1 p. unnn).

*New London Review* 2 (Oct 1799), 388–89: ‘The Heiress de Montalde is a wretched imitation of Mrs. Radcliffe’s manner, but the black horror of the mysterious tale is not brightened by a single ray of that lady’s genius. The plot is confused, the incidents contemptible, and the language destitute of all characteristic propriety.

‘Mrs. Ann Ker possesses a particular knack of protracting attention, and whenever the reader expects to come to a knowledge of the event in relation, he is almost uniformly interrupted by some unlucky accident to which the monstrous fancy of the author gives birth.

‘To those who delight in details of Gothic castles, horrid dungeons, mouldering towers, haunted groves, silver moons, refulgent planets and spangled skies, The Heiress de Montalde can only prove interesting.’

2. **ADELIN ST. JULIAN; OR, THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, A NOVEL. IN TWO VOLUMES. BY MRS. ANNE KER, AUTHOR OF THE HEIRESS DI MONTALDE, &C.**

London: Printed by J. Bonsor, Salisbury Square; for J. and E. Kerby, Bond Street; and sold by T. Hurst, Paternoster Row, 1800.

I 225p, ill.; II 228p. 12mo. 7s sewed (adv.); 8s boards (*Monthly Review*).

CME 3-628-47994-0; ESTC t070733; OCLC 6853516.

*Notes:* Frontispiece of a ghost.

*Anti-Jacobin Review* 7 (1800), 201–02: ‘Why this performance is termed a *novel*, we are at a loss to determine: certainly not because it possesses any novelty; neither does the general acceptance of the word warrant its adoption in the present instance. According to the *modern* school, it falls under the denomination of ROMANCE; for, if *improbability* and *absurdity* constitute that species of writing, *Adeline St. Julian* is sufficiently *romantic*.

‘The story is *made up* from that sublime production, the *Castle Spectre*, and from Mr. Whaley’s tragedy of the Castle of Montval, with several incidents *freely* BORROWED from *Cervantes*; or, perhaps, at second-hand from his *Shakespearean* dramatiser, the author of the *Mountaineer*. Had we any influence with Mr Astley, the Amphitheatrical Manager; we would recommend Mrs. K. to his employment, as a kind of *journeywoman manufacturer* of ghosts, secret doors, &c. &c.

‘We are not vain enough to suppose that this lady writes with the intention of pleasing the Reviewers, yet we cannot refrain from offering a piece of friendly advice. Let her peruse Dilworth, Dyche, Fenning, or some other of our minor grammarians, with some little attention: it may prevent her from being perfectly unintelligible.’

*Critical Review* 2nd ser. 29 (May 1800), 116: ‘Many ladies, from the frequent persusal of novels, acquire a set of phrases which they know not how to

apply, and treasure up in their minds a variety of incidents, calculated to amuse or astonish. If they have been praised by illiterate and ill-judging friends for their talents at letter-writing, though their epistles may have no other recommendation than pertness or vivacity, they consider themselves as fully qualified to write a novel which may gratify even the most judicious readers. With a small share of invention or some common sense, and with still less knowledge of the arts of composition, they enter upon the task of adding to the stock of the circulating library. They manufacture a tale from former works of narrative invention, with some trifling or absurd alterations or additions, and advertise the produce of their futile labour as a new novel or romance. Mrs Anne Ker appears to have followed this example; for her tale *Adeline* is a wretched farrago, with no novelty of fable, no original delineation of character, and not even common accuracy of language. Deprecating as we do, such prostitution of the press, we advise this lady to relinquish the employment of writing for the public. Let the “Midnight Hour” be involved in congenial darkness; and let the pretensions of the “Heiress di Montalde” be confined to oblivion.’

*Monthly Review* n.s. 33 (Sep 1800), 103: ‘This performance shews that the writer, though she does not scruple to borrow, possesses fancy and invention; not indeed much restrained by attention to probabilities; nor is the style of the narrative always within the limits of grammar. We can however say that many of the novels, which we announce to the public, have afforded us less amusement. The representation of a ghost fronts the title page: (be not startled, gentle reader! it is no “goblin damned!”) whether it be a good resemblance or not, we leave to the more experienced novel reader to determine. It seems to be drawn from the life, and apparently is much better flesh and blood than the persons to whom it is supposed to appear.’

3. **EMMELINE; OR, THE HAPPY DISCOVERY; A NOVEL, IN TWO VOLUMES. BY ANNE KER, AUTHOR OF THE HEIRESS DI MONTALDE, ADELIN ST. JULIAN, &C.**

London: Printed by J. Bonsor, Salisbury Square. For J. and E. Kerby, Bond Street; and T. Hurst, Paternoster Row, 1801.

I viii, 271p; II 280p. 12mo. 8s (ECB).

CME 3-628-48003; ECB 186; NSTC K380; xOCLC.

*Notes:* Dedication to Lady Jerningham, vol. 1, pp. [iii]–iv, signed Anne Ker and dated 24 Feb 1801 (ECB dates first publication Apr 1801), in which Ker, though seemingly modest in tone, confidently defends her writing as a contribution to a literary market dominated by, and approving of, ‘productions of this nature’. Address ‘TO THE PUBLIC’, vol. 1, pp. [v]–viii, voicing Ker’s bold and controversial response to the hostility with which contemporary reviewers had received her previous two novels. Here Ker both attacks gender inequality and defends the commercial and female-controlled identity of the novel. For a transcription of these two preliminary statements, see Section IV.

4. **THE MYSTERIOUS COUNT; OR, MONTVILLE CASTLE. A ROMANCE, IN TWO VOLUMES. BY ANNE KER.**  
 London: Printed by D. N. Shury, Berwick Street, Soho, for the Author, and sold by Crosby and Co. Stationers' Court, Ludgate Street, 1803.  
 I iv, 232p; II 240p. 12mo. 7s (ECB).  
 CME 3-628-47997-5; ECB 403; xNSTC; xOCLC.  
*Notes:* Epigraph on title page. Vol. 1, pp. [iii]–iv list of the novel's 28 subscribers, including Lady Jerningham, to whom Ker's previous work, *Emmeline; or, the Happy Discovery* (1801), had been dedicated, and Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales.
5. **MODERN FAULTS, A NOVEL, FOUNDED UPON FACTS. BY MRS. KER, AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS DI MONTALDE." &C. &C. &C. IN TWO VOLUMES.**  
 London: Printed by J. M'Gowen, Church Street, Blackfriars Road. For J. Ker, 34, Great Surrey Street, Black Friars Road; sold also by John Badcock, Paternoster Row, 1804.  
 I 228p, ill.; II 234p. 12mo. 6s boards (*Critical Review*); 7s (ECB).  
 CME 3-628-48016-7; ECB 320; xNSTC; xOCLC.  
*Notes:* Frontispiece portrait of 'Mrs Anne Ker'. The novel ends, Vol. 2, p. 234, with an advertisement, immediately following the text, for Ker's next novel, *Edric the Forester*, in 3 vols, which is to appear in December at 10s 6d. This novel, however, does not seem to have been published until many years later, with the earliest discovered edition published in 1817 (see next item).  
*Critical Review* 3rd ser. 3 (Sep 1804), 116: "Modern Faults"! Faults? It is thus, as we have said, that crimes are extenuated by words. The true title is Modern Villanies; yet the villain repents; and the tale is not, on the whole, without its interest. A real fault is the prefixing such an displeasing picture. Is it a likeness? It will not add to the value of the volume. Is it a caricature? The plate should have been destroyed, were it only in pity to those "who are as ladies wish to be who love their lords."'  
*London Journal* 3 (1804), 682: 'This is a sorry tame story. There is nothing like originality or acuteness of thought or expression. A rakish husband leaves his wife, and lives with another woman, till being duly convinced of his fault, he returns to his duty; and this, told in a heavy, dull manner, is the whole of the affair. But perhaps the authoress may answer nearly in the words of the razor seller to the bumpkin, "my book was not written to amuse but to sell."'
6. **EDRIC, THE FORESTER: OR, THE MYSTERIES OF THE HAUNTED CHAMBER. AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE, IN THREE VOLUMES. BY MRS. ANNE KER, OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ROXBURGH'S FAMILY, AUTHOR OF THE HEIRESS DI MONTALDE—ADELINE ST. JULIAN—EMMELINE, OR THE HAPPY DISCOVERY—MYSTERIOUS COUNT—AND MODERN FAULTS.**  
 London: Printed for the Author, by D. N. Shury, Berwick Street, Soho; and sold by T. Hughes, Ludgate Street, 1817.  
 I 214p; II 216p; III 216p. 12mo.  
 CME 3-628-47995-9; xECB; OCLC 13320499; xNSTC.

*Notes:* Prefatory poem in vol. 1 (1 p. unnn.), consisting of 14 pairs of rhyming couplets, by J. Ker, Anne Ker's husband, entitled 'A Ker-ish Trick'. A version was later published in 1841, as part of William Hazlitt's *Romanticist and Novelist's Library* (NSTC 2K4083).

*Gentleman's Magazine* 2nd ser. 88 (supplement for July–Dec 1818), 617: 'Of the credulity which might prevail when "Edric the Forester" is represented to have run his career, in the days of William the Conqueror, we have not now to determine: but, in the more enlightened period of the nineteenth century, the Reader will require something like probability in the construction of a narrative, however ingeniously his fancy may be arrested by the imprisonment of Knights and Damsels in the turrets of a Castle, or by the effects of supernatural appearances, or a guilty conscience.'

*Monthly Review* n.s. 36 (June 1818), 213–14: 'A total want of grammatical accuracy is among the least faults of this paltry performance: its moral is not more applicable to common life than that of Jack the Giant Killer, showing that ogres and murderers will certainly be punished; and we should prefer the vagaries of that nursery-story to the mawkish absurdities of the present tale. "*The ladies Ellen and Elgiva, for that were their names,*" are confined in dungeons, because "*it was not Lord Fitzosric's intentions to marry,*" and they are released by Lady Jane, who had imprisoned herself during thirteen years in a haunted room, and performed the part of a ghost from pure good will, though she constantly possessed the means of escaping, and of claiming a noble fortune!'

### III

#### PLOT SYNOPSES

##### *The Heiress di Montalde; or, the Castle of Bezanto* (1799)

This first of Anne Ker's Gothic novels consists of the first-person retrospective account of an elderly English woman named Anne. Anne tells the story of a tour of Southern Europe undertaken many years ago by herself, her young Italian friend Palmira, and Palmira's husband Count di la Rofa. The story opens as Count di la Rofa suddenly and mysteriously returns to his home, the Castle of Bezanto, leaving Anne and Palmira to travel alone with a newly hired servant named Victoria. The three women meet with Palmira's lecherous brother in law, Count Albani, who disguises himself as a woman in order to trick Victoria into meeting alone with him. Victoria, seemingly much distressed by this attention, seeks a secret conversation with Palmira by which the latter is left greatly shocked. In order to explain the import of Victoria's revelation to Anne, Palmira provides an account of her own history. Many years ago Palmira had fallen in love with the Marquis Sebastian di St Beralti who was, much to Palmira's disappointment, married to Adelaide di Solanto. This marriage, however, had taken place in secret. When her father discovered the couple's deception he sent Adelaide to the same convent to which Palmira, heartbroken and disillusioned, had also retired. Here Adelaide died after giving birth to Sebastian's child. Soon after Palmira decided against becoming a nun and returned home.

Some time passed before Sebastian fell in love with Palmira. Palmira's father, however, was angry at his daughter's flightiness, and so forced her to marry his friend, Count di la Rofa. This takes Palmira's history up to the present conversation with Victoria concerning Count Albani and the disclosure that Victoria is actually Sebastian in disguise, come to persuade Palmira to run away with him. Palmira's has refused Sebastian's entreaties, owing her to her loyalty to the Count. Palmira and Anne subsequently leave Sebastian and join Count di la Rofa at the Castle of Bezanto. Bezanto is rumoured to be haunted, and Anne, searching for evidence to disprove this, finds not a spirit but Count di la Rofa's beloved wife, Zephyrine, whom the Count, at the time of his marriage to Palmira and owing to a plot against him, believed to be dead. Palmira is told of this situation and, wishing the Count and Zephyrine happiness, agrees to arrangements for the annulment of her marriage. She returns to her home in order to take possession of the estates of her parents, who she learns have recently died. Palmira hears that Sebastian has been murdered, and that his spirit haunts the woods near her home. Anne discovers, however, that Sebastian is still alive, and encourages him to propose to Palmira. She accepts, and the couple live with Sebastian's daughter, the young Adelaide. Here Anne ends her retrospect, describing herself in the present as an old woman with a family of her own.

*Adeline St Julian; or, the Midnight Hour* (1800)

*Adeline St Julian* is Anne Ker's second Gothic novel and is set in the 1630s. Alphonso de Semonville hears a mysterious singer, rumoured to be a spirit, in the forest of St Amans near Languedoc in the French Provinces. After falling and injuring himself he awakes in the secret home of the singer, a young woman named Adeline, and her guardian, Madame Sophia Belmont. Sophia tells Alphonso that Adeline is the only remaining child of the Count and Countess of St Julian, who died under suspicious circumstances, with their property, the Castle of St Clair, falling into the possession of their relative Delarfonne. Suspecting Delarfonne of the murder of the St Julians, Madame Belmont ran away with Adeline to the home in the forest of St Amans in which Alphonso finds himself. Alphonso falls in love with Adeline, yet is intended by his father to marry Elinor de Montmorenci, a woman whom he esteems but cannot love. Elinor herself is pregnant and married without her family's knowledge to Henry de Castelle, a clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church. Henry has been framed for certain crimes by his rival Dampiere and the Cardinal Richelieu. By consequence he is on trial for using supernatural powers in order to seduce women. Alphonso and Elinor conspire to delay the marriage planned by their fathers. At this point, though, Adeline, Alphonso, and Elinor, are abducted.

Alphonso is informed that he is being held at the will of Delarfonne, though he is kept in ignorance of the reason, and remains imprisoned for some time in a Dominican Monastery. Tortured by the monks and offered the choice of taking Holy Orders or being killed, Alphonso declares that he would rather die than lead a monastic life, and manages to escape from his cell before further torture is carried out. On trying to find a route out of the Monastery he comes across Elinor who, emaciated almost beyond recognition and confined to a tiny cell not big enough to allow movement, has been tortured for her relationship with Henry de Castelle. The pair escape, and Elinor flees to England. Alphonso remains to seek Adeline. He meets with Eustace, an old and trustworthy servant of the Castle of St Clair, who informs him that Adeline is held at the Castle and that her father is still alive. Eustace proves to be an invaluable

guide, escorting Alphonso to the Castle where he meets Count St. Julian. The Count tells of his persecution at the time of his wife's murder and Adeline's flight, and states that Delarfonne is wholly to blame. He also talks of the years he has spent by consequence in exile as a slave in Tunisia, before he made his fortune in the East Indies and returned to France for revenge. The authorities are informed of Delarfonne's crimes and he is arrested. The Count reclaims his title and Adeline, having been rescued, marries Alphonso. Henry de Castelle, however, is executed on 18 August 1634, despite being proven innocent by the nuns testifying to the fact that he was framed, whilst the villain Delarfonne commits suicide before being brought to justice. Elinor, who we are told has been living in a depressed state, only returns to France in safety after her persecutors, Dampiere and Cardinal Richelieu, have died of natural causes.

*Emmeline; or, the Happy Discovery* (1801)

In contrast to the Gothic setting of its predecessors, the minefield negotiated by the vulnerable heroine of *Emmeline* is the fashionable English society of the early 1800s. As a child Emmeline was intended by her dying parents to be taken by a servant to live with relatives in England. However, this servant abandons his charge in the forest of Amiens in France, where she is found and subsequently taken in by the benevolent English couple, Mr and Mrs Wilson. Emmeline spends thirteen happy years with the Wilsons in a village near Oxford before both husband and wife die, leaving Emmeline with some property and a guardian, Sir Charles Freemore, with whom she goes to live at Auburn Hall. After a short time here, however, both Sir Charles and his son Alfred fall in love with Emmeline. Throughout the novel Sir Charles makes advances towards Emmeline, which she states reveal the 'tyrannic power' (1, 126) wielded by male guardians over vulnerable wards. Emmeline frankly tells Alfred that she loves him, and so will never marry his father. In the midst of this problematic situation at Auburn Hall, Emmeline travels to London with her new acquaintance and supposed friend, the vain, fashionable coquette and rich heiress, Charlotte Oakley.

When an admirer of Charlotte's in London, the Earl of Bellville, tells the heiress that he prefers Emmeline's beauty and character above all others, Charlotte jealously resolves to hate Emmeline and to seek revenge. With this in mind she pretends to have seen Alfred courting another young lady to whom he is rumoured to be engaged. This lie fails to convince Emmeline, though, and she is soon reconciled with Alfred. Refusing to relinquish her goal, Charlotte also hatches a plot to force Emmeline into the clutches of the dissipated and fashionable libertine, Lord Harkland. Posing as Emmeline, Charlotte writes a series of letters to Harkland in which she agrees to be his mistress and encourages him to 'kidnap' her in order to take her to his home, Morfe Castle. Entirely fooled by this hoax, Harkland has the plan put in to effect, and Emmeline finds herself at Morfe Castle. Realising the 'treacherous contrivance of her once valued friend' (1, 264), however, she explains the circumstances of the deception to Harkland, and also delivers 'a very pretty lecture' (1, 269) to him concerning the immorality of the rich and comparative positive morality of the poor. This leads Harkland to realise the errors of his behaviour and, releasing Emmeline, to reform his ways. At this point, Emmeline uncovers her mysterious parentage. It transpires that, being of the family of Mandeville, she will inherit substantial property. At the close of the novel Emmeline marries Alfred and forgives Charlotte, who has been punished and repents.

*The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle* (1803)

Anne Ker's *Mysterious Count* opens as the male protagonist Albert, the beloved son of the Duke de Limousin, leaves the family home of the Castle of Alembert in France in order to pursue a military career under the instruction of General Dumetz. The General is unfairly dismissed from the army and bitterly leaves France in disrepute in 1760. At this point Albert returns to France and discovers that during his absence his father has grown extremely close to Count Beranger. Albert is wary of the Count's character, but is in love with his daughter, Correlia. Intending his daughter for a richer suitor, however, and so wishing to prevent her potential union with Albert, the Count takes Limousin and Albert to stay with his friend, the Baron de Solignac, and his daughter Matilda, a beautiful but 'self conceit[ed] coquette' (1, 15). Matilda's father dies during the party's stay, leaving his daughter one of the richest heiresses in France. Matilda wishes to marry Albert and tells him this frankly and without invitation. By way of refusal, Albert tells Matilda of his love for Correlia. Subsequently left without hope of obtaining him, Matilda soon marries his father, the Duke de Limousin. Matilda's scorn at Albert's rejection and Count Beranger's desire to rid Correlia of Albert's presence lead this pair to unite in a plot to turn Limousin against his son. Having convinced Limousin that Albert has attempted to seduce Matilda, Limousin disinherits his son and vows never to see him again.

With the prospect of a union with Correlia thus ruled out, and ignorant of the lies behind his father's anger, Albert determines to flee to Italy but, on encountering a battle in Poland, comes to the rescue of Alzeyda, a woman strongly resembling Correlia. On taking her to her home, Albert discovers her step-father and guardian to be General Dumetz. After some time spent with the General, his wife, and Alzeyda, Albert resolves to find and be reconciled with his own father, and so returns to France with Alzeyda, whom he soon after marries. In Albert's absence Matilda has proven her involvement in a premarital relationship by giving birth just six months after her marriage. The Duke, bitter at failing to see his wife's motives for their hasty marriage, and disgusted at her lack of repentance, has gone to Paris to stay with the Count and Correlia. Albert arrives shortly afterwards, but is denied several interviews with his father. He is arrested owing to the contrivances of the Count, who also captures Alzeyda in a bid to make her his mistress. Correlia discovers the plot and, dressed as a priest, rescues Albert from the prison and helps him to locate and save Alzeyda. Through having questioned Alzeyda, the Count comes to realise that he is her father and, inspired by the love he once felt for her dead mother, he tells her honestly of his plot to divide the Duke and Albert. The Duke and Albert are subsequently reunited, before Alzeyda dies of a sudden illness. Some time after, Albert marries Correlia.

*Modern Faults* (1804)

This largely epistolary novel is moral and didactic in tone, yet simultaneously vocal on habitually censored subjects. Rosalie, the Countess de Clerimont, is the heroine of the novel, and a woman mistreated by an unworthy husband. The tale opens at midnight and during a severe storm, as Rosalie flees from her home, the Castle of Luneville, with her children Selina, aged four and a half, Frederic, aged two and a half, and a nurse and good friend named Margaret. Finding a secluded and secret home in the forest of St Amiens, Rosalie renames herself Irza, her son Henry, and her daughter Astasia. Rosalie manages, by sending Margaret to and from her old home, to exchange letters with her friend, Frederica de Villeroy, in the correspondence which comprises the novel

and which begins with an explanation of the history behind Rosalie's sudden disappearance from Luneville. Rosalie recounts her husband's affair with a servant, Nicolina, 'a young hussy' (I, 77), whom he loved and kept as a mistress in a nearby villa. As well as relating these circumstances as motivating her flight, Rosalie frankly condemns the 'gaudy and merry exterior' (I, 80) covering the dissipated, immoral sphere of fashionable society from which she needed to escape. A friend of the Count, the Duke —, declared that he loved Rosalie and, in a period of her husband's absence, threatened to kidnap her, providing her with a further reason for leaving her home.

Revealing the letter to be a space in this society for women's bold discussion of publicly taboo subjects, Rosalie makes reference to the social ill of prostitution when criticising the social condition. Condemning 'those infamous houses which are a pest to society' (I, 39), Rosalie nonetheless expresses some sympathy for the desperate 'wretches [...] to be procured for money' who inhabit these brothels. Through this correspondence with her friend Rosalie learns that the Count repents his sins and no longer sees Nicolina. After some time passes, Rosalie's children discover a man injured near their secret home who, it transpires, is the Count. Rosalie, eager to detect such a change in her husband's character as has been suggested by Frederica, conceals her face from him. We learn that Nicolina had married Captain Delamonte and that the Count, awakened to his faults, regretted his behaviour towards his wife and, believing her to be dead, is tormented by guilt. He falls in love with Rosalie, believing her to be Irza, and she reveals her true identity to him. The novel ends with Rosalie, the Count, and their children returning to Luneville reconciled, and Nicolina, deserted by Delamonte, dying in a poor house.

*Edric, the Forester: Or, the Mysteries of the Haunted Chamber* (1817)

This last of Anne Ker's publications, and the most generically mixed, is a historical, three part novel, featuring a return to the Gothic style and elements of the didactic-domestic novel. In the time of William the Conqueror, Edric, a forester raised from his station to the rank of General in the King's army, must attempt to defeat his enemy, Lord Fitzosric, and take possession of St Egbert's Castle. Whilst marching towards the Castle, Fitzosric is injured and stumbles in to the cottage of a beautiful mother and daughter named Ellen and Elgiva, who we are told are thirty-six and seventeen years of age respectively. Fitzosric is assisted and subsequently becomes enchanted by the pair, and begins to plot ways in which he might capture both women in order to have them as mistresses. Fitzosric leaves their cottage to fight the battle of Shrewsbury against Edric who, it transpires, is engaged to Elgiva. Fitzosric loses the battle and returns to the cottage. Deceiving Ellen and Elgiva into believing that they are in danger, Fitzosric tricks them in to accompanying him to his Castle.

At the Castle the two women speak to a servant, Agatha, who tells them that Lady Jane, the dead wife of Fitzosric, haunts the Castle. We learn at this stage of Fitzosric's multiple dissipations, including his kidnapping of the daughters of local villagers in the past. His great mistreatment of Lady Jane, we are also told, has led to this woman's unsettled spirit's torment of Fitzosric. Fitzosric attempts multiple tactics, promising everything from marriage to death to seduce both Ellen and Elgiva but is thwarted at every turn by apparently being hounded by the voice of his wife's ghost. Yet the women soon discover that the voice in fact belongs to the living Lady Jane who has confined herself in the Castle in order to torture Fitzosric. The women escape and

expose Fitzoscric. At the close of the novel it is revealed that Edric is actually the heir to Castle St Egbert, separated at birth from his family, and he marries Elgiva.

## IV

## TRANSCRIPTIONS OF ANNE KER'S PREFATORY MATERIAL

1. *The Heiress di Montalde; or, the Castle of Bezanto* (1799), dedication, pp. iv–vii.

## DEDICATION

TO  
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS  
THE PRINCESS  
AUGUSTA SOPHIA

MADAM,

IMBOLDENED by your Royal Highness's gracious permission, which honour I shall ever remember with every sentiment of gratitude, and *which* transcends my warmest acknowledgments, I now presume to present the following pages, being a first production, and flatter myself they will not prove unworthy your Royal Highness's approbation. Happy should I feel myself, if they found a leisure hour of your Royal Highness's time, wherein they are fortunate to amuse: trusting the innate goodness peculiar to your Royal Highness will look with candour on those defects, which I am not presumptuous enough to imagine them free from; and I beg leave to wish your Royal Highness every felicity and blessing this world can afford.

I am,  
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S  
Most obedient  
And most dutiful humble servant,  
ANNE KER

2. *Emmeline; or, the Happy Discovery* (1801), dedication, pp. [iii]–iv.

## DEDICATION

TO  
LADY JERNINGHAM

MADAM,

THE favorable reception which productions of this nature have in general met with, encourage me to hope, that the following pages, honored with your Ladyship's patronage and approbation, will have the good fortune to please equal to my first production.

Flattered with your Ladyship's praise, I hesitate not to say it much increases my gratitude, and feel unable to express the happiness I experience, and the sense I have of your Ladyship's con-

descension, to pass so kindly over the errors, which I am not bold enough to imagine, this novel is free from; by which, I am inclined to hope, the novel of EMMELINE is superior to my expectation.

Happy should I feel myself if the abilities of my pen were an offering worthy to present to a lady of your amiable character. Small, indeed, are the acknowledgments I can make for favors so generously conferred; yet, I trust, your Ladyship will believe me grateful and happy in the opportunity of thus publicly declaring with what profound respect,

I am,  
Your Ladyship's most obliged,  
And most obedient Servant.

Feb. 24, 1801.

ANNE KER.

3. *Emmeline; or, the Happy Discovery* (1801), address to the public, pp. [v]–viii.

TO THE PUBLIC.

Having read the criticism on my last novel, (romance, or whatever appellation the Reviewers please to give it) I feel it a duty incumbent on me, to state in reply, a few words, though few it must be;—for me to pretend to write against such an hoard of enemies would be an endless labour; and particularly so, when known that the pen is guided by the hand of a female. Were I the only person who wrote in the romantic manner, they are pleased to stile absurd, I own I should feel unhappy; but I could state, at least, more than an hundred late productions, which are equally as absurd as my own, though I'll touch not on the string of others. Yet, I hope and trust, that, whatever lines were dictated by my pen, those devouring watchmen will do me the justice to allow they have been in the cause of virtue; devoid of those indelicate, and, in many instances, indecent descriptions, that fill the pages in the present day, of which I should be ashamed to be the author. I return my sincere thanks to those malevolent Reviewers, who have thought it worth their notice to speak on my little performances in the manner they have. And though had, not least in my estimation, the Conductors of the Anti-Jacobin Review, whose principles, to a civilized nation, are a well known shame; to confuse them as such, I beg to say, that, *Adeline St. Julian* was written full four years past, and put into the hands of a bookseller in August 1799; consequently, could not be extracted from the works they have thought proper to state; but it appears to me, and every person who, to oblige me, have perused their astonishing criticism, that they are racking their imagination to find out a somebody that has wrote *somehow* or *somewhere* similar in *some respect*, to this wonderful, absurd, improbable, romantic *something* which I have written.

The Reviewers may be assured I have not the vanity of wishing to please them in my writings; but I write in conformity to the pleasure of the times. It is to my patronizers, and to the generous public I appeal, and not to those contemptuous open-mouthed devouring critics, who would, in all probability, have declared (had their mouths been

crammed with a bribe) that Adeline St. Julian was the wonder of the age; as they were not, what else could I expect?—But the apprehension of what they may say shall never check my absurd pen, so long as I find the encouragement of the indulgent public; to whom I beg to return my sincere thanks, and hope for their future favors.

4. *Edric, the Forester: Or, the Mysteries of the Haunted Chamber* (1817), prefatory poem, 1 p. unnn.

*A Ker-ish Trick*

There is a man on Scottish ground,  
 Caus'd me to lose two hundred pounds  
 Surely how could such things be?  
 Why, in promising to provide for me!  
 And though in me there was no pride,  
 In fine grand coach I once did ride;  
 And for my fare for four miles round,  
 It cost me just two hundred pound;  
 Now could I find HIS *number* out,  
 Although my wife has got the gout,  
 She says, on crutches she would stride,  
 And travel o'er the country wide,  
 To summons for such imposition,  
 Or try by way of a *petition*,  
 But lawyers say we were not right—  
 It should have been in black and white,  
 So Ker was left by side the Tweed,  
 And Sawney drove away with speed. Fleurs—  
 I envy not that pretty place,  
 Although I am one of the race;  
 But from my heart I wish I'd seen  
 A man live there from *Little Dean*.  
 And why so wish?  
 Because, some say,  
 He'd not have sent me empty away.  
 Now if there's left a Ker in Linton,  
 Who at these lines should take a hint on,  
 Or noble Scot that's fat or taper,  
 May cure J. Ker with HASE's paper.

J. KER

5. *The Heiress di Montalde; or, the Castle of Bezanto* (1799), subscription list.

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester, three sets  
 His Grace the Duke of Roxburgh  
 Her Grace the Duchess of Gordon  
 The Right Honorable the Countess of Cardigan  
 ..... Countess of Euston

.....Countess of Ely  
 .....Countess of Harrington  
 Lady Charlotte Bruce  
 Lady Mary Ker  
 Lady Fermanagh  
 Mrs. Bonfoy  
 Mr. Cook  
 Mrs. Clark  
 Mrs. Clutterbuck  
 Mrs. Denton  
 Mr. Edmonds  
 Miss Edwards  
 Mrs. Evans  
 Mrs. Graham  
 Miss Grant  
 Miss Gray  
 Mr. Hadwen  
 Miss Hawkins  
 Mr. Jervis  
 Mrs. Johnstone  
 Mrs. Main  
 Mrs. McFail  
 Miss Mills  
 Mrs. Neville  
 Mr. Parker  
 Mrs. Pickett  
 Mrs. Poole  
 Miss Porter  
 Miss Phillips  
 Miss Sanders  
 Mrs. Sanderson  
 Mr. Scott  
 Mrs. Skynner  
 Miss Smith  
 Mrs. Stevens  
 Mr. Stevens  
 Mrs. Tucker, two sets  
 Miss Thompson  
 Mrs. Tomlins  
 Mrs. Turner  
 Miss Wells  
 Mrs. Westwood  
 Mrs. Wheeler  
 Miss Wheeler  
 Mr. Wilson  
 Miss Williams

6. *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle. A Romance* (1803), subscription list.

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales  
 Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester  
 Her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia of Gloucester  
 Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire  
 Her Grace the Duchess of Grafton  
 Right Honorable Lady Caroline Damer  
 Right Honorable the Countess of Euston  
 ..... the Countess Fitzwilliam  
 ..... the Countess of Harrington  
 ..... Lady Mary Ker  
 ..... the Countess of Lucan  
 Lady Jerningham, 3 sets  
 Honorable Mrs. Anson  
 Honorable Mrs. Anne  
 Mr. Anson  
 Mrs. Anson  
 Mrs. Byng  
 Miss Barlow  
 Mrs. Clark  
 Mrs. Denton  
 Mr. Henorini  
 Mr. Macklin  
 Mr. Morris  
 Mr. Owen  
 Miss Scott  
 Miss Eliza Young  
 Mrs. Webster  
 Miss Webster.

## V

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF ANNE KER'S CORRESPONDENCE  
WITH THE ROYAL LITERARY FUND

Each of the following letters are addressed 48 Wellington Street, Newington Causeway, Surrey.

1. *The following entreaty, dated August 21 1820, earned Ker a donation of £5, for which she sent a copy of 'Edric the Forester', on 24 August 1820, to express her gratitude.*  
To The Gentlemen of The Literary Fund  
The Humble Petition of Anne Ker

Sheweth

That Anne Ker, Daughter of Mr. John Phillips, Author of a very Extensive History of Inland Navigation published about the year 1791, to complete which [illegible] expended a very handsome competency, and left his family much embarrassed. He also for several years was the Author of The Builders Price Book, published by Crosby till the death of Mr Phillips Dec 1 1813. Anne Ker his daughter the petitioner is Authoress of several works which have been highly approved by the Public. The Heiress di Montalde in 2 vols—dedicated by the late Queen's express permission to the Princess Augusta—Adeline St. Julian 2 vol—Emmeline 2 vols—Mysterious Count 2 vols—Modern Faults 2 vols and Edric the Forester 3 vols. The petitioner is through the most unforeseen accidents and losses in business, together with the misfortune of being frequently afflicted with that dreadful complaint the Gout, from which she is now recovering, advancing in years, being nearly 54—and driven to the severest distress, humbly implores the assistance of the Literary Fund, considering herself an object of their charity being the daughter of a very respectable Author of useful publications, and herself the Author of the amusing and virtuous—. Her embarrassments and distress cannot be sufficiently explained by letter but trusts to the feeling hearts of the Gentlemen of this Benevolent Institution, to relieve her from some of her misfortunes, having lately sold all her furniture and the money expended, and at this time nearly in want of bread to exist—

And your petitioner in duty bound shall ever pray

Anne Ker

2. *Dated 25 November 1820. This request was denied, on the grounds that it followed to soon from Ker's last application.*  
To The Gentlemen of The Literary Fund  
The Humble Petition of Anne Ker

Sheweth—

That your petitioner applied to your Benevolent Institution last July—And you [illegible] £5 which your petitioner received by the hand of Mr. H[illegible] which bounty was a most reasonable relief—And now your petitioner is extremely sorry to state that necessity compels her once more, to take the liberty of laying her distressed situation before you, humbly trusting, you will not withhold your assistance, as your petitioner is at present entirely out of employ, and has been for a length of time. Your petitioner hopes that by the turn of the New Year her affairs will mend as she is then promised some employment; the prospect is of that nature as to ensure her a decent living—but being short of clothes, if she cannot find a friend to assist her it will prevent her from embracing so good an offer. Humbly relying on your consideration, she rests her case—

And your petitioner in duty bound will ever pray

Anne Ker.

3. *Dated 2 January 1821. Ker was granted £5 for this application.*  
To The Gentlemen of The Literary Fund  
The Humble Petition of Anne Ker

*Sheweth*

That your petitioner is daughter of the late Mr. John Phillips, author of the History of Inland Navigation and herself author of The Heiress di Montalde, Edric the Forester &c, and is now under the most pressing necessity of applying to your Benevolent Institution, being at this season dreadfully distressed, unknowing how to provide the common necessities of life and clothing. That your petitioner received in the month of August £5 by the hand of Mr. H[illegible], which you had kindly voted to her and which was of such service that she shall ever remember it with grateful thanks.—That your petitioner being still involved in distress, had an opportunity of engaging with a lady as assistant in a school in the country, where she hoped to find a comfortable home for a time but for want of decent clothes could not engage. Thus circumstanced, your petitioner took the liberty of laying her situation before you on the 25. of November, but not having received any answer, trusts your goodness will take her case into consideration, as the lady has engaged another, because your petitioner could give no answer. Now Gentlemen, her only hope rests that you will grant some assistance to struggle through this dreadful season, being oppressed with poverty, age, and the Gout, which now greatly afflicts her right hand. To increase her distress, her husband was taken ill yesterday, with a very severe cold, and she is destitute of the means for support of him.—Thus distressed, she prays God for a favorable answer to this petition—and trusts it will be the last time of her even being a trouble to you.

And your petitioner in duty bound will ever pray

Anne Ker.

4. *Dated 1 May 1821. Ker received no response to this request.*

To The Gentlemen of The Literary Fund  
The Humble Petition of Anne Ker

*Sheweth*

That your petitioner four days after receiving your last bounty, was attacked in so violent a manner with Gout, and the fever so raged, as to cause an abscess in the breast, which the faculty thought a very singular case. The discharge was immense and reduced her to a deplorable state of weakness,—your petitioner was attended from the Surrey Dispensary by Dr. Davies and Mr. H. Greenhead and for want of money could afford no nurse, having a kind and good husband he was obliged (much to his praise) to be nurse and servant, and thank God through his good attention, your petitioner is once more restored, though still very weak and low, for want of the necessary supports to establish health, coming out of so dangerous an illness.—This calamity being attended with extra expense continues her in a state of great distress, and once more obliges your petitioner to part with nearly all that belonged to them, during that afflicting period.—And her illness disabling her of giving any assistance to her husband for support being so afflicted in the hands.—This unforeseen misfortune obliges her once more humbly to solicit the kind aid of your Benevolent Institution, which she prays God to bless and prosper for favors already received.—

And your petitioner is in duty bound will ever pray

Anne Ker.

5. *The following letter, dated 12 June 1821, was marked 'no motion passed' by the Fund. Ker again received no response.*

To the Gentlemen of The Literary Fund Society  
Gentlemen,

Having read of your Anniversary Dinner induces me to hope it will [illegible] of your extending your Benevolence towards me, as it should to your judgement appear, according to my last petition to your worthy Institution, in the beginning of May last, and I beg you to refer to that for the statement of my case which I humbly trust your goodness will take into consideration,

Your most obliged

And obedient servant, Anne Ker.

6. *The following entreaty, Ker's last to the fund, dated 27 October 1821, was declined.*

To the Gentlemen of the Literary Fund Society—  
The Humble Petition of Anne Ker—

Sheweth—

That your petitioner, author of *Edric the Forester &c.* and daughter of John Phillips author of the *History of Inland Navigation*, acknowledges with heartfelt gratitude your benevolent gift of last January 13th, which was of great service during her long and severe illness of the Gout. That providence has enabled your petitioner since then to contend with many difficulties, but as the Winter advanced the little she procured by industry has ceased, and is now driven to various necessities, which she is unable to explain in the small limits of this petition, and has no prospect of relief till the end of March. Thus destitute of friends she once more humbly solicits your benevolent aid, to enable her to struggle through this Winter, being in great hopes, with God's assistance to trouble you no more. At present your petitioner is labouring under many distresses as she incurred a few small debts which a sudden disappointment has made her unable to discharge, and humbly prays you will grant her some relief—

And your petitioner is in duty bound shall ever pray,

Anne Ker. 

## NOTES

1. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy, and Patricia Clements (eds), *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 608–09.
2. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, *The Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to 1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921–22). The entry for John Phillips, on p. 1093, gives a brief biography of Phillips and description of his work.
3. The title page to *Edric the Forester* describes Anne Ker as being 'OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ROXBURGH'S FAMILY'. The *DNB* entry for John Ker, Duke of Roxburgh, on p. 51, describes his interests and connections.
4. For the list of subscribers to Ker's novels see Section IV. Biographical entries for these subscribers appear in the *DNB*.
4. See Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: OUP, 1939), ch. v, which details the preferred modes of presentation for novels printed by the Minerva Press.
5. Peter Garside, 'The English Novel in the Romantic Era: Consolidation and Dispersal', in *The English Novel, 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, general eds Peter Garside, James Raven, Rainer Schöwerling, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2000), II, 40.
6. For transcriptions of the reviews mentioned here, see the Notes to the bibliographical entries, Section II.
7. For transcriptions of Ker's Prefaces see Section IV.
8. Archives of the Royal Literary Fund, 1790–1918, 145 reels (London: World Microfilms, 1982–83), Reel 12 (Case 424). Transcriptions in Section V.

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