YOUNG JANE AUSTEN AND THE CIRCULATION-LIBRARY NOVEL

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IN 1802, MARIA Edgeworth proudly reported to her friend Mary Sneyd the result of an inquiry her father had made in a "circulating library" in Leicester: he found there that "'Belinda,' 'Bulls,' etc. … were in good repute—'Castle Rackrent' in better—the others often borrowed, but 'Castle Rackrent' often bought" (85). Edgeworth's words convey an author's reasonable pleasure at news of good sales and positive word-of-mouth reviews, but her association of good sales with "good repute" also blurs the line between profit and propriety. Edgeworth, her father, and her friend appear to have shared an assumption, common at the time, that the "often bought" were not only more profitable for the author than the "often borrowed" but also more respectable. Jane Austen, on the other hand, was wont to question such an attitude, both as reader and as writer. Her oft-quoted statement that the Austens were "not ashamed" to be known as "great Novel-readers" must be taken to endorse the borrowed as well as the bought, since it occurs as part of her news that Mrs. Austen "finds the Money" to subscribe in Cassandra's name to a new "Library" (*Letters* 19 December 1798).[1] And when she reports that there may not be "a 2^{d} edition" of *Mansfield Park* because "People are more ready to borrow & praise, than to buy—which I cannot wonder at" (*Letters* 30 November 1814), her words convey no concern about what effect such borrowing might have on her book's "repute"—merely a resigned acknowledgement of financial practicalities. If, furthermore, Austen knew that *Belinda* was "often borrowed," this knowledge did not stop her from naming it as an exemplary novel—one of only three, the other two being Fanny Burney's *Cecilia* and *Camilla*—in her famous defense of novels at the end of chapter 5 in *Northanger Abbey* (*NA*).

Yet it is also noteworthy that Austen does not include *Evelina* in this list, which was published by Lowndes—a circulation-library publisher. Neither *Belinda*, *Cecilia*, nor *Camilla* had a publisher who specialized in circulation-library fiction.[2] Neither, for

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that matter, had *Mansfield Park*.[3] On the other hand, of the seven "horrid" novels that Isabella Thorpe recommends to Catherine Morland in chapter 6 of *Northanger Abbey*, six were published by the most successful circulation-library publisher of them all, the Minerva Press—famous (or notorious)[4] both for publishing gothic romances in the Radcliffean manner and for its active encouragement of young, often untried, women writers. By contrast, John Murray, who published *Mansfield Park*, was known for publishing Byron, Scott, and Isaac D'Israeli, as well as the *English Review*.

Such evidence suggests that, although Austen read widely all her life, choosing without apology among books both bought and borrowed,[5] she understood that publishers like Murray and publishers like Minerva operated according to very different business models, and the lack of overlap between the two *Northanger Abbey* lists suggests that these differences mattered to her as a young adult. In this essay, I consider what she may have understood of these differences as a teenager and how this understanding may have helped to shape her juvenilia, with particular focus on "Love and Freindship" (completed 1790, the year Austen turned fifteen). Although William Lane only began publishing under the Minerva imprint in 1790, by the end of that decade he had—thanks to his ongoing publication of gothic romances written in imitation of Ann Radcliffe, his recruitment of unknown women authors, and his innovative marketing strategies—eclipsed the competition.[6] However, as Edward Jacobs shows, "circulation-library publishers were" as a tribe "more likely to publish works by anonymous authors" and "more likely to publish works by female authors" than establishment publishers were. Moreover, the set-up and organization of circulation libraries made it easy for "readers to perceive and sample books as members of genres" (607, 617). Before the Minerva era began, one of Lane's major competitors in the field of circulation-library formula fiction, Thomas Hookham,[7] published several novels by anonymous authors that were important to Austen's juvenilia, including the three I focus on in this essay: Ann Radcliffe's *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and two by Eliza Nugent Bromley, *Laura and Augustus* (1784) and *The History of Sir Charles Bentinck and Louisa Cavendish* (1788/9?).[8] Because *Athlin and Dunbayne* and *Sir Charles Bentinck* are so little known, the first part of this essay establishes the case for acknowledging them as important targets of Austen's youthful satire, with particular focus on the recognition scenes in each.

With new books entering the market in ever-increasing numbers in the late eighteenth century, such aids to selection as advertisements, reviews, dedications, catalogues, prospectuses, and homemade reading lists were important to publishers, to even the most voracious of readers, and to new or aspiring authors. For this reason, besides Hookham's novels and Austen's parodies of them, I also consider associated paratexts. These include titles and dedications in Austen's case and, in Hookham's case, a list of "Books Printed by T. Hookham." This list includes excerpts of dedications and reviews in its descriptions of recent publications, which includes both *Sir Charles Bentinck* and *Athlin and Dunbayne*, and which appears inside *Athlin and Dunbayne* immediately following the title page, where any reader must notice it. The

very possibility that Austen paid attention to Hookham's list of "Books Printed" prompts a careful consideration of what the juvenilia may reveal about her reading process, her youthful understanding of circulation-library publishers' marketing strategies and materials, and her response to the model of authorship they promoted. In the second part of this essay, accordingly, I turn to *Northanger Abbey* for evidence of Austen's appreciation of the practical value to readers of such lists. The third part of this essay examines the influence of Hookham's list of "Books Printed" on Austen's own youthful paratexts, her dedications in particular. In the final part I read "Love and Freindship" in the context of circulation-library publishers' encouragement of female readers to consider taking up the pen, in order to argue that one of the targets of Austen's satire in "Love and Freindship" is young ladies like Laura who are not only quixotic readers of sentimental novels but also quixotic writers of the same.

"unexpected Happiness": The Pleasures of Recognition

JANE AUSTEN had little or no say about which books were permanently housed in her father's library, and as a child her input into decisions about which borrowed books found their way into the Austens' home would have been limited. Still, a reader must at some point choose to pick up this book rather than the one beside it or, once having read, to write about this book rather than that other one. And once in a while Austen's choices are surprising. A case in point is her decision to revisit, five years or more after its first and only printing, the anonymously published *Laura and Augustus* (Hookham, 1784), a circulation-library novel that received only one printing and had long since joined the ranks of the deservedly obscure when Malcolm Mudrick and Juliet McMaster revealed its significance as a source of "Love and Freindship" and made it seem worth reading again (Mudrick 4–9, 13–14; McMaster, *Jane Austen* 143–52).[9]

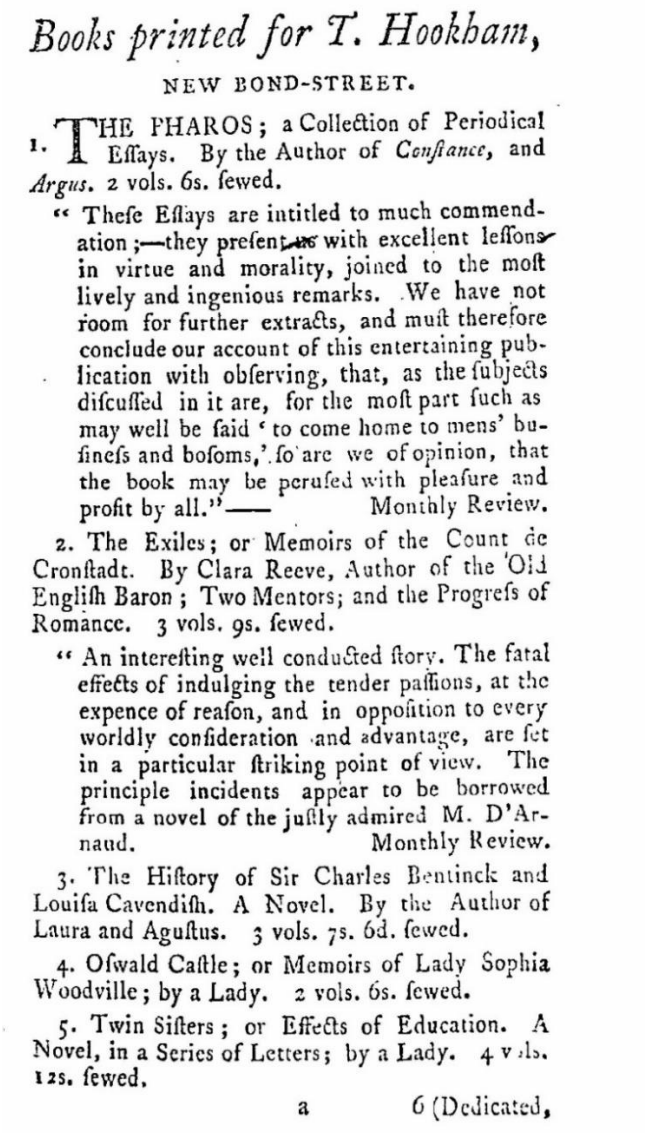
In many ways Austen's choice is not at all surprising: as Mudrick points out, *Laura and Augustus* is a good representative of the "'lachrymose novel'" and as such a deserving target of the satiric treatment she gave it (3–4).[10] Nor, given her "memory extremely tenacious" for books she had read (H. Austen, 273), is it surprising that Austen was able to retrieve details about Bromley's plot from memory,[11] even though as many as five years may have passed between the reading and the writing. And yet we may still wonder why—when the circulation-library publishers were churning out so many equally lachrymose candidates—Austen's attention landed on this one. More work remains to be done on this point, but the time gap may be anomalous, especially for the juvenilia. Consider, for instance, the fact that the circulation-library fiction that served Austen as a significant model for *Lady Susan*, namely Mary Robinson's epistolary novel *The Widow* (1794), another Hookham product, was published in the same year that Austen probably began writing her own epistolary novel about the

widowed Lady Susan (Sutherland, "Chronology" 15). Stephanie Russo quite reasonably hypothesises "that Austen would have encountered" *The Widow* "soon after its publication through a circulating library while at Steventon" (183–84).[12] Unlike such personal and family favourites as Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals*, neither *Laura and Augustus* nor *The Widow* is likely to have had a material presence in the Austen home long enough for the kind of revisiting that helps to keep a book fresh in memory. For one thing, these are not books that the Austens would invest money in purchasing, if only because Hookham made them so easy to borrow.[13] For another, a circulation library's cheaply bound novels were designed to be read "literally to pieces" (McLeod 85) and typically lasted only a few months.[14] *Laura and Augustus* is, therefore, highly unlikely to have been available in 1789 or 1790 for borrowing, or re-borrowing, especially from a small provincial library with limited stock that had to be kept current for readers who demanded the latest publications. Yet this is when Austen was choosing the names Laura and Augustus for two of her four main characters.[15]

Given this chronological oddity, I should very much like to ask what sort of system young Jane Austen employed for choosing which book to read—or to parody—next. That being a question to daunt even the most quixotic, however, I begin instead with an observation: that Ann Radcliffe's first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, was also published by Hookham, but in 1789; that it too, as F. B. Pinion has shown, was a significant source for "Love and Freindship"; and that it contains a mention of *Laura and Augustus* placed where Austen was almost guaranteed to see it—on the first page of the list of "Books Printed for T. Hookham." This paratext is eight pages long and contains fifty-four items; clearly, Hookham believed that it made financial sense to incur the cost of printing these extra pages when he added them to Radcliffe's slender, single-volume novel that sold for the comparatively low price of "3s. sewed" ("Books Printed," item number 53, a4^{v}).[16] In other words, Hookham expected readers to pay attention to this paratextual material and to make profitable reading selections accordingly.[17] Austen's juvenilia strongly suggests that she was, from a young age, one reader who did just as Hookham hoped, not least because on the first page of "Books Printed" she would have encountered the following: "3. The History of Sir Charles Bentinck and Louisa Cavendish. A Novel. By the Author of Laura and Agustus [*sic*]. 3 vols. 7s. 6d. sewed" (a1^{r}, see Fig. 1).

Sir Charles Bentinck was another significant influence on "Love and Freindship," as I have shown elsewhere; in fact, Austen appears to have been actively comparing Bromley's first and second novels as she wrote her epistolary spoof of the sentimental novel's "female faints, frenzies, and fulminations" (Peterson 84). Both of Bromley's first novels were published anonymously, but Hookham advertised the connection by identifying the latest as being "By the Author of Laura and Agustus [*sic*]." Thus, as soon as Austen picked up *Athlin and Dunbayne*, in one place all three circulation-library novels were brought to her attention. *Athlin and Dunbayne* by itself might have served to remind her of *Laura and Augustus*—Radcliffe's novel also features a heroine of

immense sensibility named Laura and a memorable recognition scene, to name just two similarities. But if Austen were reading as Hookham expected his subscribers to read, then the "Books Printed" list could well have been that which induced her to seek out *Sir Charles Bentinck*. Once sought, this novel turns out to be a kind of sequel to *Laura and Augustus*, so reading it would have further refreshed Austen's memory of its predecessor.[18] Furthermore, given the way circulation libraries were at least sometimes set up, where one Hookham work was to be found there could well have been plenty more readily to hand.[19]



Books printed for T. Hookham,

NEW BOND-STREET.

1. THE PHAROS; a Collection of Periodical Eſſays. By the Author of *Conſtance*, and *Argus*. 2 vols. 6s. ſewed.

"Theſe Eſſays are intitled to much commendation;—they preſent us with excellent leſſons in virtue and morality, joined to the moſt lively and ingenious remarks. We have not room for further extracts, and muſt therefore conclude our account of this entertaining publication with obſerving, that, as the ſubjects diſcuſſed in it are, for the moſt part ſuch as may well be ſaid 'to come home to mens' buſineſs and boſoms,' ſo are we of opinion, that the book may be peruſed with pleaſure and profit by all."— Monthly Review.

2. The Exiles; or Memoirs of the Count de Cronſtadt. By Clara Reeve, Author of the Old Engliſh Baron; Two Mentors; and the Progreſs of Romance. 3 vols. 9s. ſewed.

"An intereſting well conducted ſtory. The fatal effects of indulging the tender paſſions, at the expence of reaſon, and in oppoſition to every worldly conſideration and advantage, are ſet in a particular ſtriking point of view. The principle incidents appear to be borrowed from a novel of the juſtly admired M. D'Arnaud. Monthly Review.

3. The Hiſtory of Sir Charles Bentinck and Louiſa Cavendiſh. A Novel. By the Author of Laura and Auguſtus. 3 vols. 7s. 6d. ſewed.

4. Oſwald Caſtle; or Memoirs of Lady Sophia Woodville; by a Lady. 2 vols. 6s. ſewed.

5. Twin Siſters; or Effects of Education. A Novel, in a Series of Letters; by a Lady. 4 vols. 12s. ſewed.

a 6 (Dedicated,

Fig. 1. "Books Printed for T. Hookham," in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne *by Anne Radcliffe (London: Hookham, 1789), a1r. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.*

The scenario I sketch out here—in which Austen begins reading Radcliffe's first novel and is in the process reminded of Bromley's first novel in a manner that prompts her to reach for Bromley's second—is purely hypothetical and deserves a healthy skepticism. We can never know how it happened that Austen brought these three circulation-library novels together and introduced them into the company of the other works of fiction and drama that she offers us the pleasure of recognising within the pages of both "Love and Freindship" and "Lesley Castle." We can say only that this is one possibility; at the most, we might say that it is the simplest explanation for the facts before us.[20] However, we might also consider it an invitation—an invitation to do as Hookham and Austen each did in their own ways, and consider the three novels together.

Of the three, only *Laura and Augustus* kills off the hero, as Austen does in her burlesque. In volume 1, Laura Levison and Augustus Montague marry despite Mr. Levison's cruel opposition, but after sundry adventures and much suffering, in volume 3 Augustus dies of consumption. Laura dies shortly thereafter, after first demonstrating her sensibility in a sequence of swoons and ravings. Austen follows this basic structure in "Love and Freindship" in that her Laura and Edward marry at the beginning of the story and then flee Edward's "'mean and mercenary'" father (108); her Augustus also "dies in pathetic circumstances," along with Edward, when their phaeton overturns (McMaster and others 36n3). Sophia, the widow of Austen's Augustus, like Bromley's Laura follows her husband in death, after indulging in an ill-judged and "imprudent … swoon" (*Juvenilia* 132). This much is well known.

In certain other respects, however, both *Sir Charles Bentinck* and *Athlin and Dunbayne* align more closely with "Love and Freindship" than Bromley's first novel does. Whereas the entire plot of *Laura and Augustus* revolves around a single young couple, *Athlin and Dunbayne* and *Sir Charles Bentinck* both feature two sensitive young women who marry two noble young men who are one another's closest friends. In both novels, furthermore, once the young women meet they also become devoted friends. This is just what we find in "Love and Freindship": Laura marries Edward, the best friend of Augustus, who has recently married Sophia. No sooner do Laura and Sophia meet than they exchange "mutual Protestations of Freindship, and … vows of unalterable love" (115), and they spend much of the rest of the story supporting (or enabling) one another. The brides in *Athlin and Dunbayne*, Mary and Laura, do not meet to begin their friendship until after most of their troubles have been resolved, but in *Sir Charles Bentinck*, Louisa's friend Maria supports and assists Louisa through her various tribulations and exaltations and plays a major (if largely accidental) role in Louisa's final rescue. At the same time, the story of Maria's own courtship with Bentinck's best friend Edward Sedley (yes, another Edward!) forms a significant subplot, in which Louisa provides her friend with advice and support. This partnership between two active young women is much closer to what we find in

"Love and Freindship" than the friendship in *Laura and Augustus* between Laura Levison and her chief correspondent Cecilia; this friend does nothing for Laura until it is far too late and is perhaps remarkable mainly for her inaction.

Of course, such plots as these are legion. The case for acknowledging *Athlin and Dunbayne* and *Sir Charles Bentinck* as significant sources of Austen's juvenilia becomes much stronger, however, when we turn from plot to specific details of description and dialogue. Radcliffe's first novel has been largely overlooked by Austen scholars, but Pinion, an important exception, cites several details in *Athlin and Dunbayne* that establish its "contribution" to "Love and Freindship," including the fact that one of Radcliffe's heroes is found, at a critical moment, "weltering in his blood" (239), while Austen's Edward and Augustus are similarly found, when their phaeton overturns, "most elegantly attired but weltering in their blood" (*Juvenilia* 129).

This may be a simple case of what Austen would later term "thorough novel slang" (*Letters* 28 September 1814), but Pinion is surely right to observe a "most remarkable coincidence" (173) between Radcliffe's description of her Laura and Austen's of Sophia. Radcliffe's Laura, we learn, is "about twenty, her person … of middle stature … and very elegantly formed. The bloom of her youth was shaded by a soft and pensive melancholy" (124–25). Austen's Laura, in describing her long-lost friend Sophia, provides much the same information, presented in the same order, with similar and at points identical language: "Sophia was rather above the middle size; most elegantly formed. A soft Languor spread over her lovely features, but increased their Beauty" (*Juvenilia* 113). There are two subtle enhancements to note, however: Laura recalls her friend's being "*above* the middle size [my emphasis]"; and instead of allowing the "soft and pensive melancholy" of Radcliffe's heroine to have somewhat shaded her youthful "bloom," Laura insists that her friend's "soft languor" actually "increased" her "beauty." In this, just as there is in that doubling of the number of "weltering" heroes, I note an element of competition: Austen's Laura, who is telling the story of her adventures in a series of letters to the daughter of an old friend, is ambitious to be seen by her reader as an expert in sensibility,[21] so in this case she offers to her reader's imagination a heroine who matches Radcliffe's—and surpasses her.

I would further argue that Austen's familiarity with Radcliffe's text is again on display in "Lesley Castle." Samuel Johnson and William Gilpin are generally credited as the primary sources of Austen's description of the Lesley family's ancestral home, with no mention of Radcliffe: Peter Sabor notes, for instance, that there are "many descriptions of isolated, rock-bound castles" in Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands* on which she could have drawn (Notes 446n. 11); and Pinion asserts that "Only from some of the arresting illustrations in" Gilpin's *Observations … on the High-lands of Scotland* (1789) "could Jane have imagined her amusing picture of Lesley Castle" (161).[22] Yet the specific details of Austen's description appear to have been drawn from the opening paragraph of *Athlin and Dunbayne*: "On the north east coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands, stood the Castle of Athlin; an

edifice built on the summit of a rock whose base was in the sea. This pile was venerable from its antiquity, and from its gothic structure" (1). Compare Margaret Lesley's description of her family's "old and Mouldering Castle, which is situated two miles from Perth on a bold Projecting Rock, and commands an extensive view of the Town" (144). Both descriptions specify location, elevation, age, and appearance, and the information is in all points the same: the castle is built on a high rock (high enough to have a "summit" in Radcliffe's case and to command "an extensive view" in Austen's); it is old; and its age makes it look "venerable" in Radcliffe's case, "Mouldering" in Austen's. The parody in this case, as others have noted, lies in Austen's relocating this rock from a remote and "romantic" coast overlooking the sea to a position inland overlooking populous Perth (Sabor, Notes 446n. 12). It lies also, I would add, in her succinct mockery of the entire gothic sensibility by downgrading Radcliffe's air of "venerable … antiquity" to one merely "old and Mouldering." Since opening paragraphs are particularly memorable, Austen may have confidently expected others in her reading network to have recognised traces of *Athlin and Dunbayne* in "Lesley Castle."

The pleasure that parody offers readers always depends on recognition, and it is hard to think of any passage in Austen that packs more of such pleasure into a few short lines than the recognition scene in "Love and Freindship." Although the object of scholarly attention before now, for the purposes of comparison I quote the passage at some length here:

> … our Attention was attracted by the Entrance of a coroneted Coach and 4 into the Inn-yard. A Gentleman considerably advanced in years, descended from it—. At his first Appearance my Sensibility was wonderfully affected and e'er I had gazed at him a 2d time, an instinctive Sympathy whispered to my Heart, that he was my Grandfather.
>
> Convinced that I could not be mistaken in my conjecture I instantly sprang from the Carriage I had just entered, and following the Venerable Stranger into the Room he had been shewn to, I threw myself on my knees before him and besought him to acknowledge me as his Grand-Child.—He started, and after having attentively examined my features, raised me from the Ground and throwing his Grand-fatherly arms around my Neck, exclaimed, "Acknowledge thee! Yes dear resemblance of my Laurina and my Laurina's Daughter, sweet image of my Claudia and my Claudia's Mother, I do acknowledge thee as the Daughter of the one and the Grandaughter of the other." While he was thus tenderly embracing me, Sophia astonished at my precipitate Departure, entered the Room in search of me.—No sooner had she caught the eye of the venerable Peer, than he exclaimed with every mark of Astonishment—"Another

> Grandaughter! Yes, yes, I see you are the Daughter of my Laurina's eldest Girl …. He folded her in his arms, and whilst they were tenderly embracing, the Door of the Apartment opened and a most beautifull Young Man appeared. On perceiving him Lord St Clair started and retreating back a few paces, with uplifted Hands, said, "Another Grand-child! What an unexpected Happiness is this! to discover in the space of 3 minutes, as many of my Descendants!" (120–21)

Within a few short sentences a fourth grandchild appears, an event that has Lord St Clair "looking fearfully towards the Door" lest any more arrive (121).

This scene is widely acknowledged as referencing two scenes in Fanny Burney's *Evelina*: the "passage … preceding the discovery scene, in which Sir John Belmont denies that Evelina is his child" (Sabor, Notes 437n. 70); and Evelina's second interview with her father, subsequent to the discovery scene (McMaster, *Jane Austen* 126). In the former, Belmont drily observes that he "has had the pleasure of discovering" more than enough children lately (403); the latter climaxes just as Austen's scene does with the words "Acknowledge thee …!—Yes …!" (416).[23] But just as one lord can discover multiple grandchildren, all with some family resemblance, so too can a reader discover multiple sources of a single recognition scene—and multiple literary ancestors for that one lord. For readers, if not for grandfathers, the more the merrier.

Others before me have already recognised several members of the clan. One, as I have noted, is the recognition scene in *Laura and Augustus*. But the family tree is a large one, and there are important recognition scenes in *Sir Charles Bentinck* and *Athlin and Dunbayne*, as well, that should catch the eye of the venerable Reader. The one in *Sir Charles Bentinck* is especially noteworthy for featuring the recognition of a grandfather rather than a parent. Moreover, this grandfather is, as in Austen, a nobleman; a coach figures prominently in the events leading up to the recognition scene; and in both texts, the grandchild who describes the scene in a letter written years after the event claims to have felt an instant affinity ("reverence" in Bromley; "Sympathy" in Austen) for a "venerable," though as yet unidentified, grandfather (Bromley, *Sir Charles Bentinck* 2.117; Austen, *Juvenilia* 120). None of these details can be found in the comparable scene in *Laura and Augustus*—or in *Evelina*.

Specific elements of the recognition scene in *Athlin and Dunbayne* are hard to find in "Love and Freindship," but as Pinion notes, the reunited families in both works boast aristocratic grandfathers with the same title (172). In Radcliffe's tale, the widowed Baroness Malcolm sees the "young Highland peasant" Alleyn (11) and swoons with shock, having recognised him by "his very air, his features," and "that strawberry [birthmark] on his arm" as her long-lost son Philip: no peasant after all but the true Baron Malcolm, brother of Laura, heir to the Castle Dunbayne, and eligible suitor to Mary, sister of the young Earl of Athlin (275). Previous to this moment, however, we have already come to know (thanks to a lengthy embedded

narrative) that the baroness's father, the grandfather of Alleyn/Philip and Laura, was a Swiss nobleman by the name of "the Marquis de St. Claire" (143). Thus, the scene in "Love and Freindship" where Lord St. Clair's family explodes unlooked-for into an extensive and complex network of relations is also a scene that explodes into an extensive and complex network of literary allusions; with the same dizzying rapidity, a legion of antecedents arises to demand *our* recognition just as Lord St Clair's descendants arrive to demand his. What else can we do in such a case but throw our Hands up and exclaim with the venerable Peer, "Acknowledge thee! Yes!"

The authors Austen imitated with such glee and such facility were, themselves, committed and (at least sometimes) creative imitators, and of this Austen was well aware: in *Northanger Abbey*, she refers to the "charming" works by Radcliffe and "all her imitators" (204). As M. H. Dunlop reminds us, "every text is … a network of codes, fragments, various strands existing in perhaps uneasy relationship to one another. Furthermore, any text is intertextually connected to networks of other texts in webs constituted of cultural codes, common borrowings, [and] repeated narrative lines" (251). Moreover, formula fiction—like the novels of sentiment that Hookham published in the 1780s—is an especially good source of "pleasurable recognition" (Dunlop 251), and Austen's juvenilia documents her discovery of this fact. Hannah Doherty Hudson observes "that the popular fiction of the 1790s and early 1800s seems to be unusually—perhaps uniquely—interconnected" and, more particularly, that "Minerva's authors," those charming imitators of Radcliffe, "were engaged in a deeply imitative and intertextual writing practice" (150, 161). I would argue that this description of the Minerva gothic applies equally well to the Hookham sentimental, and that, like the authors Hudson describes, Austen recognised imitation as "a rich and flexible *practice*" (Hudson 150, original emphasis).

We know that young Austen read fiction analytically, to master generic conventions; "Running through all her juvenilia is the young author's delight in her medium, her fascination with each genre and its conventions. How does a given genre *work*? she asks herself" (McMaster, *Jane Austen* 72). Dunlop's and Hudson's work suggests that the multiple examples of formula fiction the circulation libraries made available to readers played an essential role in Austen's process of answering that question. Jacobs argues, similarly, that these "libraries gave readers an unprecedented material basis for recognizing intertextual relationships, and for identifying generic conventions" (617).[24] Even though her amusement at certain genres and their conventions grew apace with her knowledge, in other words, her journey towards mastery may well have been propelled by formula fiction.

"I have made a list": Readers, Writers, and Paratexts

JANE AUSTEN, as Isobel Grundy observes, "was never in a position, even had she wished it, to work through the kind of subject-bibliography which Emma is always

drawing up; instead, she was dependent on titles which happened to come her way." Accordingly, she "picked her reading matter for herself from a wide range of rich and multiple traditions; but she knew no tradition systematically or comprehensively" (189, 190). This is an important insight that I would not wish to dispute.[25] Nor do I wish to dismiss the compelling evidence, presented in recent years by such scholars of the Minerva Press and other circulating libraries as Deborah Anne McLeod, Lee Erickson, and Jan Fergus, that the novels these libraries carried varied far more in quality, in content, and in originality than they have often been given credit for.[26] Nevertheless, I do suggest that the relative uniformity of the circulation-library novels of Austen's youth and their relative availability may have made it possible for her, if only for a brief (though significant) period in her development, to read formula fiction with a relatively systematic assiduity. I aim here to describe not the reading of a lifetime but only some of the reading of a particular period in Austen's life that roughly coincided with the writing of the juvenilia. But perhaps such a goal justifies asking whether the teenaged Jane Austen, who clearly recognised the complexity of the network of affiliations that existed between the various novels that currently filled the shelves of circulation libraries and publishers' advertisements, felt quite the same about lists like Emma's as adult Jane Austen indubitably did. The numbers of such novels were being added to constantly at a rapidly increasing rate; as Hudson notes, "Literary overwhelm necessitates categorisation and systems of selection" (150).

There can be little question that the process by which a teenage girl might select her reading material—or might be influenced in the selection of her reading material—is a subject Austen takes up in *Northanger Abbey*. On one reading, this novel dramatises the practical value of some sort of systematic approach to a large and fast-growing body of work. If *Northanger Abbey* (composed between 1798 and 1799, revised 1803 [Sutherland, "Chronology" 21]) explores the pleasures and perils of a steady diet of gothic romances, it also explores the ways in which a teenage girl's programme of reading might be shaped and influenced: seventeen-year-old Catherine Morland's passion for novels in the style of Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is supported and nurtured, not by reviewers, but by networks of readers, and these networks are, in part, supported by the circulation libraries. Moreover, in an informal practice analogous to the circulation libraries' catalogues and other paratexts, these networks of readers are, in part, supported by the study and exchange of such simple and practical paratexts as the homemade list of recommended titles.[27]

When Isabella Thorpe offers Catherine Morland such a list, she does so in a conversation that depicts the use to which a list of suggested readings—whether personally compiled or obtained from a knowledgeable stranger—may be put:

> " … when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you."
>
> "Have you, indeed! How glad I am! — What are they all?"

> "I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocket-book. Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time."
>
> "Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?"
>
> "Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, … has read every one of them." (*NA* 33)

Catherine welcomes the offered list, as well she might: a single *General Prospectus* published in 1798 by the Minerva Press lists thirty-four titles as having been "This Season Published" by just this one publisher, and many of these titles are suitably gothic.[28] Faced with such abundance of riches, a reader could use some assistance.

Although on the morning of this conversation Catherine has been reading *Udolpho* alone just prior to meeting Isabella, the narrator informs us that the two friends have, on occasion, "shut themselves up, to read novels together" (30). We know by this point, then, that they have already established a collaborative approach to reading. This, and the fact that they are in Bath, which at the time of writing had multiple lending libraries,[29] is the context for the conversation: a context that explains why Catherine evinces no surprise at the list's existence, its second-hand origin, or its practical use-value. That is, she expresses no concern about the titles' availability, even though Isabella never claims that either she or Miss Andrews actually owns any of the seven titles that her "particular friend" has endorsed. Catherine only seeks assurance that they are all as "horrid" as advertised.

Some skepticism is clearly justified, given Isabella's tendency to overpromise and underdeliver. Catherine has not yet suspected this aspect of her new friend's character, but given a similar tendency among publishers her question is a reasonable one.[30] Instead of reading reviews or prospectuses, Catherine relies on a friend's recommendations, and Austen shows this to be a sensible strategy: even a non-expert reader of *Northanger Abbey* in 1798 or 1799 might have been expected to recognise that the list Miss Andrews has given to Isabella is in fact legitimate. The titles tick all the boxes: all but one announce their common genre, promising some combination of castle, forest, foreign setting, darkness, mystery, black magic, and horror. Even *Clermont* (Minerva, 1798) has a promisingly foreign ring to it, and it would have been recognised by aficionados as the second novel by the immensely popular Regina Maria Roche, author of the bestselling *Children of the Abbey* (Minerva, 1796).[31] Yet more promising is the fact that, as we have seen, six out of the seven were published by the Minerva Press. By the late 1790s Minerva was the largest publisher of circulation-library fiction in England, the largest provider of circulation libraries, and the largest purveyor of works aimed at young ladies and written (or advertised as having been written) in the Radcliffean style. By 1802 "the Minerva Library Catalogue listed nearly

17,000 titles" (McLeod 24), and Minerva had captured "fully one-third of the market for novels" (Hudson 151).

For a reader of such works, moreover, Miss Andrews demonstrates some discernment. Three of the titles on her list are by authors listed among Minerva's ten "particular and favorite Authors" in the 1798 *Prospectus*, and all seven have qualities to commend them.[32] *Horrid Mysteries* (1796) and *The Midnight Bell* are each outliers in different ways: the former features unusually "luscious and detailed" love scenes (Sadleir 19), and the latter is not published by Minerva. Still, *Horrid Mysteries* keeps Roche and Parsons company within the pages of Minerva's 1798 *Prospectus*: it is one of the thirty-four works listed (however misleadingly) as "This Season Published" (311) and given thereby the cachet of currency.[33] Reputation within Austen's own network as well as reputation with the general readership helps account for her inclusion of Lathom's *Midnight Bell*: a title that her father is known to have "Got from the library," read and, presumably, enjoyed (Austen, *Letters* 24 October 1798). We may suspect that Austen, no fan herself of "luscious and detailed" love scenes,[34] would not recommend every one of these seven titles to members of her own reading circle, but she would have had good reason, in all seven cases, for selecting them as titles that a Miss Andrews would single out for reading, discussing, and recommending in 1798 or 1799. All in all, Catherine has been given a list that, if acted upon, might lead her in time to suspect that her own moral standards are higher than those of Isabella and her friends (something she is soon to discover in any case). But it is also a list that should satisfy her hopes otherwise, both for "horrid" content and for authorial competence.

In *Northanger Abbey*, then, Austen suggests that strategic reading requires paying attention to a book's reputation, especially among members of one's social network; paying attention to a publisher's reputation; and paying attention to supplementary material where available, such as library catalogues, prospectuses, and other lists of suggested readings. On the basis of such aids, it appears, reasonable decisions can be made.

"an interesting and well written Tale": Infomercials in Austen's Juvenilia

IF LATE eighteenth-century readers found lists like Isabella's to be useful, so too, we may safely assume, did the authors and publishers whose books appeared on them. Authors' reputations could benefit from association with other authors on such lists, and so could sales. Lane may have been the best at promoting his business among the circulation-library publishers at the time,[35] but others used similar marketing strategies, as we have already seen in the case of Hookham's edition of *Athlin and Dunbayne*.

Unlike Hookham, Austen was not seeking subscribers; nor was she interested in promoting works written by others. So it is not surprising that the juvenilia offer little evidence that Austen paid attention to the rhetoric of such paratexts as Hookham's "Advertisement" for his circulating library, also included inside the covers of both *Athlin and Dunbayne* and *Sir Charles Bentinck*.[36] The three collected volumes of her juvenilia do, however, demonstrate her knowledge of many of the same strategies for promoting works, soliciting readers, and encouraging networks of readers with common interests that we find in the list of "Books Printed" and similar paratexts of the time. These include providing lengthy, descriptive titles that signal a work's generic affiliations and promise certain satisfactions to the reader; quoting positive reviews; and establishing an author's credibility and status by quoting from a work's dedication.

The lengthy, descriptive title is not specific to the circulation-library novel or to publishers' lists and catalogues but is rather a characteristic of contemporary novels in general, so it is no surprise that so many of the titles Austen gives to her juvenilia seem cut from the same cloth as those found in Hookham's list. "Love and Freindship; a novel in a series of Letters" follows many of the same conventions that Hookham follows in "5. Twin Sisters; or Effects of Education. A Novel, in a Series of Letters; by a Lady. 4 vols. 12 s. sewed" (a1^{r}, see Fig. 1). From each of these titles we know that the novel is epistolary and quite probably sentimental. From such a description as Hookham's "8. History of Henrietta Mortimer, or the Force of Filial Affection, a Novel; by a Lady. 2 vols. 5s. sewed" (a1^{v}), potential readers may even hazard a guess as to the moral tendencies of the books described. There is no need whatsoever to guess in the case of this parodic paratext of Austen's: "The Generous Curate[:] a moral Tale, setting forth the advantages of being Generous and a Curate" (*Juvenilia* 94).

Paratexts that in this way comically conflate the descriptive function of a title with the summary assessment of a review appear regularly throughout the juvenilia. Consider the full paratext of "Mr Harley":

> The adventures of Mr Harley
>
> a short, but interesting Tale, is with all imaginable Respect inscribed to Mr Francis William Austen Midshipman on board his Majestys Ship the Perseverance by his Obedient Servant
>
> The Author. (*Juvenilia* 46)

Here, in one concise sentence, Austen moves without a pause from informative description ("adventures"), to self-written review ("interesting"), to dedication. The paratext for "Amelia Webster" is structured in precisely the same way:

Amelia Webster.

an interesting and well written Tale
is dedicated by Permission
to
Mrs Austen
by
Her Humble Servant
The Author. (*Juvenilia* 57)

These two, because of their hybrid nature, are not texts we would be likely to find on the title page of any published volume Austen might be reading at the time, but they do, in their concision and in the particular elements combined, recall such entries as we find in Hookham's "Books Printed." In fact, Austen's language closely echoes that of the reviews extracted in that list, such as the *Monthly Review*'s description of the second item:

> 2. The Exiles; or Memoirs of the Count de Cronstadt, By Clara Reeve, Author of the Old English Baron; Two Mentors; and the Progress of Romance. 3 vols. 9s. sewed.
>
> "An interesting well conducted story …."
>
> The Monthly Review. (a1^{r}, see Fig. 1)

If *The Exiles* can be described as "An interesting well conducted story," then "Amelia Webster" can be described as "an interesting and well written tale." By including such commentary herself, however, Austen pokes sly fun at any pretensions to informative objectivity that such a list as Hookham's might have;[37] at the same time she proleptically describes her work in just the way that an author would expect to see in her publisher's marketing materials.

Information about an author's previous publications is sometimes part of a publisher's description of a work, especially when the author's name is withheld, but this too blurs the line between information and promotion. In the case of *Sir Charles Bentinck*, "By the Author of Laura and Agustus [*sic*]" stands in metonymically for the author's name in both Hookham's "Books Printed" list and on the book's title page itself. Similarly, readers of Radcliffe's second novel, *A Sicilian Romance* (Hookham, 1790), found the words "By the Authoress of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne" on the title page. But where the author's name is given, as in the case of Hookham's description of *The Exiles*, quoted above, the description of Clara Reeve as "Author of the Old English Baron; Two Mentors; and the Progress of Romance" must be considered advertising.

Austen's conflation of title, review, and dedication in so many of her paratexts is fully justified by such entries in Hookham's list as this one:

> 6. (Dedicated, with permission, to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales)—an Epitome of the History of Europe, from the Reign of Charlemagne, to the Beginning of the Reign of George the Third; by Sir William O'Dogherty, Knt. 6s. boards.
>
> "The above work appears by no means destitute of merit …."
>
> English Review. ("Books Printed" a1^{v})

Here the dedication functions as an advertisement for the book, one aimed at readers whose decisions are influenced by their own and their authors' networks and affiliations; in this case the publisher must expect to increase sales (or circulation-library subscriptions) by documenting the author's affiliation with the Prince of Wales. In the juvenilia, Austen's carefully chosen dedications identify people whom we can, by and large, assume to have been interested readers of the works the author honours them with; they are "wittily tailored to the dedicatee" (Sabor, "Brotherly" 45). Yet as Austen's later history would demonstrate, dedications do not always mark such relationships, especially in published works where they are investments of the author's labour and the publisher's paper and ink that are expected to bring reasonable returns. In the case of *Emma*, the Prince Regent supplied Austen and her publisher "with advertising that did," in Margaret Anne Doody's assessment, "have its effect on reviewers and readership" (89). Quoting a dedication in paratexts other than the title page, such as catalogues, prospectuses, and "Books Printed" lists, increases such an effect.

The teenaged Austen could not have known about *Emma*, but she understood enough about dedications to expose the puffery behind the genre's veneer of grateful humility in her dedication to her sister of "Catharine, or the Bower":

> To Miss Austen
>
> Madam,
>
> Encouraged by your warm patronage of The beautiful Cassandra, and The History of England, which through your generous support have obtained a place in every library in the Kingdom, and run through threescore Editions, I take the liberty of begging the same Exertions in favour of the following Novel, which I humbly flatter myself, possesses Merit beyond any already published, or any that will ever in future appear, except such as may proceed from the pen of Your Most Grateful Humble Serv^{t},
>
> The Author (*Juvenilia* 241)

Here Austen conflates the rhetoric of the publisher's description (in this case, its identification of the author's previous works) and the periodical's review ("possesses Merit beyond any already published") with that of the author's humble dedication ("Your Most Grateful Humble Serv[t]"). In doing so she makes the implicit explicit, exposing the "Humble" dedication as a thinly disguised boast.

That the purpose of such puffery is to make money for the publisher or to obtain financial support from a patron either directly or indirectly (i.e., by advertising his support to potential readers) is, then, something that Austen fully understood, even though she leaves it to her brother Henry to make this understanding explicit in his response to her dedication to "Lesley Castle." "I am now availing myself of the Liberty you have frequently honoured me with," she writes, "of dedicating one of my Novels to you," and she signs herself "your obliged humble Servant, The Author." Directly beneath this, her banker brother has added the following instruction: "Messrs Demand and Co—please to pay Jane Austen Spinster the sum of one hundred guineas on account of your hum[bl] Servant, H T Austen" (*Juvenilia* 142).This particular exchange between Austen and her brother does, like the other dedications in her juvenilia, genuinely honour a significant relationship, but it also problematises the relationship between an author and her audience by testing the boundary between writing to please and writing for profit. By naming his fictional banking house "Messrs Demand and Co," Henry Austen maintains the fiction that it is someone other than the author who is making a "Demand" for money; at the same time, by introducing such language as "Demand" and "pay" onto the page, he points up how small the distance is between the exchange of status and gratitude that a dedication performs and a straightforward business transaction's exchange of cash. His sister, with her demonstrated awareness of the function of the conventional dedication, surely shared this perspective.[38]

"my unhappy Story": Publication, Aspiration, Circulation

WHETHER a dedication constructs its dedicatee primarily as reader or primarily as patron, in either case it foregrounds the role of the intermediary: the sponsor, dedicatee, or publisher who can play a critical role in bringing author and audience together and who could, in Austen's day, play a critical role in determining whether or not a "young Lady" became an "Author." Austen's parody in "Love and Freindship" of the epistolary novel of sentiment—and of those who write them—results in her creating such an intermediary figure in the person of Laura's old friend Isabel. Laura puts pen to paper because, just as a publisher might do, Isabel determines that Laura has a story worth telling and then solicits the as-yet-unwritten manuscript on behalf of a potential consumer: "How often, in answer to my repeated intreaties that you would give my Daughter a regular detail of the Misfortunes and Adventures of your Life, have you said 'No, my freind never will I comply with your

request till I may be no longer in Danger of again experiencing such dreadful ones.'" But Laura is too old now for adventures, so Isabel urges her: "Surely that time is now at hand." In response, Laura promises in "LETTER 2D" that, "to avoid the imputation of Obstinacy or ill-nature," she "will gratify the curiosity" of Isabel's daughter Marianne by recounting "the many Afflictions of" her "past Life" as a "useful Lesson." In "LETTER 3D" Laura promptly addresses Marianne as "the Daughter of my most intimate friend," credits Isabel's role as the one who "has so often solicited" her "unhappy Story," and then immediately begins her narrative: "My Father was a native of Ireland" (*Juvenilia* 103–04). These are the circumstances that have led Laura to write letters that neither recount current events nor connect with an intimate friend but instead present a carefully constructed tale to a reader with whom Laura has no personal relationship.

It is as a direct result of Isabel's solicitations, and under her aegis, that Laura immediately begins to plan her story: it will be, she determines, an "unhappy" one that teaches "a useful Lesson" about "fortitude." Having made her plan, she then puts it into action immediately, launching directly into her narrative in the approved manner. Whereas Isabel refers to "intreaties," Laura claims to have been "solicited" to write, using a term equally at home in the discourses of business and friendship. From the start, then, even though none of the three principals mentions money, Laura does her untutored best to imitate a professional.

I do not, however, mean to claim that Laura's authorial self-fashioning only begins with Isabel's "intreaties." Rather, I suggest, it began with her reading: with her voracious consumption of the sentimental fiction that she now imitates. "Love and Freindship," as Olivia Murphy argues, "is essentially a first-person narration masquerading as an epistolary novel" (34). Moreover, because of the time that has passed between the events Laura recounts and the letters in which she writes down her story, Austen makes it impossible for us to know how much of what we read is evidence of Laura trying to *act* like a sentimental heroine and how much is evidence of Laura trying to *write* like a sentimental novelist. Where it is this easy for a reader to turn writer, Austen suggests, the difference can be difficult to discern.

It would have been quite reasonable for Austen to see the readers of circulation-library novels as particularly prone to authorial ambition, because the publishers of these works, hungry for inexpensive manuscripts to feed the ever-growing demand, encouraged such ambitions. As Jacobs has shown, "fledgling publishers who wanted to get in on this burgeoning enterprise could not compete in terms of money, author prestige, or business connections with the established publishers"; therefore these "new publishers … needed to discover and exploit new authors who would work for cheap" (612). Lane's efforts in this regard have been relatively well documented, despite the ephemeral nature of much advertising, and some of these records predate "Love and Freindship." For instance, "in 1784 he was advertising for 'several Novels in Manuscript for publishing the ensuing Season'" (Blakey 9). Lane even made a practice of publishing novels that contained positive representations of him as

publisher, including one, *The Follies of St. James's Street* (1789), in which "a minor character with pretensions to authorship" who experiences "difficulties … placing her second novel" praises her treatment at his hands; this woman author assures the reader "'that young and timid adventurers for fame may be encouraged to present the offsprings of their genius, to Lane's Literary Repository, [where] it is but justice to say, the proprietor is both free, generous and encouraging'" (qtd. in Blakey 70–71). As Blakey notes, this "portrait of Lane … suggests that a definite part of his policy was to attract young and timid writers, who would be flattered to part with their manuscripts at any price" (71).

It is far from impossible for Austen to have encountered one or more of such solicitations. Even had she not, however, it remains the case that, as Jacobs points out, "because proprietors constructed circulating libraries as social sites, the libraries allowed reading patrons and other prospective authors an unusually direct and familiar access to the publishing business. Circulating-library publishers also had a unique ability more or less to guarantee 'circulation' for the books they published, even if they were by novices, and this ability would presumably have attracted prospective authors" (616). And many of these authorial hopefuls were indeed women—something that must have been obvious to anyone skimming a circulation-library shelf, a catalogue, a prospectus, or a "Books Printed" list.

There was some basis in fact, then, for such negative appraisals of contemporary novels and novelists as Hannah More's: "such is the frightful facility of this species of composition that every raw girl while she reads, is tempted to fancy that she can also write …. Capacity and cultivation are so little taken into the account, that writing a book seems to be now considered as the only sure resource which the idle and illiterate have always in their power" (1.170–72). We know that Austen was not one to lump all novels and all novelists together without distinction as More does; nevertheless, "Love and Freindship" suggests that, years before More published this comment in 1799, Austen may have entertained similar suspicions about some readers-turned-writers and about those who, conflating the roles of publisher and confidante, "tempted" readers to "fancy" themselves authors, tempted consumers to imagine themselves producers on a par with professionals.

From the outset, in "Love and Freindship," Austen represents Laura, Edward, and others of their generation as unduly confident in their ability to tell a good story and in their right to expect rewards for having done so. In "LETTER 3D" Edward concludes the story of his life and asks immediately, "and now my Adorable Laura … when may I hope to receive that reward of all the painfull sufferings I have undergone during the course of my Attachment to you … ?" (*Juvenilia* 109). Since he has only just arrived at Laura's home, and since he has spent virtually the entire time since that moment in narrating his story, the "course" of his "Attachment" must have paralleled the course of his narrative; therefore, the only pain he has undergone must consist in the labour of telling his story. Now he "hope[s] to receive" a "reward" for it. Similarly, Philander and Gustavus understand their arrival at the inn as an opportunity to

exchange a story for reward: "we agreed to endeavour to get something from him by discovering the Relationship," they tell Laura; "You know how well it succeeded—" (139). Laura and Sophia, as well, expect and obtain material reward when they write "a very elegant and well-penned Note" to Sophia's relative Macdonald, "containing an Account of our Destitute and melancholy Situation" (119). We know how well it succeeded: Macdonald buys their story. Their first reward is free accommodations; their second is access (albeit unintentionally provided) to the cash in Macdonald's "private Drawer" (*Juvenilia* 125). This is the culture of equating narrative with money that helps explain why, when Laura next sees Gustavus and Philander, they expect her to "call them to account for the money which … they had unjustly deprived" her of back at the inn, "but find instead that she "mentioned nothing of the matter." She is there to exchange stories. "Accordingly," Laura reports, "we feasted ourselves … by a confidential Conversation" (137). As McMaster notes, it appears here that "Laura actually lives off people's lives and adventures"; her appetite for "personal narratives is insatiable" (130). Nonetheless, this craving notwithstanding, it is quite out of character for Laura to ignore an opportunity to line her pockets—unless we consider that, within this circle of like-minded relatives, stories are scrips. They are substitutes for legal tender.

To such instances of successful and satisfactory exchange, however, Austen opposes the disappointing results of Laura's final performance. When she encounters her various friends and connections on that coach from Edinburgh to Sterling, as she explains to Marianne, "in civility I complied with" Augusta's "and Sir Edward's intreaties that I would inform them of the whole melancholy Affair." Nor is she forced to limit herself to an abstract or brief chronicle of her time as Edward's wife and widow, for her in-laws' entreaties are followed immediately by those of her friend: "at the request of your Mother I related to them every other misfortune which had befallen me since we parted" (*Juvenilia* 134–35). What follows soon afterwards is money: "Sir Edward told me that as the Widow of his Son, he desired I would accept from his Hands of four Hundred a year" (140). But Laura could be better pleased. She complains, "I graciously promised that I would, but could not help observing that the unsimpathetic Baronet offered it more on account of my being the Widow of Edward than in being the refined and Amiable Laura" (140). Even worse, her old friend Isabel "pretended to find fault with my Behavior in many of the situations in which I had been placed" (135). Laura has just been handed the perfect opportunity to tell a story that will convince her captive audience of her "refined and Amiable" character, but it proves a failure with the critics. In this context we may recall Isabel's statement in "LETTER THE FIRST" that, "in answer to my repeated intreaties that you would give my Daughter a regular detail of the Misfortunes and Adventures of your Life," Laura has "often" said, "'No, my friend never will I comply with your request till I may be no longer in Danger of again experiencing such dreadful ones" (*Juvenilia* 103). Laura's representation of her disappointment in the coach suggests that

a poor review by an unsympathetic audience has a place on her list of dreadful Misfortunes.

On this reading, then, Laura is a quixote who aspires not only to imitate the heroines of the novels she reads but also to imitate their authors and thereby gain the ranks of young ladies who write.[39] We might think that teenaged Austen, her eyes firmly fixed on the goal of professional publication, would depict such a one more sympathetically, but here too a comparison of her juvenile paratexts with those found in Hookham's "Books Printed" list may be helpful. When Austen finally achieved her first publication, *Sense and Sensibility* bore the words "By a lady" on the title page. It was only on the title page of her second novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, that she was promoted from "lady" to "author," with the words "By the author of *Sense and Sensibility*." We can infer the significance of this difference from a quick review of the attributions in "Books Printed": Of the fifty-four items listed, nine (seventeen percent of the total) are represented as having been written "by a Lady."[40] Only four—fewer than half this number—identify their anonymous creators as "authors" of previously published works. (One of these, as we have seen, is *Sir Charles Bentinck*). In relative terms, then, Hookham's "Authors" are a select few. Yet not once, in any of her juvenilia, does Austen identify her early pieces as having been authored "by a Lady" or "by a Young Lady." This is a noteworthy departure from her practice of closely imitating the rhetoric of such paratexts as Hookham's, and it strongly suggests that, although Austen was deeply interested in the process by which one progresses from being "a young Lady" who writes to being an "Author" who has already written, in all of her juvenilia she has already chosen to make that move proleptically and to absolutely eschew the merely aspirational term. To put it another way, Austen was writing her juvenilia in a time when the marketplace was becoming increasingly crowded by *young ladies* with stories to offer. Austen chose, from the start, not to travel in such a crowd.

Austen has Laura introduce the final episode of "Love and Freindship," in which she finds herself on a coach "surrounded by" her "nearest Relations and connections" (*Juvenilia* 134), with the adjective "illiterate." Before Laura can test her father-in-law's appreciation of her "unhappy tale" or even learn who he is, she deems him "an illiterate villain" simply because he snores (*Juvenilia* 134, 133). Of course the epithet marks her as absurdly judgemental, but it also serves to remind us of the central role reading practices play in shaping Laura's social network. Moreover, it signals that Laura's central purpose in writing this final letter is to demonstrate her own superior literacy, for the rest of this lengthy episode documents the importance of narrative to Laura and the literacy levels (judged by their familiarity with and respect for the "refined and Amiable" conventions of sentiment) of each occupant of the coach. By terming the baronet "illiterate" she evokes the earlier accusation he levied on his son: "'You have been studying Novels I suspect'" (*Juvenilia* 108). We may infer that, if the baronet had only read more of the right sort of book, he would not show such "total Want of delicate refinement" (*Juvenilia* 140): he would know, as the (presumably)

snore-free Laura does, how to behave and would make an acceptable companion. So determined is she to cast him in this light that her complaint of his failure to appreciate "the refined and Amiable Laura" quite overshadows the fact, which she but grudgingly acknowledges, of his having been "touched with Sorrow, by the unhappy tale" of his son's death (*Juvenilia* 134).

Her treatment of the baronet throughout this episode thus reveals how, "As the narrator of 'Love and Freindship,' Laura actively *character*-ises those she meets: that is, she turns them into characters in this story she is constructing, however improbably they answer her wants" (Murphy 38). In this case, Laura wants the baronet to be illiterate. I would add, moreover, that Laura's reading of formula fiction has, just as Dunlop describes, facilitated a way of reading—and of writing—by which characters can be "experienced … not as personal but as textual, as narrative devices propelling and propelled by formula" (254). This is why, when Laura is not treating her coach companions as audiences, she treats them as little more than potential embedded narratives or traveling subplots. As stories to be consumed they are also material for her to organise and manipulate; in this way they serve her efforts to dazzle the reader with her ability to knit up a plot.

From Laura's perspective, then, the coach episode is the culminating performance of her mastery of narrative convention. Laura-the-author offers Marianne a *second* recognition scene here: when Laura's remembered—or constructed—younger self enters the coach in the middle of the night, she misrecognises its occupants as strangers and is misrecognised similarly by them, only for everyone to properly recognise one another in the morning as relations, in-laws, and other connections. It is a coincidence that her reader cannot have expected and yet one that the writer is able to entirely explain. Moreover, the reunion provides opportunity for a fairly impressive number of embedded narratives. From one perspective, it really is a tour de force.

But from Austen's perspective, Laura's performance of authorial competence is also a demonstration of the strengths and the limitations of the vehicle she chooses for her narrative. For those on board, the journey offers new material enough to keep travellers interested along the way; there is considerable satisfaction in recognising so many familiar reminders of earlier experiences and in making new connections between the familiar elements that have here been creatively, if implausibly, brought together. Yet Laura thinks herself a better storyteller than she is, and at the end of the day, her coach starts to resemble such circulation-library novels as *Laura and Augustus* and *Sir Charles Bentinck*. It is too crammed with the familiar to be comfortable to any but the relatively "illiterate": although the characters within it offer plenty of stories, replete with incident, and although the territory it covers is by no means to be despised, the vehicle these elements propel continues to circulate but never goes anywhere new. Here, then, as she has done throughout "Love and Freindship," Austen the already-Author exposes the folly of cramming one's entire network of

associations into a single narrative vehicle with only one possible route and expecting to be both paid and praised for it.

Ann Radcliffe opens her first novel, published anonymously by T. Hookham in 1789, with a description of the castle of Athlin: she terms this edifice a "gothic structure," and it would not be wrong to describe the plot of *Athlin and Dunbayne* in similar terms. In *Northanger Abbey*, written about ten year later, Austen acknowledges Radcliffe as the preeminent author of gothic novels and the Minerva Press as their leading publisher. However, *Athlin and Dunbayne* can also be listed alongside such sentimental novels as Eliza Nugent Bromley's *Laura and Augustus* and *Sir Charles Bentinck*: works that were published anonymously by T. Hookham, that contained gothic elements, and that were advertised within the pages of *Athlin and Dunbayne* in Hookham's list of "Books Printed." All three novels are targets of Austen's expert parody of the "lachrymose" genre in "Love and Freindship," and the promotional rhetoric we find in lists such as Hookham's are targets in her youthful dedications; it is clear that Austen read all three novels, that she appreciated the textual networks that connected them, and that she paid attention to the means by which a publisher might promote them.

Taken together, these texts and paratexts strongly suggest that the teenaged Austen could be at times a deliberate and strategic reader. Committed to mastering generic conventions, she appreciated the practical use of lists like the one found in Hookham's "Books Printed" and seems to have made good use of them, even as she parodied their rhetoric in her own titles and dedications. She also appreciated the pleasurable recognition of the familiar enjoyed by readers of circulation-library publisher's formulaic fiction, yet she was skeptical about certain aspects of the reading and writing networks that such publishers' marketing strategies were designed to produce.[41] Moreover, she was aware of the implicit encouragement to write imitative "lachrymose novels" that such publishers extended to their readers, yet she resisted the invitation. Even as she fashioned in "Love and Freindship" a portrait of the sort of quixotic "Young Lady" who sets out on the road of literary imitation and ends up both disappointing and disappointed, young Jane Austen was proleptically fashioning herself as quite a different kind of "Author."

Notes

[1] Although the Austens' lack of shame may have been noteworthy, their reading habits were not unusual among their class. Two of the Austens' neighbours (Mrs. Bramston and Mrs. Lefroy) owned copies of Radcliffe novels (Benedict and Le Faye xxxvi). Neither was George Austen unusual as a man for reading novels; Fergus finds, in two sets of records studied, "no evidence of a largely female reading public for fiction in the provinces" (*Provincial* 15). See also Fergus, "Eighteenth-Century" 169, 189–90; Fergus, *Provincial* 6; Fergus and Ruth Portner 157.

[2] Jane Austen's omission of *Evelina* can also be ascribed to the fact that it is epistolary; the three novels she praises are all written in the third person (Fergus, *Jane Austen* 81). It is also significant that all three of these titles "were, in fact, published without the subtitle 'A Novel.'" In citing them as part of her defense of novels, Austen is "both praising and prodding Burney and Edgeworth" in that she "relabels *Cecilia, Camilla*, and *Belinda* as novels, in effect daring their authors to acknowledge them as such" (Looser par. 23–24).

[3] "Lowndes ran one of the earliest and most successful London circulating libraries, and was also a major publisher" (Jacobs 605). *Cecilia* was published by T. Payne and T. Cadell, who had published Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, works by William Blackstone, and several by Samuel Johnson; *Camilla* was published by subscription; *Belinda* was published by Joseph Johnson, who also published works by Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Thomas Malthus, Erasmus Darwin, and Joseph Priestley. Jane Austen "may have been their first female novelist" for both of her eventual publishers, Thomas Egerton and John Murray (Sutherland, "Jane" 105). Cadell and Davies, who rejected *First Impressions* "sight unseen" in 1797, "were quality publishers of religious books, poetry, history, belletristic titles, and some fiction (including Frances Burney's recent success *Camilla*)"; by contrast, Crosby, who purchased *Susan* in 1603 but did not publish it, "was populist with a sizeable novel list" (Sutherland, "Jane" 10).

[4] There is a long critical tradition of contempt for Minerva Press fiction. The "*Critical Review* called Minerva works 'wretched productions,' 'buzzing insects,' and 'the vilest trash'" in 1791, 1788, and 1786 (McLeod 2). In this essay I often use the term "fiction" or "novel" rather than attempting in every case to distinguish between novels and romances, in part because of the difficulty of classification (see McLeod 60–79) and in part because authors of popular fiction in the late eighteenth century often themselves preferred to describe their works as novels or tales (McLeod 54).

[5] As Gillian Dow and Katie Halsey point out, "Jane Austen got hold of books in many different ways—reading them in her father's library at Steventon and her brother's Godmersham library, borrowing from circulating libraries in Bath and Southampton, joining the Chawton Reading Society, and borrowing the latest publications from her publisher—but she rarely bought books" (par. 10). Much scholarly work has already been done on the question of just which books she did read, and that list, while inevitably incomplete, is today extensive. See Dow and Halsey, Halsey, Isobel Grundy, Jocelyn Harris, Jane Stabler, and Mary Waldron, among others.

[6] Lane started out as a printer and then began publishing books and operating a circulation library, businesses which were both well established before 1790. In the 1780s he published a wide range of genres (see, e.g., Lines), but although Blakey asserts that "after 1790 … he published practically nothing but" novels and romances (26), McLeod finds "a previously unappreciated diversity" of "sub-genre" in Minerva's publications after 1790 as well (3).

[7] Even after the ascendance of Lane's Minerva Press, Hookham remained a major player for some years.

[8] No year of publication is given on the title page, but "History of Sir Charles Bentinck and Louisa Cavendish, 3 vols, 9s" is listed among newly published "Novels, Romances, &c." in the May 1789 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling provide evidence for a publication date of "a few days" after 20 Dec. 1788 and therefore, quite sensibly, include the novel among those published in 1788 (1788:45). However, it seems possible that those hoped-for "few days" after 20 Dec. 1788 stretched into the new year (446).

[9] Other sentimental novels that have been identified as significant sources of "Love and Freindship" include Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (McMaster 152–57) and Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) (Byrne 77).

[10] "What these popular authors [whom Austen was parodying in her juvenilia] turned out was, essentially," states Mudrick, "so fixed and identifiable a blend of Richardson, Sterne, and the picaresque and moralistic elements of Fielding and Smollett, that it should be given a new name: perhaps the lachrymose novel, compounded of sentiment, morality, manners, instruction, sensibility, and adventure" (3–4).

[11] Nor does Austen recall plot only, as McMaster notes: "When Laura refuses to part with Augustus, her father summarily dismisses her: 'Take yourself off with your beggar's brat, and see if love will support you: you will find it, Madam heroine, I fancy damned slender diet' (II 149). This was no doubt the source for the exchange between Edward and his sister in 'Love and Freindship' when he scorns 'the mean and indelicate employment of Eating and Drinking,' and she responds drily that it's still the most effective support she knows of'" (150). On the accuracy of Henry Austen's praise of Austen's memory, see, among others, Harris (ix–xi).

[12] If, as seems at least possible, the name of *Lady Susan*'s hero Reginald de Courcy comes from Anna Maria Bennett's popular Minerva novel *Agnes de-Courcie*, published 1789, then we may have yet another instance of Austen's excellent memory. However, it is also possible that she was reminded of the 1789 volume when Bennett's *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* was released in 1794. Bennett was one of Minerva's most popular authors, and *Agnes de-Courcie* was translated into French (Blakey 53) some time before receiving a second edition in 1797, so there is good reason to believe that the novel was not forgotten by readers in the years between its first and second edition.

[13] Hookham's business model shares similarities with William Lane's, though much more is known of the latter. "The advertising," says Deborah Anne McLeod of Lane, "may have influenced people to read" the "novels, but it can hardly have been effective in persuading them to buy. The majority of his books did not go into the hands of private owners, but into the circulating libraries. … They were expensive; few were from the pens of distinguished authors; and fewer still were likely to be of any permanent value" (111). If the Austen family belonged to a book club in 1785, it is not completely impossible for that club to have made *Laura and Augustus* one of its selections, in which case they may have become the lucky custodians of this collectively-purchased book once all club members had had their turn. However, the only specific title chosen by a book club that Jane Austen mentions reading—albeit in 1813—is the much more respectable "Capt. Pasley's essay on the Military Police of the British Empire*" (Letters* 24 Jan. 1813).

[14] Before 1800 the standard "practice in the matter of binding" of those circulation-library novels advertised as "sewed" was to issue them "in sheets, or with a plain paper wrapper, usually entirely unstiffened" (Blakey 95, 94). This is why copies of such novels today "are extremely rare" (McLeod 85). Scholars of circulating libraries regularly refer to the problem of investigating catalogues that contain "titles of which no extant copies are now known" (McLeod 605). Edward Jacobs and Antonia Forster's research "suggests that *ESTC* and *NUC* together miss about eight percent of the works of fiction that were actually published in Britain during the eighteenth century" (267).

[15] The material fragility of these books and the subsequent loss of many of them to posterity may perhaps remind us that it is a mistake to assume that an obscure title of a book of which very few copies are today extant necessarily points to small readership or ill repute among contemporary readers.

[16] Lane also published lists of recent publications in Minerva novels, but these were printed on the fly-leaves at the back (Blakey 101–02).

[17] See also Fergus and Portner's discussion of the evidence that members of "a flourishing provincial reading community" in Warwick in the 1770s "kept in close touch with publishing activity in London largely through advertisements in newspapers" (158). Studying such paratexts as this list of "Books Printed," when provided, is consistent with such a habit.

[18] When the heroine of *Sir Charles Bentinck*, Louisa, flees from her abductor, she is rescued by Mr. Levison, the cruel father in *Laura and Augustus*. This former villain is now a repentant, cave-dwelling hermit who meditates on his lost daughter's memory, rescues persecuted maidens, and waits for death. Louisa and her friend Cecilia recall reading the "history" of Laura Levison and her husband Augustus.

[19] William Lane sold complete sets of books to circulating libraries all over the kingdom. His 1791 prospectus promised "that a library containing from a hundred to five thousand volumes could be had at a few days' notice, along with a catalogue for the subscribers, and full instructions 'how to plan, systemize, and conduct' the library" (Blakey 18). Much less is known of Hookham's business practices, but to his London-based circulating library he attracted rural subscribers in at least two ways: by offering special terms "To those … in the Country" wishing to subscribe and by making special arrangements with provincial booksellers who acted to some extent at least as his representatives ("Advertisement" a5^{r}, a6^{v}).

[20] Another scenario, perhaps even more likely given how much more popular Radcliffe's second novel was than her first, is that Austen began with *A Sicilian Romance* (Hookham, 1790), saw on this novel's title page that it was "By the Authoress of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne," and became interested enough in the author to seek out *Athlin and Dunbayne*—which she then found complete with its list of "Books Printed." *A Sicilian Romance* is a significant source of *Northanger Abbey* (Grogan 18).

[21] See, for instance, Letter 3rd and Letter 13 (*Juvenilia* 104–05, 125–31)

[22] Sabor also points to her "interest in James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785)" (Notes 446n11).

[23] Sir John Belmont exclaims, "Acknowledge thee, Caroline!—yes, with my heart's best blood would I acknowledge thee!" (416). He addresses his dead wife, Caroline, in absentia, not their living daughter, Evelina, who stands before him.

[24] Jacobs elaborates on this point: "Before circulating libraries, readers could more easily view a book as a singular, unique practice; with circulating libraries, readers were better able to see books as members of classes. Quite 'accidentally,' patrons' sensitivity to genre was also emphasized by the physical ordering of books in circulating-library catalogs, advertisements, and label illustrations. … At the most general level, and for practical reasons, catalogs and shelving divided books into broad categories … most 'Mysteries' were catalogued and shelved together, as were most 'Memoirs and Adventures.' Because catalogs and shelving also grouped books by format, even a little experience would teach patrons to look for 'modern romances' among duodecimo volumes. Such ordering made it easy for readers to find other books like ones they had enjoyed, and perhaps more importantly, it encouraged readers to perceive and sample books as members of genres" (Jacobs 617–18).

[25] One would have to deliberately misread Grundy to argue that the formula fiction that filled the shelves of English circulation libraries in the late eighteenth century deserves to be considered a "tradition" as she uses the word.

[26] "The Minerva Press produced many works other than novels and many types of novels other than gothic and sentimental romances. Also, although many of the Minerva Press novels are poorly written, many are at least as good as the standard novels of the day" (McLeod 13).

[27] A "reading list kept by Miss Mary Orlebar, a gentlewoman of Ecton in Northamptonshire, who read several hundred volumes between 1789, when she began her list at the age of 59, and 1820, a year before she died, aged 91," documents one reader's dependence on friends, from whom she borrowed the many novels on her list (Fergus, *Jane Austen* 25). It is not known whether her friends also kept reading lists or whether Orlebar shared her reading list with friends.

[28] These include *Rose-Mount Castle, or False Report*; *Edgar, or the Phantom of the Castle*; *Horrors of Oakendale Abbey*; *Heir of Montague*; *Mystery of the Black Tower*, and numerous others in the same line (311).

[29] In 1792 Bath had seven circulating libraries (*New Bath Directory* 13–27); "at the turn of the century" there were nine (Benedict and Le Faye xxviii). The best known of these, James Marshall's, was located in "Milson-street" (*New Bath Directory* 20), where Isabella resided and down which she would have to walk to reach "the Pump-room" where she and Catherine discuss novels (*NA* 60).

[30] A novel's title might announce it as gothic, whereas its plot might turn out to be primarily sentimental with some gothic elements. See, for instance, McLeod's plot summary of "Mary Julia Young's 1798 novel *Rose-Mount Castle; or, False Report*" (85).

[31] Roche "was a pillar of the MINERVA Press, managing deft transformations from polite decorum to GOTHIC sensationalism in sublime and picturesque settings" (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 917, original capitalisation).

[32] The three are *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *The Mysterious Warning* (1796), both by Eliza Parsons, and Roche's *Children of the Abbey*. Roche, Parsons, and Francis Lathom (author of *The Midnight Bell* [1798]) were all popular in their day; in our own day, all three have entries in the *DNB*, a rare achievement for circulation-library novelists, and all three have been commended for the quality of their work by at least some twentieth-century readers. Sadleir terms *Clermont* an instance of the "rhapsodical sensibility romance in its finest form" (10), and Dorothy Blakey believes it "well deserved its place" among "the 'Northanger Novels'" (59). Blakey considers *Wolfenbach* and *Mysterious Warning* "two admirable specimens of terror fiction" and notes that "Contemporary reviewers spoke of her [Parsons] as a 'writer of no inferior talents' and of her novels as on the whole superior to most of Lane's other works" (59–60). She wrote to support her large family, and her "large output (19 multi-vol. titles) makes her quality uneven" (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 834). Eleanor Sleath does not make Minerva's Top Ten list, but her *Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) is, in Sadleir's assessment, "a strangely attractive absurdity" with a strong "affinity to the Radcliffian school of sensational landscape-fiction staged abroad" (23, 22), and as a 1798 publication this work would have for Isabella the added credibility of currency. *The Orphan of the Rhine* "was called by the *Critical Review* a 'vapid and servile' Ann RADCLIFFE imitation" (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 992, original capitalisation). Even though *The Necromancer* (1794) "as a novel … is a failure" in Sadleir's view, this "conglomerate of violent episodes thrown loosely together" contains "magniloquent descriptions of 'horrid' episodes" that, "for sheer stylistic fervour in the handling of the quasi-supernatural," makes it "rank high among its contemporaries" (17–18).

[33] Since *Horrid Mysteries* was first published in 1796 and there is no evidence of a second edition before 1927, its appearance on this list suggests that Lane misrepresented its

newness in order to advertise it along with genuine new releases—something he made a practice of doing. For instance, an advertisement of 1793 lists "Fifty-one titles," supposedly published "'within the space of a year,'" but in fact "the list contains books which may be definitely dated 1791, 1792, and 1793" (Blakey 97). In the 1798 *Prospectus*, similarly, of thirty-four titles said to have been published "This Season," only six were published in 1798; twelve were published in 1797, thirteen in 1796, and one in 1793. (Two cannot be located.) Similarly, Crosby advertised as "Just Published" in 1805 a book he "had published … two years earlier" (Burns 196).

[34] See her complaint to Cassandra of the "indelicacies" of Madame de Genlis's latest novel, *Alphonsine* (*Letters* 7 January 1807). Sadleir calls *The Midnight Bell* "Clumsy in construction, humourless and as mechanically a novel of suspense … as ever was" but notes that it does contain some chapters that would still "hold the attention of the modern reader" (16, 17).

[35] For instance, "Lane … spent a number of years travelling throughout the country, encouraging the development of a network of provincial circulating libraries in order to develop a market for his own productions" (McLeod 23).

[36] In *Athlin and Dunbayne*, a four-page version of the "Advertisement" follows the "List of Books Printed." A two-page version of the "Advertisement" is appended to the second volume of *Sir Charles Bentinck*. Whereas the "Advertisement" appears designed to appeal to the library's widest possible number of potential subscribers, the "List of Books Printed" serves to promote the publisher's most popular genres and most profitable products.

[37] When Lane "became the proprietor of a newspaper" in 1788, "'the first idea' of the proprietors, according to the prospectus" in the opening number of *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, "was to provide a reliable medium of advertising for their own products" (Blakey 10).

[38] Henry "probably wrote the note at some point after he began his banking career in 1801, and perhaps as late as November 1812, when Jane sold the copyright of her most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, for £110. Henry's joke, in that case, would be the suggestion that his sister's unfinished, juvenile manuscript was worth almost as much as the three-volume novel newly purchased by the publisher Thomas Egerton" (Sabor, "Brotherly" 40).

[39] For a further discussion of the eighteenth-century tradition of the quixotic "novel *reader* who turns *writer*" as one of the "constituent images" of "the dominant discourse about authorship" that was "taking shape at the end of the eighteenth century," see Neiman (636).

[40] In this count I include number 10, "the first literary attempt of a Young Lady" and number 45, "by a Widow Lady." The other seven all use the identical phrase, "by a Lady." Other entries that do not name the author include four that identify the author only by previous works (these include *Sir Charles Bentinck*), twenty-four that make no mention of the author or translator at all, five that identify the works as translations without identifying either the author or the translator, and one that identifies the author as "an American Spy" (no. 46, n.p). Blakey similarly notes that "by far the most common item in the Minerva list of pseudonyms is the colourless fiction of 'A Lady'" (48).

[41] For a more positive assessment of the reading and writing networks generated and sustained by circulation-library fiction, see Neiman's analysis of how Minerva novelists "are connecting with each other over space and time via a market-driven system of exchange," to "fashion a collective model of authorship" (634, 635).

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