

CFP: The Minerva Press and the Romantic-era literary marketplace

Papers will be published in a special issue of *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780-1840* (Spring 2019), guest edited by Elizabeth Neiman and Tina Morin.

This special issue of *Romantic Textualities* focuses on a re-assessment and re-valuation of the publication and dissemination practices of William Lane's London-based Minerva Press. Officially established in 1790, Minerva published an unprecedented number of new novels, many of them by women, in the last two decades of the century, and remained the leading publisher of popular novels throughout the Romantic period. Seen to cater to indiscriminating circulating library audiences, Minerva – and other presses like it – were understood by their critics to drive the period's troubling surplus of cheap, imitative fictions whose impact on Romantic-era culture and literary production has long been overlooked or unfairly dismissed. In addition, Lane established the Minerva Library, which contributed in no small measure to the circulation of popular literature to an eager reading public.

This special issue seeks to re-appraise these fictions, particularly in the context of Lane's revolutionary business model. Through such practices as advertising for new manuscripts, especially by debut female novelists, and selling texts wholesale as circulating library collections to shopkeepers across the nation and, indeed, the British Empire, Lane capitalized on an expanding and evolving literary marketplace while also helping to precipitate modern divisions between 'high' and 'low' literature (Blakey 1939; Clery 1999).

While a focal point of this issue will be the Minerva Press, we also welcome papers on other popular publishers and circulating libraries that either followed Lane's model or utilized different methods to reach (and perhaps create) a reading public.

We are interested in papers that focus on topics such as, but not limited to:

- Reassessments of Minerva or other Romantic-era popular presses and what is known, about the novels themselves, their authors, their readers, the presses, or their relationship to other period texts and intertexts;
- Explorations of Minerva's transnational impact, either through the study of publishing records or through literary analysis, as well as works issued by Minerva by international authors (e.g. Charles Brockden Brown, François Ducray-Duminil, August Lafontaine);
- Re-evaluations of Minerva's association with 'circulating library' reading, through attention to the generic variety of his publication lists and/or evidence of readership, as well as other circulating libraries that catered to the popular taste;
- Examinations of Minerva's networking techniques, particularly with publishers and booksellers across Britain, Europe, North America and the Empire;
- Investigations of authorial migration, between Minerva and other popular presses, on the one hand, or contemporary magazines and journals, on the other;

- Analyses of notable Minerva authors/novels, such as Ann of Swansea, Medora Byron, Selina Davenport, Isabella Kelly, Francis Lathom, Elizabeth Meeke;
- Minerva and genre, including sentimental fiction, the gothic (e.g. the Northanger Novels), religious writing and juvenile works;
- Considerations of research methodologies for studying popular novels published by Lane and/or other British publishers (e.g. data from publishing records; thematic approaches; case studies of novels; close reading; distant reading; bibliographic materials; book history). What methods are most appropriate and why? Does this line of study demand different methods than more traditional literary scholarship, and if so, why and with what effects on literary scholarship?

500 word abstracts due by 31 October 2017; first full drafts of 6,000-9,000 words due by May 2018. Please email submissions to Elizabeth Neiman (Elizabeth.Neiman@maine.edu) AND Tina Morin (Christina.Morin@ul.ie).