Women Writing About Money addresses the paradoxical situation of the women of Jane Austen’s time who had no legal access to money yet were held responsible for domestic expenditure. In this context, money becomes the major issue in women’s fiction, as well as the legal disabilities suffered by women and the restrictions imposed by rank. The book translates the fictional money of the novels of Jane Austen’s day into the power of contemporary spendable incomes. From the perspective of what the British pound could buy at the market, the economic lives of women in the novels emerge as part of a general picture of women’s economic disability. Through the work of both well-known and less canonical writers such as Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, Eliza Parsons and Sarah Green, as well as writers of magazine fiction, Women Writing About Money examines the professional lives of women authors, the kinds of publishers who would publish their work, the profits they could expect to receive, and the specific demands of their different reading publics. By linking authorship to the economic lives of contemporary women, Women Writing About Women links the fantasy worlds of women’s fiction with the social and economic realities of both readers and writers.
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This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1790s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again and again by what Wordsworth called those “great national events” that were “almost daily taking place”: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion and literature were reworked in texts such as Frankenstein and Biographia Literaria; gender relations in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Don Juan; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; poetic form, content and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of response or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of “literature” and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

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EDWARD COPELAND

Pomona College, Claremont, California
For
Margaret Mathies
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Abbreviations and notes

Citations from Jane Austen’s minor works, the juvenilia and the fragmentary novels, are from Minor Works, volume vi of R. W. Chapman, The Works of Jane Austen, 1st ed. 1954, reprinted with revisions by B. C. Southam 1966, 6 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1982). This volume is referred to as MW.

All citations to Jane Austen’s novels are to Chapman’s The Works of Jane Austen.

Citations from Jane Austen’s correspondence are taken from Jane Austen’s Letters, 2nd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford University Press, 1979). This volume is referred to as Letters.