

# The Female Spectator

CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY



VOL.16 No.4, Autumn 2012 ISSN1746-8604

## GRAFFITI ON THE MELLICHAMP!

By Sarah Parry, Archive and Education Officer

It is not every day that a colleague announces, 'Have you seen the graffiti on the Mellichamp?!' 'The Mellichamp' is the affectionate name used in reference to a large (133 cm x 204.4 cm) painting of Chawton House, dating to approximately 1740. The painting is signed 'Mellichamp' but I have yet to discover anything about the artist. One theory is that perhaps Mellichamp was an itinerant artist, travelling the country and arriving on the doorsteps of suitable properties hoping to secure a commission. If anyone has information on Mellichamp I would be delighted to hear from you.

The painting gives a bird's eye view of the approach to the house with St Nicholas' Church on the right and the Tudor stable block, now known as the Old Stables, on the left. The painting dates to an important period in the history of the estate. Thomas Brodnax May Knight inherited in 1741 following the death of Elizabeth Knight. He changed his name from 'Brodnax' to 'May' in order to inherit the Godmersham Estate in Kent and on inheriting the Chawton Estate, changed his name from 'May' to 'Knight'. The Mellichamp is highly detailed and the project to create Chawton House Library literally uncovered evidence which supported the theory that the painting was an accurate representation of the house and immediate landscape. While resurfacing the drive, foundations of the walls that run across the middle of the painting were revealed; exactly where the painting said they would be.

Thomas Knight made Godmersham his home and the management of the Chawton Estate was administered by his Steward, Edward Randall and, in time, Randall's son, also called Edward. The Knight Archive, at the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester, contains fascinating letters between owner and stewards. There are also detailed ledgers carefully listing the expenditure of the estate whilst giving a glimpse into the seasonal and daily round of work.

Recently Caroline Baker, a paintings conservator, carried out condition reports on all the pictures at Chawton House Library. With her expert conservator's eye and conservation lighting Caroline

discovered that on the 'wall' in the bottom right hand corner of the Mellichamp was the following, very faint, writing in pencil: 'Mary Jane Austen 1819'. There was also a trace of the same name written on the coping stones of the wall. I excitedly hoped that this might be Mary-Jane, daughter of Jane Austen's brother, Francis. Research and an email exchange with Deirdre Le Faye soon confirmed this.

Jane Austen's brother Francis, known in the family as Frank, was born in 1774. He married his first wife, Mary Gibson, in 1806 and they had six sons and five daughters; Mary-Jane, born in 1807, was their eldest child. On 26 July 1809 Jane Austen wrote a poem to Frank which includes the now famous line 'Our Chawton home—how much we find ....' The poem begins with a reference to the birth of Francis and Mary's son, Francis-William, and mentions the difficult birth of Mary-Jane.

Of his two main estates Edward Knight (previously Austen) also preferred Godmersham and made it his home. As for Chawton House, Edward variously rented it out, left it empty, sometimes stayed at the house while visiting family or on business in the area or lent the house to a brother. During the period 1814 to 1818 Francis Austen and his family were living at Chawton House or in Alton but Francis was back at Chawton House in 1819, the year Mary-



Chawton House, Hampshire by Mellichamp

Jane reached her twelfth birthday. The dates neatly suggest that the Mellichamp was also at Chawton House in 1819 and I am indebted to Deirdre Le Faye's *Jane Austen: a Family Record and A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family* for details of dates and family whereabouts. However, the circumstances which lead to Mary-Jane writing her name on the picture must be pure conjecture. Was it the result of a bored young girl and a wet afternoon in the country? Did she tell anyone what she had done? Did her father or uncle ever discover her handiwork? As Caroline's work progressed I wondered if Mary-Jane had added her name to other paintings in the house but nothing further was discovered that could be attributed to her. The writing is too faint to be read by the naked eye but as a quirky, historical 'addition' to the picture it will be kept and Mary-Jane's exploit will be a fun addition to our house tours.

## *The Female Spectator*

Autumn 2012

### Editors:

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General: Helen Cole, Sandy White

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## CHAWTON CHRONICLES: A LETTER FROM THE CEO

The unique collection of books at Chawton House Library attracts scholars from all over the world, but there is another important source of inspiration for visitors to draw on – the paintings of women writers, playwrights and aristocrats of the long eighteenth century.

A recent acquisition is the portrait of Anne Compton, Countess of Northampton, by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Her life was tragically brief. Born Lady Anne Somerset in 1740, she was married at nineteen to Charles Compton, 7th Earl of Northampton, who became Ambassador to Venice. Anne gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, but when the young family had



*Anne, Countess of Northampton (d.1764), oil on canvas. By Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)*

been in Italy a matter of months, Anne died in the city of Naples at just 22. Her husband followed her to the grave five months later, leaving their little daughter an orphan. The child survived and went on to marry George Cavendish, 1st Earl of Burlington. The painting is on loan to us from Lady Chesham and family, descendants of Anne Compton. Another recent arrival is *The Adventures of David Simple* by Henry Singleton (see the piece by CHL Trustee, Dr Linda Bree in this issue). These, and other items, refresh and enhance the displays within the house and provide further reference points to interpret the social and cultural history of the period.

The importance of our art collection to visitors and friends is reflected in the major programme of conservation embarked upon several months ago, with support from the de Laszlo Foundation and the Golsoncott Foundations, who provided generous contributions towards the cost of the commission. This has involved a comprehensive condition audit of all the paintings – see Sarah Parry’s article for an account of one surprising find! We will follow up this activity by stabilising and repairing any works which have been identified as requiring attention, ensuring their continued existence for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

Of course, there is no point in broadening our activities unless people get to know about them! We have been delighted, therefore, by the overwhelmingly positive response to our revamped website. The site gives a flavour of what makes our charity special for all visitors. Most importantly, what our promotional campaign seeks to do is reinforce our many strengths in a professional manner. Do help us to spread the word!

# FRIENDSHIP AND REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS IN HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS'S SENTIMENTAL NOVEL *JULIA* (1790)

Katrin Berndt is Assistant Professor in British and Anglophone Literatures at the University of Bremen. She was a Visiting Fellow at Chawton House Library in March 2012.

My research at Chawton House Library began as a project on radical British women writers in the 1790s who used attributes of the Romance to endow their political novels with emotive appeal. Two of the works I looked forward to dealing with, Helen Maria Williams's *Julia* (1790) and Elizabeth Hervey's *The History of Ned Evans* (1796), have engaged wider academic interest only recently. They were republished in 2009 by the valuable *Chawton House Library Series*, which has made several remarkable texts available to the reading public, including literary gems like *The History of Julia Mandeville* (1763) by Frances Brooke, and culturally influential contributions in the *Memoirs of Scandalous Women* (ed. Diane Dugaw, 2011), and in *Women's Travel Writings in Revolutionary France* (ed. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave, 2007-2008).

My focus swiftly zoomed in on Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827), whose life and work provide fascinating insights into the literature and politics of late eighteenth-century Britain. A notable woman of letters, an abolitionist and a liberal, Williams began her career as an acclaimed composer of sentimental poems and sonnets. She also translated into English Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul and Virginia* (1796), as well as the accounts of her friend Alexander von Humboldt's journey through South America (*Researches*, 1814, and *Personal Narrative*, 1814-29). Her main work, *Letters from France* (1790-6), passionately promoted the aims of the French Revolution, as did her only novel *Julia*, which includes a poem celebrating the fall of the Bastille. Although Williams distanced herself from the violence of Jacobin rule in her second series of *Letters from France* (1795-6), her continued support of revolutionary ideals earned her the reputation of a notorious radical in Britain. From the 1790s onwards, Williams visited France repeatedly; regarded as one of the 'literary celebrities of the French Revolution', she established a liberal salon in Paris during the Consulate, which was later 'placed under police surveillance' after Williams became critical of Napoleon Bonaparte's authoritarian tendencies.<sup>1</sup> Her later works, such as



Helen Maria Williams

*Poems on Various Subjects* (1823), testify to her persistent commitment to political equality and liberal values.

My interest in women's political writing originally emerged as part of a larger project on friendship in novels of the Romantic age. To my delight, Williams's *Julia* offered substantial material for both topics, and I decided to include a discussion of this novel in my forthcoming monograph on friendship. My fellowship provided me with an extensive opportunity to broaden my knowledge on Williams, for Chawton Library holds her original published writings as well as contemporary reviews, works of fellow writers, and of course a well-chosen array of secondary sources. Wollstonecraft's review of *Julia* was particularly useful since it praised the novel as an innovation of the sentimental genre that successfully outbalanced rational understanding with 'feminine sweetness [...] in style and observation'.<sup>2</sup> Williams uses the friendship motif to convey her socio-political agenda, demanding that sympathy, which in earlier sentimental novels was often a passive feeling, must be realized as political sensibility in the form of engagement for the community.

My work on *Julia* has benefited enormously from the professional support and the friendly atmosphere at Chawton. My academic interest in friendship spilled over into real life, in the shape of lively discussions with fellow scholars and the dedicated staff at the Library. I was also fortunately able to attend a talk by Laura Kirkley at the University of Southampton, whose discussion of transnational rewritings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau deepened my understanding of the European dimensions of revolutionary and

Romanticist thinking. Another highlight of my stay was the book launch of *Second Impressions*, Ava Farmer's inventive sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*, which afforded us visiting fellows the immense pleasure of sharing our literary passion with other book lovers. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Chawton House Library for the opportunity of a fellowship. Humanities scholars occasionally find that they have to defend the significance of their work, yet in Chawton, critical thinking and writing is rewarded by a truly congenial research environment.

1 Deborah F. Kennedy, 'Williams, Helen Maria (1759-1827)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29509>,

accessed 2 Oct 2012].

2 Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Art. LVII. Julia, A Novel: interspersed with some poetical pieces', *Analytical Review*, 7 (May 1790), 97-100 (p. 98).

# THE JUVENILIA PRESS

By Juliet McMaster, University of Alberta

*Woman, ye Powers! the very Name's a Charm,  
And will my Verse against all Criticks arm.*<sup>1</sup>

So wrote fourteen-year-old Sarah Fyge (later Egerton) in 1686, in *The Female Advocate*, a bold defence of women against a satirical attack by a misogynist on the 'Pride, Lust, and Inconstancy' of the sex.

Sarah's spirited refutation is the earliest text in the growing list of the Juvenilia Press. And it was another early text by a girl of fourteen, Isobel Grundy's 1994 edition of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Indamora to Lindamira*, that sparked the creation of the Press in the first place. Begun in 1994 at the University of Alberta and continued since 2002 at the University of New South Wales, the Juvenilia Press has now produced dozens of editions of youthful writings by aspiring writers – of either sex, from all periods, in any genre.

Since the early 1990s, in courses on Jane Austen and the Brontës, I had already got students producing 'editions' of Austen's 'Jack & Alice' (written at 13) and Charlotte Brontë's 'The Twelve Adventurers' (written at 12) as class projects. But when Isobel Grundy, a major scholar, offered to edit an early unpublished work by Lady Mary, a major author, I recognized we had hit the big time. I called a meeting of sympathetic colleagues at the University of Alberta, who would become an Editorial Board, and proposed the creation of a press that was to specialize in publishing scholarly editions of early works by known writers; and because it had grown out of a classroom project, students were always to be involved in the editing process, working alongside experienced scholars.

Editing looms large in the world of literary academe, but students in literature departments rarely receive any training in it. Each volume of the Juvenilia Press provides hands-on experience in textual editing, writing a Note on the Text, discussing an introduction, researching and writing explanatory notes, as well as close study of an early and perhaps formative work of a canonical author. The exercise also alerts students to editorial procedures in the other texts they read, which hitherto they have viewed uncritically as God-given. Besides the pedagogic function, the Press is engaged in the recovery and dissemination of a body of work that is significant, often brilliant, in itself, and all too often overlooked. According to Ruskin, great creators 'have been great only in their rendering of what they had seen and felt from early

childhood.'<sup>2</sup> Examining an author's early work can give unique access both to the later work of the same author, and to the larger culture of childhood that produced it.

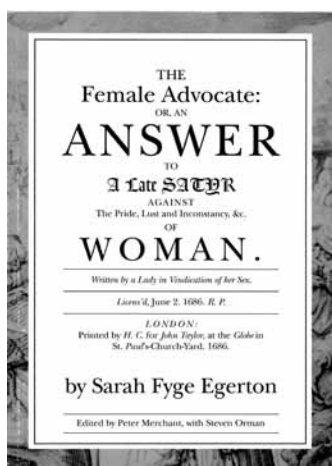
Since that first meeting in 1994, the Juvenilia Press has produced nearly 50 volumes, and many have been reprinted, reviewed in professional journals, and used as texts in classrooms. As our web site shows,<sup>3</sup> Austen and the Brontës are best represented, partly because their large following means those volumes sell well, and we have to think about money. But other authors from England, besides Sarah Fyge Egerton, include Anna Maria Porter, John Leigh Hunt, Charles Dickens, Branwell Brontë, George Eliot (that volume has been translated into Japanese), Lewis Carroll, John Ruskin, and Philip Larkin; from the U.S. Louisa May Alcott and Opal Whiteley; from South Africa Iris Vaughan; from Australia Dorothy Hewett and Mary Grant Bruce;

from Canada Malcolm Lowry, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood (who generously allowed us to publish her early work without royalty). Our editors and their teams of students similarly hail from all over the world.

When I retired from teaching in 2001, the Press and I were extraordinarily fortunate that Christine Alexander, the distinguished editor of the large and on-going edition of Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia, was ready to take over as Director of the Press at the University of New South Wales. Far-sighted and imaginative, she has more fully professionalised its operations, and it was at her suggestion that we took the study of early writings a major critical step forward. We decided to edit a collection

for Cambridge University Press's nineteenth-century series as *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*. It includes essays on individual authors: by Margaret Anne Doody on Jane Austen, Daniel Shealy on Alcott, Christine herself on Charlotte Brontë and many others. It also includes more general studies that relate these youthful writings to each other and suggest that they constitute their own genre.

It was gratifying to get a front-page review article in *TLS*, where Dinah Birch praised 'the quiet work of the Juvenilia Press,' and recognized the book's ambitious intention, 'nothing less than the definition of a new genre within the literary academy, with a theoretical framework and distinctive identity, which claims consideration and respect.'<sup>4</sup>



Cover of *The Female Advocate*

2 From *Modern Painters*; quoted by Rob Breton, ed., in *From Seven to Seventeen: Poems by John Ruskin* (Sydney: Juvenilia Press, 2012), p. xii.

3 See [www.arts.unsw.edu.au/juvenilia/](http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/juvenilia/)

4 Dinah Birch, "Eager to Please," review article on *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, *TLS*, 10 February 2006, p. 3.

1 Sarah Fyge Egerton, *The Female Advocate*, ed. Peter Merchant with Steven Orman. Sydney: Juvenilia Press, 2010, lines 68-9.

# THE CORRESPONDENCE OF CATHERINE DE SAINT-PIERRE (1743-1807)

By Katherine Asbury and Catriona Seth, Visiting Fellows at Chawton House Library in April 2012

In April 2012, Katherine Asbury (University of Warwick) and Catriona Seth (University of Lorraine) held a joint Chawton House Library fellowship to allow them to work on editing the correspondence of Catherine de Saint-Pierre, the younger sister of the famous French writer Jacques-Henri-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814). Jointly editing a complicated corpus when living in different countries is a challenging task and Chawton provided a congenial environment to advance the work.

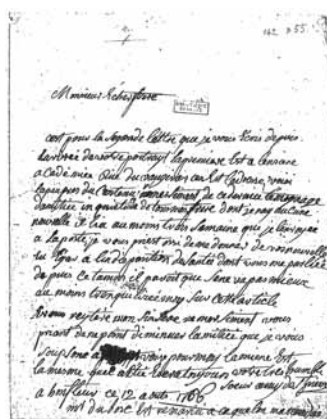
Like most women of her generation, Catherine de Saint-Pierre received little formal education. Whilst her brother travelled the world from Poland to Mauritius, and hobnobbed with the major intellectuals of his time, she spent her life in her home province of Normandy, in genteel poverty, partly dependent on handouts from relatives. She stands in a sense at the still point of a turning world, with scientists and men of letters corresponding with her, foreign travellers – including the occasional mulatto – coming to and fro, and merchandise from far-flung quarters of the globe passing through her hands.

Catherine's first letter to her brother is dated June 15th 1766. Like all the others, it is hard to decipher and written – or rather scrawled – in a semi-phonetic script. The difficulty in making sense of these texts is compensated for by the huge importance that such a collection of letters from a provincial single woman of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century (the last letter dates from 1804) can afford the cultural historian. Catherine gives us information on financial matters. She tells her brother the latest news of their extended family. She worries about inheritances. She scours the local merchants for the most exotic shells and objects brought from distant shores. She sends her beloved Bernardin fresh oysters from the seaside. She talks about reading his recent publications and reacts to his attitude towards religion. She expresses concern for her health and for her brother's. She also mentions the rumours which start flying during the Revolution, the hike in the price of wheat, the excitement surrounding a balloonist's presence in the neighbourhood, the prospects of a marriage settlement for her, and many other diverse facts. The letters are valuable not only because of their addressee, but also for their contents.

There are 120 letters in this particular corpus and the full transcription will provide invaluable insight into the development of the French language, the education of women and regional accent (the rather idiosyncratic phonetic style gives us a glimpse into oral French).

The sample letter illustrated here offers an indication of the difficulty of the task. The paper quality is poor, the handwriting not always easy to read, and idiosyncratic spelling complicates the deciphering still further. The letters from Bernardin to his sister have not survived so we often have to guess details referred to in passing, or use letters from him to third parties to understand allusive mentions.

This correspondence forms part of an ambitious scheme, funded by the AHRC and the British Academy, and headed by Professor Malcolm Cook to edit the complete correspondence of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Our contribution (transcribing, annotating and 'translating' Catherine de Saint-Pierre's prose into modern French) will place the letters of an ordinary provincial spinster – albeit one very well connected within her local community and beyond –, within the international web of correspondences of the major and secondary figures of the long eighteenth century. She was acutely aware of her gender, and the reality of fending for herself as a single woman. She is conscious of her clumsy style, of the precariousness of her situation, her need for her brothers' support. The letters detailing the increasingly unsuitable suitors who present themselves to her are a poignant reminder that she is desperate not just for Bernardin's financial support but also his love. Unlike him, Catherine cannot go anywhere of her own volition. A clear instance comes when she is worried about Bernardin during the Revolution and says were she a boy, she would jump on a horse and ride post-haste to Paris to check up on him.



A letter from the Catherine de Saint-Pierre correspondence

The correspondence is to be published in *Electronic Enlightenment*, a scholarly research project of the Bodleian Library and the Humanities Division, University of Oxford. It offers unrivalled access to correspondence of the period and the Catherine letters will boost the share of female correspondence. The only woman to have a set of letters in *Electronic Enlightenment* thus far is Betsy Sheridan. Catherine de Saint-Pierre's letters will represent a significant addition.

# ORIGINALITY IN ADAPTATION: LUCY PEACOCK'S *AMBROSE AND ELEANOR*

By Anne Birgitte Rønning (University of Oslo)  
- Visiting Fellow at Chawton House Library in  
March 2012.

An important genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the robinsonade challenges modern literary scholars on basic notions such as originality and authorship. The genre comprises works which overtly evoke *Robinson Crusoe* as a script, or which repeat some of its *topoi* and plot elements (shipwreck, survival, desert island, loneliness). These stories circulated all over the western world, sometimes in new editions, adaptations and translations and often without mention of the author's (or the translator's) name. Lucy Peacock's *Ambrose and Eleanor* (1796) is one of these works.<sup>1</sup>

Peacock's story is presented as 'a free and abridged translation of *Lolotte et Fanfan*', i.e. from the work of the French popular writer François-Guillaume Ducray-Duminil.<sup>2</sup>

*Lolotte et Fanfan* is a lengthy, adventurous and melodramatic story of two young siblings. Set ashore on a desert island accompanied only by a man who dies soon after, they are discovered by a shipwrecked Englishman after a couple of years. Shocked by their interaction with the corpse in the cave, but also touched by their simple way of life, he takes up the role of the siblings' mentor. Their island life and education is just one episode among several others: they are confronted by natives, taken prisoner by bandits, and form a resistance force with other English and French characters who in turn have stories to tell. Finally, they are reunited with their mother, and the novel ends with a new society founded on the once deserted island.

1 Lucy Peacock's *Ambrose and Eleanor. Or, The Adventures Of Two Children Deserted On An Uninhabited Island. Translated from the French. With alterations, adapting it to the perusal of youth, for whose Amusement and Instruction it is designed. By the author of The Adventures of the six princesses of Babylon, Juvenile Magazine, Visit for a week, &c.* London: For R. And L. Peacock and sold by Messrs Hookham and Carpenter, 1796. In the third edition, from 1807, a copy of which to be found in Chawton House Library, the translator/author is mentioned by name.

2 François-Guillaume Ducray-Duminil, *Fanfan et Lolotte, ou Histoire de deux enfants abandonnés dans une île déserte. Rédigées et publiées sur des manuscrits anglais par M. D\*\* de M\*\**, Charlestown and Paris : Maradan, 1788

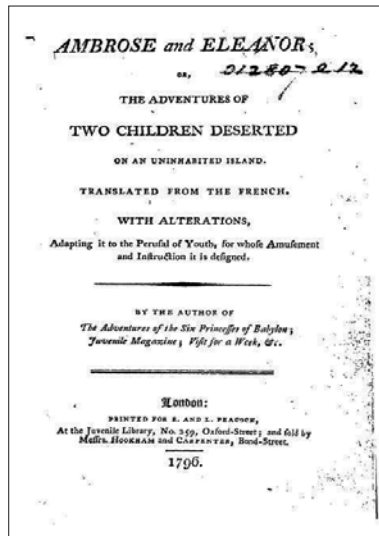
Peacock's reworking of the text is for long passages a faithful word-for-word translation, but at the same time the plot is completely reorganised, making it denser and omitting some of the subplots, poems and exclamation remarks. It also cuts short the descriptions of violence and seduction. In the advertisement this is commented upon in an interesting and highly self-assertive way:

*The design of the editor [...] was to form a work expressly for the perusal of youth.... but as many characters and scenes woven into the original could neither afford pleasure nor advantage to a juvenile reader, in order to suppress them, and at the same time to preserve the interest of the narrative, she has found it necessary to make considerable alterations: for these she can offer no other apology than the necessity, which must be obvious to every reader acquainted with the French Work. (Peacock 1796: v-vi)*

Lucy Peacock was at the time of publication already a well-known author, editor and publisher of juvenile fiction, and there was no reason for her to be modest in the prefatory remarks.<sup>3</sup> In fact, *Ambrose and Eleanor* is definitely a polished story, more suitable for youth than *Lolotte et Fanfan*.<sup>4</sup> It has a clearer edifying perspective, linked to the discourses of sentimentalism and moral education, as well as the downscaling of melodramatic and gothic elements. It is also interesting to note that while the final paragraphs of Ducray-Duminil's work evoke a patriarchal society, with old male heroes as legislators and respected rulers, Peacock's novel ends with an image of two mother-figures having 'the pleasure of seeing their friendship perpetuated in their children' and witnessing the siblings' respect and gratitude towards their old preceptor.

3 Little information is given on Lucy Peacock, but her first publication, at the age of seventeen, was a success (*The Adventures of the six Princesses of Babylon*, 1785, an allegory and adaptation for children of Spenser's *Faery Queene*)

4 Both books were published in several editions. *Lolotte et Fanfan* was also translated into German, Swedish and Spanish, while *Ambrose and Eleanor* seems only to have existed in English.



Title page from *Ambrose and Eleanor*

# MUCH ADO ABOUT MONEY; OR, AID AND ALTRUISM

By Eleanor Marsden, Director of Development

Shakespeare may not be the first author you would expect to hear about in the pages of *The Female Spectator*. Yet on a warm evening in July, the gardens of Chawton House Library resounded with the steely wit of one of the Bard's most admired creations, the indomitable Beatrice, warring and wooing with a gamut of other characters in our open-air production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

That 'skirmish of wit' between Benedick and Beatrice was played out in a literal 'merry war' by the very talented Heartbreak Theatre Company, a new find for Chawton House and one we hope to work with again in the future. Bringing together an innovative and accessible production set at the end of the Second World War, we welcomed nearly four hundred members of the audience to the historic gardens – with more than a little trepidation, given the recent history of the summer weather! However, the muses were smiling on us, and a more perfect evening for an outdoor production we could not have wished for. A newly-established tradition here, a performance against the backdrop of our splendid house on a summer's evening is already one which we very much hope to continue into the future.

We could almost hear the faint applause of Wollstonecraft and sisters coming from inside the house after Beatrice's resonant appeal that it must '... grieve a woman to be overmastered by a piece of valiant dust...'; she will not marry someone intellectually inferior in preference to remaining unmarried. So, too, would a lot of our authors have identified with the description of Beatrice possessed by creativity: 'She'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper.' Although we need no reminders, women writing are ever-present in our cultural history... and yet, even now, not so. A child of today could probably name Austen, perhaps Bronte; an older student perhaps Behn and Burney. But there is still a lot of work to be done in promoting those names and works which we know fill a gap still widely extant in our cultural memory. Chawton House Library is working, with your support, to rectify this.

In 2013, our celebrations of *Pride and Prejudice* and our tenth anniversary will, of course, look back on the successes of a decade in which the charity has advanced across the board, expanding its aims, reach, and influence. It will also be an important year for us in terms of building on that momentum for the future.

Interestingly, the 'one-zero' categories of the Dewey decimal system are for philosophy and psychology – in essence, for exploring things we don't fully

'know'. We cannot know what the next decade will bring for Chawton House Library, except for two certainties: first, that we will continue to the best of our abilities to preserve and promote our valuable heritage to an ever-increasing audience, in the belief that it matters and that everyone deserves to have access to our resources. Secondly, we know that it will be tough. The gloomy financial clouds are not lifting and show no sign of doing so.

For us, this means that, in the words of *Much Ado's* Don Pedro, 'The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.' Whilst we do everything possible to operate as efficiently as we can, inevitably we have to spend money in order to do what we do. The work of the charity must be allowed to continue to keep the organisation making progress.

In the coming months, we will be launching an appeal to all our supporters. Please take a moment to consider whether you can spare a little extra to contribute to the preservation of this unique resource. We know that everyone is being careful with money, and that you want to know that your donations will have a direct impact on the future of the organisation you support. We guarantee they will. Whether or not you yourself can visit in person, it is so important that the Library can exist for all, and flourish, building its noteworthy collections and maintaining their precious setting.

Thank you for already supporting us. With your help, we can enter our next decade in true 'Beatrice' fashion: with a little wit, with great spirit, and most importantly, with a smile.



Open-air performance of *Much Ado About Nothing*

# JANE AUSTEN AND THE SHAFTESBURY CONNECTION

By Lorraine Clark (Trent University, Ontario) - a Visiting Fellow at Chawton House Library in May 2012.

Since 1998, when I began to explore the writings of the early eighteenth-century philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, I had been deeply struck by the affinities between his vocabulary and ideas and those of *Mansfield Park*. I later learned that Oxford philosopher of mind Gilbert Ryle had similarly noted that Jane Austen's vocabulary is, *en bloc*, as he put it, Shaftesbury's, extending the claim of influence to all her novels. Yet Austen disclaimed all knowledge of philosophy; and those few literary critics who do acknowledge a probable influence (most notably D.D. Devlin, and more recently, David Marshall)<sup>1</sup> nonetheless dismiss any use of Shaftesbury's vocabulary as ironic.

The only evidence for the connection is strictly internal, again, in her vocabulary and ideas. But I was intrigued to see that the Chawton House Library lists a 1749 edition of Shaftesbury's collected works, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, as having belonged to Edward Austen-Knight's Godmersham Park library. Austen apparently had unfettered access to this library; in fact, Gillian Dow and Katie Halsey quote her writing to Cassandra that 'we live in the library, except at Meals.'<sup>2</sup> So I was delighted to be able to examine this edition, and even more delighted to find that it is in three small pocket-sized volumes. One can easily imagine Jane Austen pocketing Vol. I, with its essay 'Soliloquy; or, Advice to an Author'; or Vol. II, containing 'The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody. Being a Recital of certain Conversations on Natural and Moral Subjects' to read under a tree somewhere in Godmersham Park, just such a 'park' being Shaftesbury's setting for 'The Moralists' as of course Austen's setting for *Mansfield Park*. Marginalia in her handwriting were, alas, too much to hope for; nor of course does this by any means constitute external evidence of influence. But it at least adds a degree of probability to the suggestion.



Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, from the frontispiece to *Characteristicks* (3rd edition, 1723). Simon Gribelin, line engraving after John Closterman.

Shaftesbury in any case was so enormously influential a moralist throughout the long eighteenth century, pervading its vocabulary of manners and morals, conversation, politeness, and literary and moral 'taste,' that he indeed, as Joseph Addison's *Spectator* aimed to do, 'brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables, and in coffeehouses.'<sup>3</sup> As Michael Prince and Lawrence Klein have suggested, Shaftesbury brought philosophy and theology out of the private realm of metaphysics onto the public stage of the novel understood as a form of 'soliloquizing conversation,' precisely Austen's enterprise (I propose) in *Mansfield Park*.<sup>4</sup>

My second task at the Chawton House Library was to see to what extent eighteenth-century women like Austen might have learned about philosophy in indirect ways through forms of popular literature such as conduct books. (Novelists of course were another route: Henry Fielding would

have been a direct conduit to both Aristotle and Shaftesbury for Jane Austen.) Peter Knox-Shaw suggests that she would have heard arguments about 'natural religion' in part through having an enlightened latitudinarian clergyman for a father, mentioning too that a landmark in her reading was her brother Edward's gift of Thomas Percival's *Tales, Fables, and Reflections* (1775). Describing it as 'a manual on science and liberal opinion disguised as a conduct book,' Shaw comments that 'Percival introduced his young readers to Shaftesbury, Voltaire, Robertson, and Smith' among others.<sup>5</sup> Although Chawton House Library does not have a copy of this, my on-line reading of it suggested an example of the kind of thing I might find in the Library's collection of conduct-book literature. Percival's book turned out to be not so much an anthology of authors' excerpts (although there are some) as paraphrases or synopses not always identified as such. (I found nothing excerpted from and identified as Shaftesbury, for

3 Joseph Addison, *Spectator* No. 10, Monday, 12 March 1711.

4 Michael Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue in the British Enlightenment: Theology, Aesthetics, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

5 Peter Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 17-18.

1 D.D. Devlin, *Jane Austen and Education* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1975); David Marshall, *The Frame of Art: Fictions of Aesthetic Experience, 1750-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

2 Letters, 23-24 September 1813; quoted in Gillian Dow and Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen's Reading: the Chawton Years* (University of Southampton: Chawton House Library), p.14.

instance, just a couple of entries with arguably Shaftesburean sentiments expressed.) But I was intrigued to discover at Chawton House Priscilla Wakefield's *Mental improvement: or the beauties and wonders of nature, in a series of instructive conversations* (1799) as well as Charlotte Smith's *Rambles farther: a continuation of rural walks: in dialogue. Intended for the use of young persons* (1796). These delightfully instructive and entertaining 'conversations,' themselves prototypes for novels, suggest that eighteenth-century women authors frequently engaged in dialogues on natural religion no less 'philosophical' than those being written by masculine counterparts like Shaftesbury and (later) David Hume. That their intended audience is clearly children and their parents indeed brings natural religion and philosophy into the quotidian, domestic sphere of life, the very stuff of Jane Austen's novels. But why does the Shaftesbury connection matter to our understanding of Jane Austen, you may ask? The implications for her theology, ethics, and aesthetics are profound, for what is at stake is the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns about nature and human nature which she shares with Swift, Pope, Fielding, and most of all, Shaftesbury. Is nature (including human nature) a tabula rasa, a blank slate, a 'mere nothing,' as Lockean moderns assert? Or is it informed by an indwelling telos, purposiveness, and intelligibility, as Shaftesbury (following Aristotle) argues? Like Shaftesbury (tutored by and reacting against John Locke), Austen argues in *Mansfield Park* that we moderns have 'forgotten' the ancient understanding of nature and human nature as informed by intelligibility or 'mind'; and like Shaftesbury, she proposes that the art of 'soliloquy' as practised by Fanny Price is the way to 'remember' it. The two uncharacteristically metaphysical scenes in the novel—the star-gazing scene with Edmund (I: xi) and the garden-gazing scene with Mary Crawford (II, iv)—demonstrate how Fanny attempts to put reflection, 'mind,' or 'memory' back into our modern understanding of nature. By schooling other characters in her art of soliloquizing reflection, she attempts to 'improve' their memories, their modern 'absent-mindedness' which thinks that nature itself is absent a mind, 'nature without a νοῦς' as Pope says in *The Dunciad*.

Fanny's attempt to give the young, modern Mr. Rushworth the mind, the brain, the memory that our modern understanding of nature has denied thus becomes a metaphor for how Austen herself conceives of her task as a novelist. Fanny's soliloquizing habit of mind may account for the increased interiority of Austen's last three novels:



Detail from the title page to volume I of Chawton's 1749 edition of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*, engraved and etched by S F Ravenet after an earlier design by Simon Gribelin.

their emphasis on reflection, their increased use of free indirect discourse, and their intense 'vocalizing' of thoughts which Kathryn Sutherland has so rightly noted.<sup>6</sup> It may also account for the curiously dissatisfying (to many readers) character of Fanny herself: she is almost pure mind and memory, attenuated almost to the point of immateriality, to her own habits of mind which Austen wants to emphasize through her. She is the 'exercise' of soliloquizing reflection in its purest form. If indeed the Shaftesbury connection holds, this would make *Mansfield Park* not only Fanny Price's 'coming out' into society, but Jane Austen's own 'coming out' as an author, engaging in the 'improvement' of national 'manners' Shaftesbury recommends. It also, remarkably, echoes modern virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre's diagnosis of modern moral philosophy as having 'forgotten' the ancient, teleological understanding of nature, and his suggestion that virtue ethics rehabilitate Aristotle for modernity.<sup>7</sup> As he himself to some extent recognizes, in attempting to "re-mind modernity," after Shaftesbury, Jane Austen got there first.

6 Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

7 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Indianapolis: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

Since the publication of this issue, we have had contact with Peter Knox-Shaw, who, in response to Lorraine Clark's article, has provided us with the exact reference to Shaftesbury in Thomas Percival's *Moral Tales* as follows:

MORAL TALES. 97

WARMTH IN ARGUMENT.

**L**ORD Shaftesbury, I remember, in his excellent *Characteristicks*, relates the story of a Clown, who was present at the debates of the Doctors in the University of Oxford. Though he was equally a stranger to the subjects and the language, he seemed to listen with great attention, and to receive much pleasure from them. A Gentleman Commoner who stood near him, and observed the emotions expressed in his countenance, inquired what amusement he could find in hearing such disputes, since it was impossible that he should even know to which side the victory  
H inclined.

98 MORAL TALES.

inclined. *Sir*, replied the Clown, *I am not such a fool as you imagine me to be; for I can easily see who is first put into a passion.* Common sense dictated this observation to the Country Man, that he who was superior in argument would maintain his composure of mind; whilst his antagonist would naturally become violent and angry, because unable to support his cause by the force of reason.

HABITS OF SENSUALITY MAY  
BE FORMED IN EARLY YOUTH.

**F**LORIO and Alonzo were school-fellows, and inseparable companions at Eton. They were both  
pro-

We thank him for bringing this to our attention.

K. Simpson  
November 2019

## “THE LOVELY CYNTHIA” FINDS A HOME AT CHAWTON’

By Linda Bree, Trustee of Chawton House Library

A fascinating new acquisition for Chawton House Library reminds us of the importance of illustrations, as well as texts, in exploring and celebrating the achievements of women writers.

One of the characteristic features of eighteenth-century fiction was the representation of situations of heightened emotion, presented almost like descriptions of scenes on a stage. Authors of popular novels of sensibility, in particular, loved to offer such sentimental tableaux, accompanied by a high level of physical detail to enable the reader to reconstruct the scene in his or her mind's eye, and sympathise with the feelings of the characters involved. Of course such scenes lent themselves particularly well to visual representation, which is one reason for the increasing frequency of illustrations to accompany the text of novels towards the end of the eighteenth century. And it is one such incident, in Sarah Fielding's novel, *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), that is portrayed in a fine painting by Henry Singleton presented to the library earlier this year by Sandy Lerner.

Sarah Fielding (1710-1768) was one of the most popular novelists of the eighteenth century. In *The Progress of Romance* (1785), a history of fiction presented in the form of a discussion between characters, Clara Reeve had one of her characters describe Sarah Fielding as ‘one of those truly estimable writers, whose fame smells sweet, and will do so to late posterity’, a novelist whose ‘works are not unworthy next to be mentioned after her brother's [that is, Henry Fielding's], if they do not equal them in wit and learning, they excel in some other material merits, that are more beneficial to their readers’ (pp. 143, 142). Reeve was, alas, wrong in guessing that Sarah Fielding's fame as a writer would last, but her assessment of the strengths of Fielding's writing is endorsed by other contemporaries, who praised her ability to explore the recesses of the human heart, and to offer sound moral teaching through fiction.

In fact Fielding described her first work of fiction, *The Adventures of David Simple: Containing his Account of his Travels through the Cities of London and Westminster, in the Search of a Real Friend*, not as a novel, but as a moral romance. It follows the experiences of the hero as he observes the people

around him, from the highest to the lowest, always hoping to find trustworthy and congenial companionship, and succeeding at last, though not without a lot of disappointments along the way. The work is episodic, and includes many scenes of high-wrought tension. *David Simple* proved very successful, and new editions were published through to the 1780s. It was perhaps the edition of 1788, itself accompanied by illustrations of several key incidents in the novel, that stimulated Henry Singleton to think of making a picture out of a scene easily overlooked in the text. It comes towards the end of the novel, at a point when narrative questions have essentially been resolved and David and his bride-to-be Camilla, together with Camilla's brother Valentine and his bride-to-be Cynthia, are taking the air:

As they were talking, on a sudden a Boat which passed hastily by them splashed them in such a manner, they were obliged to get into a House, in order to refresh and dry themselves; and during their Stay there, they heard a doleful Crying, and dismal Lamentation in the next Chamber; sometimes they thought they heard the Sound of Blows.—*David*, according to his usual Method, could not be easy, without inquiring what could be the Cause of this Complaint.—*Valentine* and the rest were also desirous to be informed.—On which they agreed to go into the Room whence the Noise came.

There sate at one Corner of the Room a middle-aged Woman, who looked as if she had been very handsome, but her Eyes were then swelled with crying.—By her stood a Man, looking in



Scene from *The Adventures of David Simple In Search of a Faithful Friend* by Sarah Fielding: *The Lovely Cynthia and the Rest of the Company Joined in Entreating the Man to see his Wife better* by Henry Singleton (Chawton House Library Collection)

the utmost Rage, clenching his Fist at her, as if he was ready every moment to strike her down.—*Camilla*, at *David's* Request, presently went up to her, and desired to know of her what it was that had put the Man into such a Passion with her. The Woman, in the softest Voice, and mildest Tone i m a g i n a b l e , replied, as follows:—‘You are very good,



‘*Camilla Recovering from Her Swoon*’ (an illustration of a scene from Fanny Burney’s ‘*Camilla, or a Picture of Youth*’, published in 1796) by Henry Singleton (Chawton House Library Collection).

Madam, to take so much Notice of the Miseries of such a poor *Wretch* as I am;—but I cannot tell what it is that continually throws my Husband (for so that Man is) into such violent Rages and Passions with me.—I have been married to him ten Years, and till within this half Year, we always lived together very happily; but now I dare not speak a Word, but he beats and abuses me, and his only Pleasure seems to be the contradicting me in every thing he knows I like.—What this usage proceeds from, or how I have displeased him, I cannot find out, for I make it my whole Study to obey him.’

*David* immediately turned to the Man, and begged him not to abuse his Wife in such a manner.—If he had taken any thing ill of her, it would be better to let her know it, and then he did not doubt, but she would behave otherwise. But he could get no other Answer from the Man, than that he was resolved not to be made such a *Fool of*, as Neighbour Such-a-one—was by his Wife: for tho’ perhaps he had not so much Sense as he had in some respects, yet he was not so great a *Fool*, as to give way to a *silly Woman’s Humours neither*, but could tell how to govern his Wife. *Cynthia* and the rest of the Company joined in intreating the Man to use his Wife better; but as they found all Endeavours vain, for that the Man *abused* her only because he would not be made a *Fool of*,—they left them. (Book 4, Chapter 3)

The episode, like some others in the novel, is curiously isolated from the flow of the narrative. Once *David* and *Camilla*, *Valentine* and *Cynthia*, return to their lodgings they discuss why the man behaved in the way he did, drawing analogies with

their experiences of other personalities and events, but without reaching any conclusion; and we hear no more of the abused wife or the abusing husband. But the potential of the scene for visual representation is clear, and *Singleton’s* picture makes the most of the poor abused woman in tears, while *David* physically restrains the husband, and *Valentine*, *Camilla* and *Cynthia* look on, concerned.

*Henry Singleton* (1766-1839) was the most prominent member of a gifted family who made their living through their art: his sisters *Maria* and *Sarah* exhibited at the Royal Academy in the early nineteenth century. By the 1780s *Henry* was becoming known as a painter of portraits and scenes of sentiment and religion. He won the Royal Academy gold medal in 1788 for a painting from *Dryden’s* ode *Alexander’s Feast*, and it was in this same year that *Singleton* embarked on the *David Simple* image. He took some care over it - a drawing, which is a study for the final picture, is extant, with a copy at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London - and the final version must have been considered a success. *Henry’s* career continued to flourish, and among a large number of later sentimental scenes are others from fiction, including in 1790 ‘*Amelia* Surprising her Husband and *Miss Mathews* as they are leaving the Prison’ (from *Henry Fielding’s Amelia* (1751)), and in 1796 two pictures depicting scenes from *Frances Burney’s Camilla*, just published that year. These two images, ‘*Camilla Recovering from her Swoon*’ and ‘*Camilla Fainting in the Arms of her Father*’, are also held at Chawton House Library.

Chawton’s new picture is entitled ‘*The Lovely Cynthia and the Rest of the Company Joined in Entreating the Man to see his Wife better*’; at the auction in *Sotheby’s* London saleroom earlier this year it was described as formerly ‘*The Property of a Lady*’. For all sorts of reasons it is now highly appropriate that it has found a home at Chawton House Library, joining the two *Camilla* pictures in bearing eloquent witness to the importance of the work of women writers in stimulating the imaginations of their readers, and in inspiring the artists of their time.

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Thursday 8th November - Morning Talk

Rosamund Wallinger - 'Gertrude Jekyll; Artist, Writer and Gardener'.

Having spent over 28 years researching and lovingly restoring one of the most important Edwardian gardens in the country, namely her own, which was designed by Gertrude Jekyll, Rosalind Wallinger is a noted expert on the life and work of this remarkable woman.

10.30 am for talk with coffee and cake. Tickets £7.50.

### Saturday 17th November – Study Day

Dr Abigail Williams – 'The Cheerful Companion': Eighteenth-Century Poetic Miscellanies.

This study day will include a series of short talks followed by an interactive session, in which participants will be able to explore the miscellanies within the Chawton House Library collection. 10.00 am – 4.00 pm. Tickets: £35; Students £28. Includes refreshments and buffet lunch.

### Thursday 22nd November – Evening talk and book launch

Kate Chisholm – 'Wits and Wives: Dr. Johnson in the Company of Women'.  
7.00 pm.

### Saturday 1st December – Gala Dinner:

Brick by Brick Theatre Company presents 'A Christmas Feast: Dinner with a Literary Flavour'. Enjoy a festive treat as you dine in style, entertained throughout the evening with a literary anthology. A three-course Christmas dinner will be served in the Dining Room, preceded by a drinks reception. Tickets: £40.00. Dress code: Black tie. 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. dinner.

All evening lectures begin with a wine reception and canapés at 6:30 and the lectures begin at 7 pm. Tickets: £10.00 (£7.50 for Friends and students). Tickets for other events may be priced differently.

To book tickets for any of the above events please telephone: 01420-541010 or email [info@chawton.net](mailto:info@chawton.net) Tickets may also be booked via the website: [www.chawtonhouse.org](http://www.chawtonhouse.org)

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## *The Female Spectator*

*The Female Spectator* is the newsletter of Chawton House Library, a British company limited by guarantee (number 2851718) and a registered charity (number 1026921).

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The Library's mission is to promote study and research in early English women's writing; to protect and preserve Chawton House, an English manor house dating from the Elizabethan period; and to maintain a rural English working manor farm of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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Produced and printed by The Print Centre, University of Southampton. 023 8059 4605

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