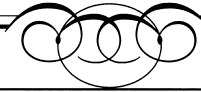


# The Female Spectator

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## ANN YEARSLEY'S HISTORICAL DRAMA

By Lisa K. Kasmer, Clark University

**E**ighteenth-century women's history writing, penned by such intellectual luminaries as Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Helen Maria Williams, trenchantly speaks to the political issues of the day. Catharine Macaulay, who was the first British woman to write a comprehensive history of England, forcefully promulgates her politics, which centre on the republican or 'old Whig' values of civic merit, within the public forum of her *History of England, from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line* (1763-1783).<sup>1</sup>

Her 'principal motive' in undertaking this history was 'to do justice . . . to the memory of our illustrious ancestors . . . still having an eye to public Liberty, the standard by which I have endeavoured to measure the virtue of those characters that are treated of in this history.'<sup>2</sup> Framed in the popular genres of the domestic, sentimental, and Gothic, eighteenth-century women's historical fiction ostensibly has only a tenuous connection to the political aims of women's history writing, yet women's historical fiction is also politically astute: both currently well-known women writers, as well as lesser-known authors, wrote historical fiction set during political upheavals in the early modern period that plainly respond to troubling contemporary national issues, such as tyranny, insurrection, and imperialism. Indeed, these writers self-consciously exploit the unusual generic framework of their fiction to effectively negotiate an engagement with national issues of the eighteenth century. By extending the generic and political possibilities of history writing, these writers enter the sphere of civic discourse alongside women writers of history.

A sample of eighteenth-century women's historical fiction

found in Chawton House Library's collection delineates this purpose in the genre: Miss Ballin's *The Statue Room: An Historical Tale* (1790), a Gothic tale set during Elizabeth's



The Reverend Thomas Wilson (1703-1784) and Miss Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791) by Joseph Wright of Derby 1734-1797, Chawton House Library (Painting probably features Macaulay's daughter rather than Macaulay herself)

reign, critiques tyrannical rule; Anna Maria Johnson's *Monmouth: A Tale, Founded on Historic Facts*, in tracing the political pride of Monmouth through a domestic tale, supports monarchical rule; Agnes Musgrave's *Cicely; Or the Rose of Raby: An Historic Novel* (1790) traces the problems of insurrection in the context of a romance set during the War of the Roses; and Ann Yearsley's *The Royal Captives: A Fragment of Secret History Copied from an Old Manuscript* (1795) examines religious tyranny through a Gothic romance concerning seventeenth-century French Huguenots.<sup>3</sup> Ann Yearsley's sentimental drama, *Earl Goodwin: An Historical Play* (1791), which explores issues of absolutism through the 1042 rebellion of Earl Goodwin against King Edward the Confessor, stands as an especially captivating example of this genre.<sup>4</sup>

Acknowledging the cultural cachet of history, in her introduction to *Earl Goodwin*, Yearsley aligns her fiction with history writing. She insists upon the historical accuracy of her tale in the face of critiques of the sentimental form as self-indulgent and enervating: even Henry Mackenzie, who wrote the seminal sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771), cautions in his essay in *The Lounger* of 1785 that the sentimental novel can create 'refined sentimentalists' with a 'certain childish pride of superior delicacy' (147).<sup>5</sup> To argue for the veracity of her tale, Yearsley acknowledges that her portrait of Goodwin differs vastly from the depictions of him throughout history, but she justifies the liberties that she has taken by attributing to her play the moral authority critics like Samuel Johnson institute in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

## *The Female Spectator*



The establishment of the Visiting Fellowships at Chawton House Library has been very successful. Some of the fruits of the research of recent visiting fellows are in this issue. Readers will also find news of the Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Chawton House Library as well as academic seminars and reading group activities.

Autumn 2008

### Editors:

Academic: Gillian Dow

General: Jacqui Grainger

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Through a sentimental delineation of Goodwin, Yearsley defends his 'injured reputation' from the 'blackening of character [...] by infernal spirit of party,' which, she insists, exists throughout much of history writing. During the Pre-Enlightenment, she argues, 'the chain of superstition fell heavy on the people of England' from the leadership of the 'frozen, yet ambitious Monks,' so that someone, like Goodwin, who 'dared trust his reason or his faith beyond priestly rule . . . was pronounced an alien to God and Society' (Preface). In Earl Goodwin, then, through the imaginative force of sentiment, Yearsley upholds Enlightenment rationalism against religious and political tyranny to call for an equitable government in England, a common rallying cry during the Georgian period.<sup>7</sup>

The broad characterization of the self-aggrandizing priest and the noble earl in Yearsley's *Earl Goodwin* outlines the moral territory in the play, in which political and religious tyranny are diluting the foundational rights of the English people, a political position that juxtaposes *Earl Goodwin* with Macaulay's republican *History*. In her play, Yearsley portrays the historical personages of Earl Goodwin and Archbishop Canterbury almost as stock figures, but within the context of a moving psychological portrait of their moral world. Yearsley, discovered as a poet and published by Hannah More, is known for her pastoral and sentimental poetry, or as More depicts it 'natural and strong expression of misery'; like Helen Maria Williams, the self-professed poet of sensibility, Yearsley also penned a poem to sensibility, 'Addressed to Sensibility' (1787).<sup>8</sup> Through her poetry, especially her abolitionist verse, 'A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade' (1788), Yearsley, herself 'born in humble circumstances' and a 'milkwoman' by trade, also reveals a politics keenly aware of individual justice.<sup>9</sup> The play opens to a political crisis in England as one of Goodwin's sons asserts that the Peers in England who are chiefly Norman rather than Anglo-Saxon have 'wrest /The nation's statutes with o'erweening pride' (I, p. 2). This comment concerning the control of the 'nation's statutes,' associated with the Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great, who first framed the code of laws that instituted equal justice in England, speaks to the fear of foreign usurpation of the nation's laws.

Yearsley reveals the contemporary nature of these political injustices in referring to King George III, also a 'foreigner,' in an editorial note. At the play's denouement, Yearsley speaks to her decision to save the life of Lodowicke, the priest who under the orders of Canterbury poisons Goodwin and almost immediately laments his barbarous act. She asserts:

I own that such are my feelings towards my fellow creatures, that I think remorse worse than death: it is to the criminal a torture all his own, while it leaves no blemish on society. Mankind depend on mercy:--were we emulous in gaining its first gradation, would 72,000 souls have been executed in the reign of Henry VIII.? Or would twenty men be suspended of a morning, on a spot of some few yards wide, in London, and under the

cognizance of our Most Gracious sovereign George III.?

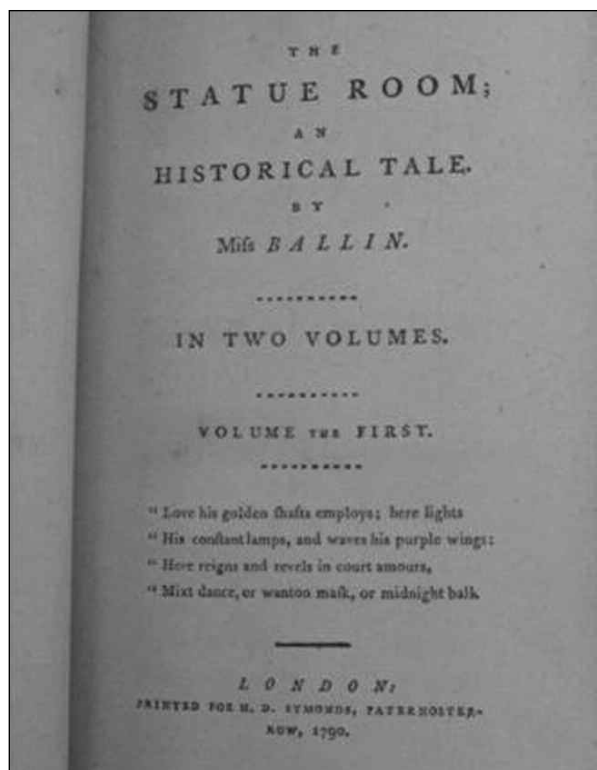
In comparing George III to Henry VIII, who, according to Holinshed, executed 72,000 for political and religious reasons, Yearsley exposes King George's abuses of the constitutional monarchy, especially in his exploitation of juridical procedure with the institution of the Sedition Law. This view of George III as tyrant is ever-present in eighteenth-century prints and works, such as William Blake's *America: A Prophecy* (1793).

The sentimental figure of Goodwin stands as the ideal advocate for the rights of the English people, declaring, 'England speaks by me' (III, p. 41). In the eighteenth century, the man of feeling not only carried moral currency, in a highly developed social or ethical sense of the suffering of others, but political weight as well, as according to Adam Smith and David Hume, sensibility is linked to social action.<sup>10</sup> Goodwin supports the people of England through concepts foundational to English law as he speaks against Edward's tyranny in legal terminology, attacking his 'extortion' that drains the 'public funds' [t]o 'swell the priestly revenue' (III, p. 41) and only provides 'half a meal' for each subject (I, p.16). In referring to the oppression that has reduced the nation to 'Shrieking o'er ev'ry roof' (I, p.16) and 'stand[ing] like statues stiffen'd by despair' (III, p. 41), Goodwin's metaphorical embodiment of the populace serves to enhance his claim, both through his empathetic portrayal of the people and his corporealization of the legal entity of the body politic.

For Yearsley, this moral sensibility demands that Goodwin place the nation's integrity above his own domestic concerns. When Goodwin's sons urge him to wage war against Edward to save the honor of their sister, Editha, who has married and been spurned by Edward, Goodwin proclaims, 'we must not yield to private woe./ . . . *her* [Editha's] *wrongs*, /Nor mine, or thine, shall ever raise my arm /To plunge a guiltless nation deep in blood' (I, pp. 4-5). Although Goodwin mourns his daughter's fate, he determines that to bring warfare and bloodshed to the nation solely to protect his daughter would be unconscionable.

Yearsley draws the moral lines in the play even more clearly as Goodwin's unflagging rectitude stands in sharp counterpoint to the Catholic Church's exaggerated evil.

Goodwin descries King Edward as a 'slumb'ring monarch' (III, p. 38), 'So chill'd by penance and abstemious rule,/ That his weak spirit dares not look abroad/ . . . Scorning the heav'nly attribute of mercy' (III, p. 38). Since Edward's religious 'penance' 'chills' his legal duty as a monarch toward his people, Yearsley associates the King's willful neglect of the rights of the people with the Church's influence.



The title page from  
The Statue Room: An Historical Tale (1790)  
by Miss Ballin

In a conversation between Canterbury and the prelate Lodowicke, these religious figures playfully deconstruct the terms 'justice' and 'truth' to reveal a moral relativism in the Church, in which theological strictures are mere placeholders that can be manipulated to suit the institution's interests. Asking how the priests persuaded Edward to rescind Canterbury's order to execute the priest Alwine, an order Canterbury fears will anger the people, Lodowicke relates that the King, 'Demanded if with Justice he might spare /The life of Alwine?' (I, p. 12). When Lodowicke at first implies that the priests deter the King from sparing Alwine—"They rais'd their eyes to Heav'n, then cross'd themselves,/And faintly sounded 'No,'" (I, p. 12) to Edward's demand--Canterbury

boldly declares that he will tell Edward that Lodowicke mislead him to call for Alwine's execution: '. . . I will to the king, confess myself/Mislead by you, whose craft would foil the devil./And in return a miracle I'll teach,/ . . . and that is *Truth*' (I, p. 13). Canterbury's planned prevarication to Edward stands as the 'truth' in his eyes, as for Canterbury, whatever his authority deems as such is truth. To Canterbury, this level of power is a 'miracle,' a perversion of religious authority and belief.

In continuing his discussion, however, Lodowicke reveals that the priests initially denied justice for Alwine to later manipulate Edward into renouncing the execution: 'When Edward had pronounced /The name of *Justice* . . . Each [priest] smil'd/ In secret on the other; waved the claim/ Of *Justice*, and convinc'd the godly King/ He could not save, but by the rule of *Mercy*' (13). In displacing the language of justice with that of mercy, the priests remove the decision to save Alwine from the monarch's legal realm to ecclesiastical law. Through the Church's lack of moral certainty, Yearsley reveals the insidious nature of an institution that has no substantive basis to support its policies or limit its power.

Yearsley presents the zenith of the danger of unchecked

power through the revelation of Canterbury's nihilism. To him, life is a meaningless series of acts as man is 'Doom'd to throw pebbles at the changeful moon/(For such is man's great farce)' (III, p. 55). For Canterbury, there is no underlying rationale for these actions but physical need: 'Men are machines,/ . . . Unruly passions, /Dissolving wishes, appetites, and wants,/Are springs that move stupendous order' (III, p. 56). The extreme and almost unprecedented nature of this religious figure, which situates the Archbishop as amoral, easily elucidates the problematic nature of absolutism in England.

The strength of Goodwin's nobility ultimately convinces Edward to reject Canterbury's guidance. In reminding him of his legal responsibility to his people, Goodwin attempts to instill a sense of compassion in Edward toward his subjects:

Own, my son,  
The godlike pow'r of  
blessing . . .  
...soft peace is thine  
And on her lap thy poorest  
slave may rest.  
Plenty is thine; nor should  
her fruitful store  
Be thus divided by a  
Sovereign's hand  
Among the lazy few. (III,  
pp. 44-45)

The image of providing a peace on whose 'lap thy poorest slave may rest' and of fairly doling out the nation's 'store' acknowledges the sovereign's duty to support the welfare of the English body. Above all, his providing rest for the 'poorest slave' and dividing the store fairly suggests that an equitable treatment of the people must be instituted. When Edward accepts Goodwin's call for his royal duty, Goodwin proclaims, 'Open thine arms,/ And take thy honest subjects to thy heart' (III, p. 47). As Edward literally opens his arms to Goodwin and figuratively to his people, he accepts the duty that Goodwin has shown to him.

Eighteenth-century women's historical fiction, like Yearsley's play, then demands a novel vision of not only eighteenth-century generic formulation, but also gender. In addition, since much of the fiction is yet unknown, as archival collections, such as the one at Chawton House Library, disclose, this study demands archival work as well. In fact, I believe that the intersection of archival research and gender and genre theory will contribute most to an understanding of this body of work.

Notes:

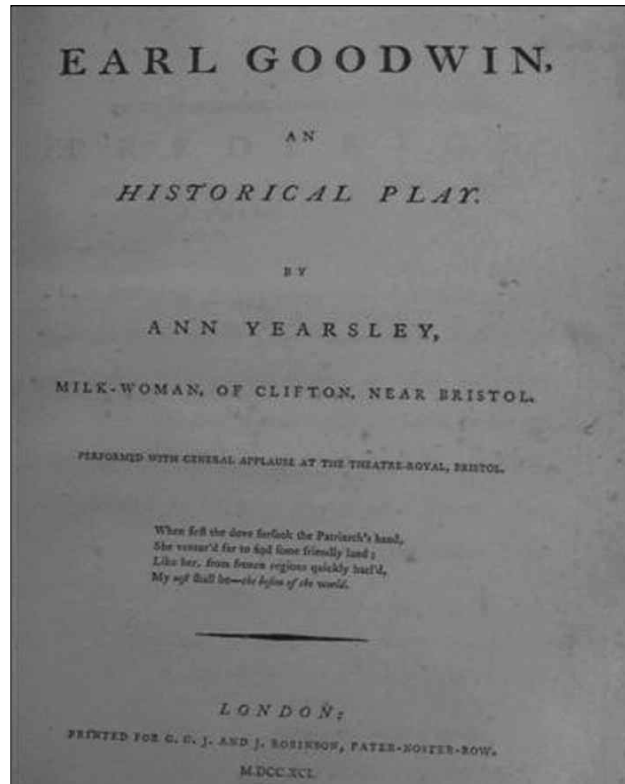
<sup>1</sup> Catharine Macaulay, *The History of England, from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line*, 8 vols. (London: Printed for the Author, and Sold by I. Nourse, Bookseller to His Majesty, in the Strand, I. Dodsley in Pall Mall, and W. Johnston in Ludgate Street, 1763-83)

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay, Introduction, vii.

<sup>3</sup> Miss Ballin, *The Statue Room: An Historical Tale*, 2 vols. (London: Printed of H.D. Symonds, Paternoster-

Row 1790); Anna Maria Johnson, *Monmouth: A Tale, Founded on Historic Facts*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for W. Land, Leadenhall Street, 1790); Agnes Musgrave, *Cicely; Or the Rose of Raby: An Historic Novel*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, Leaden Hall-Street, 1795); Ann Yearsley, *The Royal Captives: A Fragment of Secret History Copied from an Old Manuscript*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster Row, 1795).

<sup>4</sup> Ann Yearsley, *Earl Goodwin: An Historical Play* (London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row, 1791). Further references to this text are given parenthetically after quotations in the text.



The title page from  
Earl Goodwin: An Historical Play (1791)  
by Ann Yearsley

<sup>5</sup> MacKenzie, *Lounger*, no. 20, G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 177.

<sup>6</sup> In *Rambler* no. 4, Samuel Johnson asserts, "the chief advantage which these fictions have over real life is that their authors are at liberty, though not to invent, yet to select objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employed" (157). See *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Brady and W.K. Wimsatt (Berkeley: University of Berkeley, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> As Vincent Carretta points out, eighteenth-century satirists attacked King George III "as a would-be absolute monarch" (11). See *George III and the Satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (Georgia and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Prefatory Letter to Mrs. Montagu by Miss Hannah More in *Ann Yearsley, Poems on Various Subjects* (London: Printed of the Author, and Sold by G.G. J. and J. Robinson, Paternoster Row, 1787).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Waldron, *Lactilla, Milkwoman of Clifton: the Life and Writings of Ann Yearsley, 1753-1806* (University Of Georgia Press, 1997), 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Both David Hume and Adam Smith link sympathetic feelings within society to social control. See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).



## ON THE VALUE OF ORIGINAL SOURCES

Christine Gibbs Independent Scholar

Of all the varied missions of Chawton House Library, arguably the most influential is its availability for research and the educational opportunities it provides for students of literature and society. In today's electronic world, information is so easily accessed that original sources – the books, pamphlets and prints in which the information was originally contained – tend to be overlooked. Web sites such as the British Museum's 'Turning the Pages' can reproduce facsimiles of selected works, but physically to handle early editions of books, pamphlets and prints, to note the binding and printing, to read the footnotes, and the marginal notes in the hand of some early owner, is to open a door of understanding into a past world that would otherwise remain closed to us. I first understood this when I researched a book for boys written by once-famous but now almost forgotten Victorian 'sensation' novelist Mrs. Henry Wood. The volume bears little comparison to lavish modern productions for children, but one realizes, holding it, that attempts were clearly made to adapt an adult genre to a young person's needs. *The Orville College Boys* is small – about the size of a modern trade paperback – hard-bound, but with fairly large print and a few black and white illustrations. Small enough, perhaps, to be taken to boarding school in a tin trunk, or hidden under a pillow? The copy I examined was coming apart because it had been cheaply made, presumably to keep down costs. The venture apparently failed financially; Mrs.



Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) by Charles Jervas c.1675-1739, Chawton House Library

Wood wrote only two books for boys, returning to what she did best – causing palpitations in the hearts of housemaids with subversive tales of passion among the upper classes.

The value of going to primary sources, of being privileged to see and touch the artefacts themselves, has also been borne out for me more recently, when I became intrigued by a small, puzzling mystery in the life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I should explain first that I have been interested in Lady Mary ever since I came across my mother's copy of Doris Leslie's 1954 novel, *A Toast to Lady Mary*, a best-seller at the time. In her foreword, Leslie wrote that she did her best to make the novel authentic by quoting from Lady Mary's

own letters and poems, and by including no fictitious characters; yet so much of the story seemed left out, so much history unexplained, rather like the blank white space in the heart of Africa as it appears in Victorian maps, as to make the novel quite puzzling. Leslie's *Lady Mary* seemed the most fortunate of Fortune's children – the daughter of a duke, married to a hugely rich if parsimonious husband, at the centre of a glittering and erudite social circle – and yet at the age of forty-nine she left husband, friends, literary reputation and country behind and ran away to Europe. Granted, Leslie portrays Lady Mary's life as fraught with problems of one sort or another, from her erring children, to the opprobrium heaped on her for her introduction of smallpox inoculation into England, and her famously vitriolic exchanges in verse

with Alexander Pope; but none of these seems sufficiently dire to explain a voluntary absence of more than twenty years. Leslie skips over these missing years with scarcely a word of explanation, and then brings Lady Mary home to die. Anyone who has seen the younger Jonathan Richardson's painting of Lady Mary, stunning in an ermine robe and gold satin Turkish pantaloons, returning the spectator's gaze with a challenging, half-amused look, would admit that this was not a woman to be so easily intimidated.

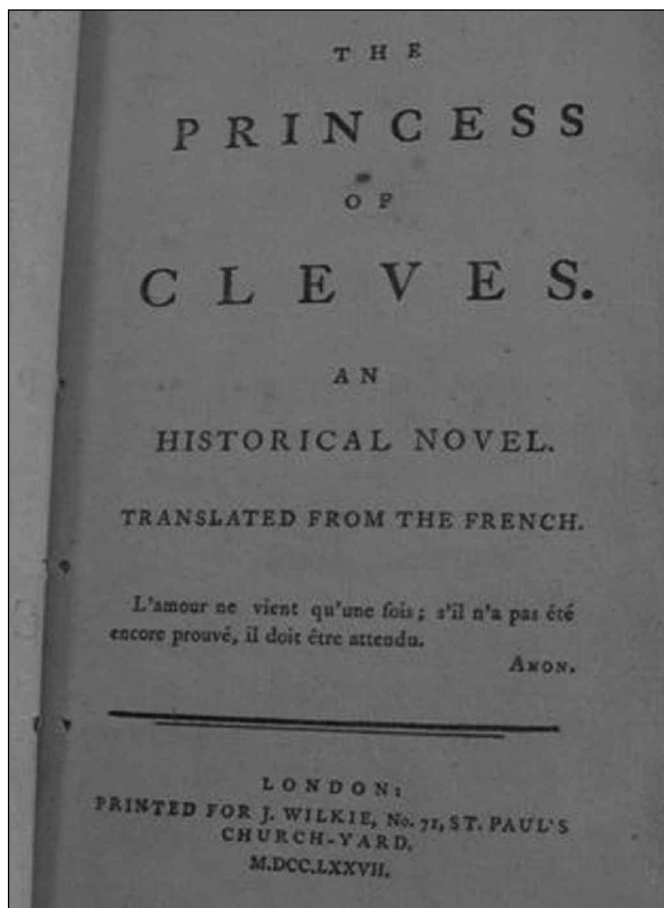
Thanks to the exhaustive research of Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy, we now know, at least in part, what provided the impetus for Lady Mary's flight – her desperate, and almost certainly unrequited, love for a young Italian named Francesco Algarotti. Intelligent, ingratiating, impecunious, and by all accounts astoundingly handsome, he first came to England in 1736 with letters of introduction from Voltaire and Emilie du Châtelet, to sell himself and his new book on Newton's theories of light to the rich and famous. Grundy remarks in her biography<sup>3</sup> of Lady Mary that Algarotti had a knack of making old people fall in love with him<sup>1</sup>, and two at least of the *ton* of London seem to have done just that – the bisexual Lord Hervey, and Lady Mary. Throughout her life her choice of men seems to have been unfortunate, and in this case particularly so; Algarotti was twenty-four (Lady Mary was forty-seven), about the same age as her son, and homosexual. He was happy to accept several large gifts of money from her, and, judging from her passionate letters to him, to make promises he didn't intend to keep. However this may be, by 1739 she seems to have been confident enough of his feelings for her – or desperate enough – to 'take the leap for another world' and follow him to Venice<sup>2</sup>, where he had apparently agreed to live with her. It took Lady Mary nearly two years' wandering in Europe to catch up with Algarotti, and by that time he had very different plans – he had become the homosexual lover and favourite companion of Frederick the Great of Prussia. Turin, where Algarotti had arrived on a diplomatic mission, held both Lady Mary and Algarotti for about two months in 1741; they did not meet again for fifteen years.

What happened between them is guesswork. Isobel Grundy imagines them engaging in a civilised, bantering extended conversation on the nature of love, but points out that Algarotti must have disposed of any lingering hopes of a continuing relationship with necessary dispatch. There is one tiny piece of evidence to suggest a restrained tone to their parting. Grundy mentions that inside Lady Mary's copy of La Fayette's *La Princesse de Cleves* is a poem written by Algarotti, explicating with wry detachment the nature of love. Robert Halsband established that it is in Algarotti's handwriting; Isobel Grundy generously told me where to find it.

Sandon Hall in Staffordshire, the residence of the Earl and Countess of Harrowby, holds a private collection of some of the many thousands of books Lady Mary owned when she died, as well as the stunning Jonathan Richardson portrait. The books are bound in various shades of tan leather, each inlaid with a red leather square on which is embossed a gold "M". Lord Harrowby was kind enough to take down for me the two volumes of *La Princesse de Cleves* from their glass-fronted bookcase, and there was Algarotti's poem, tucked inside the second volume where it had presumably lain like a small time capsule for more than two hundred and fifty years. The untitled poem is written in black ink

in tiny, tightly-controlled handwriting, with no flourishes or decorative touches, on a sheet of once-white paper about four inches long by three inches wide, brown around the edges and pierced on one side by two rusted pinholes. On the back, Robert Halsband penciled "Probably in the hand of F. Algarotti. R.H. 1963."

While this scrap of paper cannot solve the mystery of what happened during those two months in Turin, as a physical object it raises some interesting speculations. The note was folded in three, and then at some point opened out and pinned onto the back of the title page of the novel's second volume; the pin has been removed (how long ago, I wonder?) but the pinholes at the edge of the page and the indentations of the pin itself match those on the paper exactly. There are no marginalia in either volume, which suggests that Lady



The title page from *The Princess of Cleves*. An historical novel by Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne La Fayette (1777). (Translated from the French by Elizabeth Griffiths.)

Mary, an inveterate margin commentator, may already have possessed a copy of the novel; the title page proclaims that it was published in Paris “by the Company of Associated Libraries with permission of the King” in 1741, so it was clearly new at the time of their meeting. Did Algarotti give Lady Mary the book with the note already inside? The story of a doomed love affair seems an unwontedly heartless gift at that point. And if so, why pin it into the second volume, where it might possibly remain unnoticed? It seems to me more likely that Lady Mary was given the note, folded into a little two-inch by four-inch sliver, and that she opened it out herself and pinned it into a book that must have seemed to her in the circumstances grimly ironic. The two scholars who untangled the tiny faded script and convoluted eighteenth-century Italian for me noted that the last line of the original seems deliberately ambiguous, as if asking ‘little Mary’ to guess the identity of Algarotti’s true love.

Here is the poem in transcription and translation. It was, the translators thought, quite a brush-off.

Il vero amore egli è  
 Bella, se tu nol sai,  
 Io da te l'imparai,  
 Figlio d'un non so' che,  
 Non di fredda ragione  
 Come sognò Platone  
 Fui languidette occiate,  
 Ch'a caso paion date,  
 Fur smezzate parole  
 Madri di dubbia speme.  
 Egli asconder si suole,  
 E di scoprirsi teme.  
 Il vero amor, Marina,  
 È quell che s'indovina.

True love is -  
 Darling, if you don't know,  
 I learned it from you -  
 The child of I don't know what;  
 Not of cold reason,  
 As Plato imagined,  
 But of languid hinting looks  
 That seemed given by chance;  
 Of half-spoken words,  
 Mothers of failing hope.  
 Love habitually hides itself,  
 And fears being revealed.  
 True love, little Mary,  
 Is whatever one guesses.

## Notes

I like to imagine this little piece of paper, small enough to hide in the hand, passed discreetly to Lady Mary at a public gathering and later pinned inside a book about a princess who renounces her only love – a silent relic of a romance grown cold, or perhaps a testament to the manner in which a civilised woman might handle disappointment and despair.

<sup>1</sup> Isobel Grundy. *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Comet of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Selected Letters*, ed. Isobel Grundy (New York: Penguin Books 1997), p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 436.

I am grateful to the late Earl of Harrowby and Janet, Dowager Countess of Harrowby, for allowing me to see and handle Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s books from their private collection; and to Luca Cottini and Jennifer Testa of the University of Florida for their translation of Francesco Algarotti’s poem.



## LIBRARY BULLETIN

### Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies

*The group of scholars working in eighteenth-century studies at the University of Southampton formalised their links with each other, and with Chawton House Library, with the creation of a Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies recently. A reception was held at the library on the 16th of October to celebrate the new Centre. The following is the press release sent from the University of Southampton. For more information about the Centre, please contact Gillian Dow at Chawton House Library.*

The University's Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies (SCECS) was launched on Thursday at the Chawton House Library. The Centre brings together specialists from a broad range of disciplines - English, History, Philosophy and Music - and draws on the University's rich research culture in eighteenth-century studies. It will have a base in a specially-designated room at Chawton House Library, which was the venue for a reception to mark this week's launch.

SCECS Director, Professor of History John Oldfield, comments: 'The link with Chawton House Library is of great value to the University and the new study centre. This was the home of Jane Austen's brother and the house is not greatly different from the days when Jane was a visitor, apart from the establishment of the excellent Chawton House Library in the past decade. The University of Southampton already has strengths in the area of eighteenth-century studies, with our MA in Eighteenth-Century Studies regularly recruiting between eight and ten students, and ten PhD students currently working on eighteenth-century topics. Additionally, scholars at Southampton and Chawton have initiated a number of publication projects, including the Chawton House Library Series, published by Pickering & Chatto, and we will be building further on these initiatives over the next twelve months.'

Plans are already in progress with colleagues in music to submit a bid to digitise all of the existing Jane Austen song books, an exciting project that will be of immense benefit to scholars and Austen enthusiasts alike.

Stephen Lawrence, Chief Executive of Chawton House Library, comments: 'The launching of the new Centre provides an excellent platform for strengthening the important links that already exist between CHL and the University. The breadth of the collection at the Library will provide significant opportunities for inter-disciplinary research within the context of a wonderfully restored Elizabethan Manor house.'

In 2008-9 the SCECS will also sponsor a series of workshops on 'Common sense', 'Gardens', and 'Cross-Channel Exchanges'. SCECS will be the hub for a range of academic events and projects, chief among them being the 2009 international conference celebrating the bicentenary of Jane Austen's arrival at Chawton.

'We are very proud of our association with Chawton House Library, which focuses on women's writing in English from 1600 to 1830,' continues

John Oldfield. 'The Centre greatly values the support it receives from Chawton House Library, not least through the Chawton Fellow, currently Dr Gillian Dow, and we are immensely grateful to the current CEO, Steve Lawrence, for providing us with a designated room at Chawton, to be used for teaching, meetings, and individual research.'



*From left to right: Dr. Jonathan Conlin (History), Dr Alex Neill (Philosophy), Dr Gillian Dow (English), Dr Thomas Irvine (Music), Dr Stephen Bending (English), Ms Sandy White (English), Professor John Oldfield (History), Dr Stephen Bygrave (English), Professor Emma Clery (English)*



## Les Mercredis de Chawton

Viewed through the lens of the salon, the republic of letters in the eighteenth century seems dominated by remarkable women. In the Hôtel de Rambouillet in seventeenth-century Paris, the Marquise de Rambouillet welcomed witty and elegant men and women for literary discussion and to read aloud from recent publications and manuscripts.



Frontispiece from *Oeuvres Complètes de Mesdames De La Fayette* (1825) by MM. Etienne et A. Jay

At Madeleine de Scudéry's samedis, her Saturday salons in the 1650s and 60s, the literary women of the day gathered to discuss, among other things, the importance of women's independence from men and the institution of marriage. Molière was to lampoon what he saw at the pretensions of these women in his play *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, first performed in 1659. Despite this attack, which twentieth-century feminist critics have cited as one of the earliest examples of the backlash against educated women, the trend for hosting literary gatherings continued into the eighteenth century.

The Marquise de Lambert (1647-1733) held two salons in her house in the rue de Richelieu: a Tuesday salon, when she welcomed men of letters, and a Wednesday gathering for 'persons of quality'. Montesquieu and Marivaux visited Lambert frequently, and her *Avis d'une mère à son fils* (1726) and *Avis d'une mère à sa fille* (1728) played an important part in the early eighteenth-century debate on education.

These salons had an influence outside of France: Madame de Tencin's salon was visited by Bolingbroke and Chesterfield; later in the century, Horace Walpole was to visit Madame Geoffrin's salon in the rue Saint-Honoré. Another prominent salonnière, Madame du Deffand, became infatuated by Walpole at the age of sixty-eight, and her last letters to him address her loneliness and her nihilism. Julie de Lespinasse, at

first Deffand's pupil, but eventually a renowned hostess and salonnière in her own right, also left a voluminous correspondence, published in 1809. Madame d'Épinay (1726-83) held a popular salon from 1762, and Madame Necker (1739-94) opened her own salon's doors in 1764; her daughter Germaine de Staël was to develop her own intellectual talents in this environment.

In homage to these literary salons of the eighteenth century, Chawton House Library has recently started hosting afternoon seminars, which will take place every month, on Wednesdays. For two hours on Wednesday afternoons, visitors will be able to hear work in progress by the visiting fellows in residence, and to take part in lively discussion.

The first mercredi, held on October the 15th, was a great success. Claire Harman paper examined Austen's own literary connections and her earliest audience, presenting a section of her work *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, to be published in 2009. Pauline Morris discussed her PhD project, a cultural history of depression, 1660-1830: a vast topic, which provoked much interest and discussion.



Portrait of Mme. Geoffrin from the *Memoirs of the Countess Genlis* (1825) Stephanie Bruslart Genlis

The seminar was attended by colleagues from the University of Southampton, and by students currently enrolled in the MA in Eighteenth Century Studies at Southampton. In the future, we hope that others will join us. The date for this month's seminar is the 12th of November, and December's seminar will take place on the 10th.

All other dates will be advertised on our website, and in the pages of *The Female Spectator*, so do come prepared for enlightened conversation, and tea!

Gillian Dow

# The Jane Austen Society of North America 2008 AGM in Chicago

Each year The Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) holds its annual general meeting in a different American or Canadian city. This year it was the turn of Chicago to be the host and from 2 to 5 October Steve Lawrence, Chief Executive Officer, Gillian Dow, Chawton Fellow, and myself represented the Library at this event. Heather Shearer, former Director of Chawton House Library and Lindsay Ashford, Press and Communications Consultant, also provided much appreciated help and support to us.

The theme for this years AGM was 'Jane Austen's Legacy: Life, Love & Laughter' and this proved to be a fascinating direction for the AGM as it allowed for diverse and in many cases, fresh approaches, to Austen's work and reception. The plenary sessions covered the following topics and The North American Scholars' Lecture panel addressed the question "How far across countries, cultures and disciplines does Jane Austen's legacy reach?" The panel for this session included Gillian Dow, and was a lively response to the theme of the AGM. The Carol Medine Moss Keynote Lecture was given by Claudia Johnson on the theme of 'Can we ever have enough of Jane Austen', the conclusion amongst the delegates in the room being a definite 'no!' Joan Klingel Ray gave us an entertaining approach to Austen studies in her lecture entitled 'Jane Austen for Smarties' in a tongue-in-cheek reference to her recent book *Jane Austen for Dummies*.

The AGM started on 2 October with a full day of events including country dancing lessons, the welcome reception and the Thursday evening curtain raiser lecture by Jeff Nigro, who is Director of Adult Programs at the Art Institute of Chicago, entitled 'Visualizing Jane Austen and Jane Austen Visualizing'. The emporium opened offering retail opportunities that ranged from beautifully hand made bonnets to gloriously well-stocked bookstalls and all manner of purse-emptying merchandise in between. Chawton House Library had a table which proved to be an excellent meeting point for so many friends, old and new. We encouraged all our visitors to keep in touch with us and to, hopefully, one day come and visit the Library either for a house tour, as a Library user or both. Throughout the day the bonnet, reticule and dancing workshops continued although Friday was also the first day of the breakout sessions. Subjects covered ranged from the 'Anatomy of a Janeite' in which the presenter Jeanne Kiefer gave the results of her online survey on whether there such a thing as the 'average' Jane Austen fan to 'Keeping it Cool: the role of Jane Austen's House Museum in delivering her legacy to young people' by Louise West of Jane Austen's House Museum. I gave a breakout session called 'The Pemberley Effect: Austen's Legacy to the Historic House Industry' which gave me the opportunity to combine my two favourite subjects.



*The Jane Austen Society of North America AGM delegates in costume ready to parade across Michigan Avenue, Chicago*

On Saturday evening the Regency Ball gave many of the delegates the opportunity to appear in some breathtakingly beautiful Regency costumes. Led by a piper the costumed group took to the streets of Chicago in a grand parade down Michigan Avenue that really did stop the traffic! The brunch on Sunday morning gave everyone a final chance to get-together with promises to do it all again next year in Philadelphia. A final treat was a presentation by Lindsay Warren Baker and Amanda Jacobs who have been working on a musical version of *Pride and Prejudice* for several years. They showed us their much loved but dog-eared copy of *Pride and Prejudice* that had accompanied them on their musical journey as well as on trips to England to see many of the places that Jane Austen knew. They graciously showcased some of the songs from the musical and after their Mr Darcy (Colin Donnell) had sung, there were many of us who were already making mental preparations for trips to New York to see the show when it opens next year!

This was my first experience of a JASNA AGM and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. It was a particular a joy to meet again so many friends that we have made through Chawton House Library and to many meet many new friends who we hope will be able to, one day, visit us at Chawton. Summing up a JASNA AGM is challenging because it is such a wonderfully enticing mix of exciting, thought provoking, fun, entertaining, inspirational events and an unparalleled opportunity to indulge in all things Austen. I already have the dates in my diary for next year!

Sarah Parry  
Archive and Education Officer

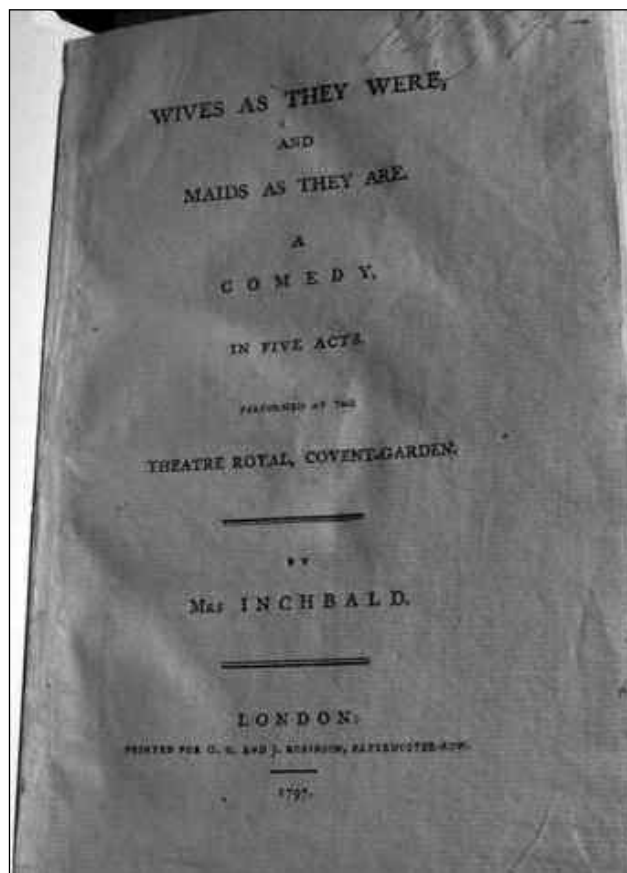
## Chawton House Library Reading Group

The reading group has reconvened after the summer break, starting the autumn season with an outing to the Haymarket Theatre in Basingstoke to see a dynamic and hilarious production of *Wives as they Were, and Maids as they Are* (1797) followed by *Animal Magnetism*, (1788), a short farce. Both plays are by Elizabeth Inchbald (nee Simpson) (1753-1821) a beautiful actress and writer, who moved in radical circles, and refused the hand of William Godwin. She left home when very young with the ambition of becoming an actress; the description of the event as related in her biography in the *Monthly Mirror*, 1797, reads like the opening pages of a romantic novel:

She was now sixteen years of age, and was become still more beautiful: her hair was of that bright gold-colour, so much celebrated by eminent poets and painters: her complexion was the glow of loveliness itself: her eyes dark, and her teeth exquisitely white: she was tall, and the symmetry of her person was elegant and correspondent to every description of perfect drawing. Such was our heroine, when, in the year 1772, about the end of February, at an early hour in the morning, she stole away unperceived by any of the family, furnished only with a few necessaries, which she had previously packed up in a band-box, and ran about two miles across some fields to the London road, where, with an indescribable perturbation, she waited the coming of the Diligence, which speedily conveyed her to 'that spot of glory, and that world of woe,' the metropolis.

Hampered by a bad stammer, initially the young Elizabeth Simpson had difficulties in achieving her ambition. However, she was soon to marry Joseph Inchbald, an actor older than her who helped to establish her chosen career. The couple spent several years performing in the provinces until Inchbald died suddenly in 1779 whereupon his wife went to London, finally making the stage at Covent Garden the following year. But it is as a dramatist and novelist that Elizabeth Inchbald is remembered; it was her adaptation of August von Kotzebue's German play *Das Kinde de Liebe, Lovers' Vows*, which was so ardently rehearsed by the young people in *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen. A prolific playwright, she expressed her radical views, especially in relation to women's place in society, but softened her opinions with humour.

*Wives as they Were and Maids as they Are* is a good example of Inchbald's mixture of fun and social criticism. The action begins in the house of Mr. Norberry, who is looking after Maria, the daughter of his friend Sir William Dorrillon, who has just come back from foreign parts. To make matters more complicated, Maria is not to know that Dorrillon is her father; he does not approve of her lifestyle, but is unaware that she is heavily in debt through gambling and is soon to be



*Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are* (1797) by Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821)

taken away to prison. In the meantime, Norberry's friend, Lord Priory comes to ask if he and his wife could come to stay while his house is being refurbished. Lady Priory is kept in her proper place and told exactly what she can do by her domineering husband. Eventually she is taken off by the rake, Mr. Bronzely, but remains unscathed. All ends relatively happily with two engagements and father and daughter reconciled.

The repertory company, which had first performed the play at the Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, brought out all the liveliness and humour of Inchbald's script in their production. Every scene began with each of the relevant characters posed in a clear plastic showcase. It was as though the costume dummies of a museum came to life, an ingenious way of bridging the gap between the centuries. Gestures were larger than life, as in the eighteenth century, yet never overplayed to the extent that they jarred. It was a theatrical experience to remember. Hopefully, the Reading Group will put Elizabeth Inchbald's novel *A Simple Story* on their list for future discussion.

Ruth Facer  
Chawton House Library



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Wednesday Afternoon Seminars

From the 10th December 2008, Chawton House Library continues to host a series of monthly Wednesday Afternoon Seminars, Les Mercredis de Chawton, presented by the visiting fellows. Entry is free, each seminar starts at 2pm, and last approximately 2hrs.

Friday 12 December 2008

### Fellow's Lecture: Mrs Pilkington's Memoirs: Sex, Scandal and Celebrity

Professor Norma Clarke talks about her new biography of a woman determined to be known as a writer on equal terms with men.

Thursday 15 January 2009

### Fellow's Lecture: Rediscovering Women Writers

Nicola Beauman, founder of Persephone Books talks about rediscovering and promoting women writers.

Thursday 12 February 2009

### Fellow's Lecture: Reading Jane Austen after Reading Charlotte Smith by Professor Jacqueline Labbe, University of Warwick

In this lecture, Professor Labbe will discuss what happens if we read Austen after and alongside reading Smith, arguing that in drawing what have come to be seen as her key scenes and characterizations from Smith, Austen does more than pay homage to a forebear; she initiates a partnership that allows us to reinterpret the parameters of the modern novel.

Tuesday 17 March 2009

### Fellow's Lecture: 'Witches, Welshmen and Whores?': Explaining the Massacre of the Royalist Women at Naseby. Professor Mark Stoyale, University of Southampton.

The lecture considers the chief theories which have been put forward by historians to explain the massacre, exploring new theories, in particular, the way that parliamentary pamphleteers had helped to pave the way for the atrocity.

Lecture tickets: £10.00 (£7.50 for Friends & Students)

6.30pm Reception in the Old Kitchen with complimentary glass of wine and an exhibition of relevant works from the library collection in the Reading Room

7.00pm Lecture

## *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).

### MISSION

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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CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY  
Chawton House, Chawton, Alton, Hampshire GU34 1SJ  
Telephone: 01420 541010 • Fax: 01420 595900  
Email: info@chawton.net  
Website: www.chawtonhouse.org

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