

The Female Spectator

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'LEARNING HOW TO SEE: MARIA ELIZABETH JACSON'S BOTANICAL DIALOGUES (1797) AND THE TRADITION OF WOMEN'S BOTANICAL WRITING'

Judith W. Page was a visiting fellow at Chawton House Library from January to March 2008. Here, she writes of her work on the women's botanical writing in the collection.

I arrived in Chawton last winter to a surprisingly lush landscape, including evergreen shrubs, velvety lawns, and the most beautiful colonies of snowdrops I have ever seen. Even coming from northern Florida where the winters are mild, if not balmy, I was delighted to become part of such a green world. I could not have asked for a better backdrop for my research on botanical texts by women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, part of a larger project that Elise L. Smith and I are writing, tentatively titled, *Disciples of Flora: Women Writers and the Domesticated Landscape from Romantic to Mid-Victorian England*.

Botanical texts by women are part of what Mitzi Myers has identified as a mentorship tradition, in which women are dramatized as teachers, usually in a domestic setting.¹ In her groundbreaking study of women's botanical culture (1760-1860), *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science* (1996), Ann B. Shteir has emphasized the diverse educational approaches of botanical texts. While learning about the botanical structures of plants is often the stated goal of these texts, mentors also emphasize that studying botany enhances one's moral and spiritual life. The language of growth and process that pervades these texts applies both to the teeming lives of plants and to the lives of those who view and comment on the plant life. Numerous texts make connections between the behaviour of plants and of their human observers: some are selfish, some frugal, some caring, etc. Women botanical writers recognize that the minute world of botanical study posits a microcosm well-suited to teaching about the complexities of life, loss, and recovery.

An excellent example of the mother-mentor of botanical texts, and one that I had the pleasure of reading at Chawton, is Maria Elizabeth Jacson's *Botanical Dialogues* (1797). Jacson's Hortensia articulates the roles that her children will

play, both in botanical studies and in life.² The orderly domestic world is a training ground for the future. Hortensia's older son Charles learns that he will be able to devote himself to 'useful and elegant studies' (53-54) because he will not need a profession. Hortensia, with the Proper Lady looming over her shoulder, urges her daughters not to lose sight of their domestic mission even as they become more educated: 'a woman rarely does herself credit by coming forward as a literary character' (239).³ The actual setting of these dialogues, a well-laid out estate with garden and greenhouse, reiterates these values: Hortensia has prepared 'a little room, which opens into my flower garden, for our study' (2) and thus sets up the perfect relationship between the room, where the children examine plates and specimens and learn the botanical language, and the garden where they collect flowers and

observe the beauties of nature. The children venture outside both for fun and for learning; as younger son Henry says, 'Now let us go into the garden, and try to put in order what we have learnt, and then we can question each other in turns' (60). Later, Hortensia sends the children to the greenhouse to 'gather some orange flowers,' (10), signalling that they are studying the 'genus citrus' and also that the gardener grows these delicacies.

Hortensia regards her primary responsibility as teaching the children to see and to think for themselves. In her epigraph she quotes Thomas Martyn's just published translation of Rousseau's *Letters on Botany* (1796): 'Before we teach them to name what they see, let us begin by teaching them how to see.'



Plate I. Part I. from *Botanical dialogues* by Maria Elizabeth Jacson (1797)

The Female Spectator



This issue examines how the botanical education of children in the late eighteenth century had wider social and moral implications, as well looking at the history of the reception of Jane Austen in Japan.

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Editors:

Academic: Gillian Dow

General: Jacqui Grainger

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This passage is central: botanical knowledge is important mainly in teaching children the skills necessary for understanding the world and appreciating the power of small things. Unlike some botanical writers, Jacson does not emphasize the religious dimension, although she certainly points to the idea of a divine plan several times in her text. Shteir rightly sees Jacson as constrained by the backlash of the 1790s in her attitudes toward the education of girls. But Jacson also insists in *Botanical Dialogues* that her students think for themselves and not simply follow 'authority.'⁴ By framing her presentation in terms of questioning authority, Jacson also subtly suggests that her readers should also question *her* authority as the final word and rather learn different perspectives from the vital form of the dialogue. She tells her children early on that 'I never wish you to take anything upon my authority' (65). Jacson models this attitude by endorsing Rousseau's maxim on teaching students how to see, but implicitly rejecting his ornamental view of girls and women as themselves more beautiful flowers than any they can study. In addition, her frank but not overblown acknowledgement of the sexuality of plants places her in opposition to reactionaries who comment on the 'smuttiness' of Linnæus.⁵

Even though Jacson presents Hortensia and her children in a privileged world, Hortensia nonetheless speaks for the accessibility of science and botanical knowledge. Several times in the text she expresses concern for the expense of plates and botanical books and magazines: 'even my Sowerby's English Botany would be more generally bought, if published at as low a rate as Mr. Curtis's magazine: it ought to be a point with every one who publishes on any science, to make their work as easy of access as possible' (139).⁶ She praises Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* because it costs one shilling and therefore 'is in everybody's hands and has diffused a general knowledge of plants' (65). So, even though Jacson presents Hortensia and her children as privileged in their studies and their prospects, Hortensia nonetheless embraces a democratic spirit in calling for botany for all. This progressive attitude is perhaps more in line with her publication by radical publisher Joseph Johnson and a printed letter of endorsement in the preface by Sir Brooke Boothby and Erasmus Darwin.

Jacson develops two major themes of 'seeing' in *Botanical Dialogues*: First, when we are careful to look at the most minute objects in nature, we see the world anew. Near the beginning of the book, as the elder son Charles is learning how to see, he exclaims, 'How carelessly we have often passed by the moss bank in the wood, and complained that there were no flowers!' (10). Through their mother Hortensia's tutelage in observing the minutiae of natural objects, Charles and the other children learn that such plants as mosses represent miniature worlds of diversity. Hortensia teaches her children to observe what we learn through careful observation. Hence, in the second year of study Harriet claims that 'We learn daily to see with our naked eyes beauties in the most common plants of which last year we were no less insensible than if we had been blind' (245). Jacson's method also bears some comparison to Wordsworth's idea, just one year later in *Lyrical Ballads*, that those who are attuned to the world find stories everywhere. Hortensia's children learn to find those stories in careful observation, either with the naked eye or with the help of magnification. Hortensia says, 'I mean to make my favourite flowers not only beautiful objects of sight,

but agreeable companions: before I have done with them they shall eat, drink, sleep, and have a will of their own' (17). Jacson shares with her poetic contemporary a value placed on knowledge that leads to sympathetic identification with human and natural worlds outside of the self.

Second, a related issue involves seeing for oneself rather than depending on authorities. In the second part of the book (third dialogue), Hortensia and Harriet discuss the merits of looking at plates in botanical books and viewing the parts of plants through a microscope. Hortensia favours the microscope because in looking through this instrument 'we see for ourselves' (228). Although she acknowledges some wonderful reproductions in botanical books, Hortensia warns that 'Most of our botanical publications are taken one from another; and thus if an eminent botanist has in the course of his researches fallen into a mistake, the error has been propagated. Mr. Curtis from his caution in this particular has done more towards the improvement of the science, than any other writer with whom I am acquainted; and by his judicious and candid correction of the few errors in the works of Linneus [*sic*] has rendered essential service to the botanical world' (229-30). Several times in the text Hortensia uses the example of botanical errors in plates to argue in favour of seeing for oneself, both in terms of microscopy and in relation to larger educational issues. For instance, Hortensia notes a repeated error of botanists in assuming that the common fern (*Polypodium vulgare*) does not have an elastic ring around its capsules—but had those botanists not 'blindly follow[ed] authority figures' and instead 'made use of their own eyes, assisted only by a common magnifier, they must have seen, what had long before their time attracted notice of enquiring botanists' (237). A bit later in the text, she provides the children with several different points of view regarding reproduction in the class Cryptogamia and suggests that they will need to develop informed opinions for themselves. She ends with an astute suggestion that 'What we suppose to be seeds may partake more of the nature of buds, and that the mosses, and other plants of the class Cryptogamia, may be viviparous only, and not oviparous, or producing young plants without seed' (252).

That said about authorities, Jacson, through Hortensia, will also praise those botanists who see and present plants clearly, with close attention to detail. Although she praises Linnæus for the elegance of his systematic approach to botany, she also acknowledges 'Dr. Grew' because 'his investigations made with so accurate and penetrating an eye' (68) contributed to knowledge in the seventeenth century.⁷ So Nehemiah Grew, working without system, nonetheless earns Jacson's praise because of his precise attention to detail—his penetrating eye. She praises Linnæus not just for his system of classification, but

also for his attention to 'minute circumstances' and for his 'penetrating eye' (32). Likewise, Curtis's *Flora Londinensis* (1777-98) garners praise for the 'great accuracy' of the drawings. These drawings are often the first step in minute botanical knowledge—an excellent plate can teach the student what to look for in the plant itself. For instance, the anthers of moss: 'This is a beautiful microscopic object, but you must be content to become acquainted with it, and the other parts of fructification in mosses, first by the assistance of plates and afterwards amuse yourselves with viewing them through glasses' (245). So, while Jacson does not advocate a dependence on authority, she does encourage her children to use and evaluate botanical knowledge and to become a part of the community of botanists by learning the proper language of botanical classification: 'I intend strictly to require the use of Linnean terms, as that will be a means of imprinting on your minds what you learn, and, as you grow older, will make you ready in the language of botany' (4).



Plate 2. Part I. from *Botanical dialogues* by Maria Elizabeth Jacson (1797)

Jacson's repeated use of the term 'penetrating eye' might suggest an interest in getting below the surface of ordinary sight. Although Jacson does acknowledge that microscopy allows for greater degrees of this type of penetration (in the sense of seeing the minute), she is actually more leery than other botanical writers of getting carried away by speculation about the unseen. At one point, Hortensia chides Juliette, warning that 'Your imagination went a little too rapidly' (88), as she redirects her daughter back to observing the plants very carefully. And yet, at the same time, Hortensia surely encourages her children to think imaginatively about plants as living organisms: seeds come to life when Hortensia tells the girls that their muslin dresses were made from 'the soft cradle of seeds' (23) of the cotton plant or speaks of the appearance of ferns in groups, elegant assemblages of 'families' in a winter garden (265); in each instance Hortensia evokes an interior life or miniature world that is highly imaginative in ways that Gaston Bachelard has identified in *The Poetics of Space* (1958).

Jacson's outlook and examples, then, are imaginative, but she does not emphasize this imaginative quality as an educational value in itself. Rather than the imaginative insight that other botanical writers emphasize, Jacson is overwhelmingly concerned with having the children learn to be useful citizens. Even when Charles comments on Linnæus's 'genius,' Hortensia downplays such terms as 'genius' in favour of praising Linnæus's usefulness and 'his industrious application of his genius' (52). This usefulness—and avoidance of indolence—is the basis of her advice to both the boys and the girls. Even Hortensia's older boy Charles cannot rest on his laurels as the first born, but must train himself for exertion—'cultivate your useful and elegant studies' (53-4) so that he can live a productive life. Henry, who won't have the luxury of not earning a living, can

use his botanical studies as the basis of a profession, such as medicine. Hortensia also urges her daughters to usefulness, as Harriet puts it, 'in the small duties of life, which daily occur' (55), thus keeping the girls in the domestic sphere. Yet, given these apparent distinctions based on sex and birth order, Hortensia educates the children in the same way: encouraging them to question and to talk about the smallest details of plants—a levelling that sometimes seems at odds with any rigid distinctions. Jacson's credo, 'we can do nothing without energy' (286), applies to all.

Hortensia's lesson on equisetum (plants such as rushes that reproduce by spores rather than seeds) brings together several issues of magnification and seeing. She describes the plant in early spring pushing 'out of the earth a little club-shaped head; round this head are placed in circles target-form substances, each supported on a pedicle, and compressed into angles, in consequence of their resting against each other before the spike expands' (230-31). This minute description, as Hortensia explains, is based on observation with the naked eye. 'All this we may see without a microscope; but by the assistance of glasses green oval bodies have been discovered, and attached to them (generally) four pellucid and very slender threads, spoon-form, at their ends' (231). When Juliette comments that she would not have suspected such regularity and distinct formations, Hortensia reminds her that 'regular organization exists in all the various parts of plants, though from the want of a proper method of investigating them this may not be always visible to us' (231). Hortensia goes on to explain that the threads are in motion and are very sensitive to moist air, adding that they will have to take this point 'upon trust' (232) because to see the motion would require greater magnification than they have. She also says that Hedwig believes the green ovals are seeds, but wisely warns that 'Future observations must confirm or refute this opinion' (232) – modern science will not, of course, confirm that the equisetum bears seeds.⁸

Jacson's writing is quite vivid here – the beauty of the description of this plant in the first green of spring is striking. Also, the description takes us deeper and deeper into the image, with the green oval bodies and the pellucid threads visible only through microscopy and the constant motion and sensitivity of the threads taken on faith. So, Jacson also reveals the limitations of seeing, at least without proper equipment; but she also indicates what might be taken upon trust and what the botanist should continue to question, such as the existence of seeds in equisetum.

When she next has the children examine the capsules from the hart's-tongue fern the description suggests both the life of the plant and the challenge in viewing the minute world under the microscope: "these capsules are an agreeable subject for the microscope, but it is difficult to manage them, so as to gain a distinct idea of their progress. They are placed so closely together on the leaf, that it is necessary to separate them from it with a fine knife, before you begin to view them, otherwise there appears only confusion. The warmth of breath also, by occasioning the capsules to open and discharge their

seeds, gives them the appearance of something alive. While you are intently looking at one, hoping to observe the operation, the strength and elasticity of the spring, at the moment of discharging, will often carry it out of sight, so that to see the manner of opening requires some dexterous management, and much patience; but we shall be able, I dare say, to overcome the difficulties, and obtain the amusement of viewing through the microscope this curious arrangement." (235-36)

As this vivid description makes evident, Jacson has Hortensia frame the lesson to teach several different skills and virtues: in addition to keen observation, the children will need patience and dexterity in managing the specimen. Difficulties must be overcome. Like the green oval bodies and pellucid threads of the equisetum, the delicate leaves of this fern have a story to tell about the 'progress' of the processes of nature, the constant and unexpected motion of life. The plant specimens are governed by the same 'energy' that Jacson values in humans. Jacson conveys the excitement of finding more and more detail under greater magnification—recognizing both order and unexpected movement or progress. Magnified objects have, Jacson implies, a secret life, which intense observation can uncover. But to understand the significance of this observation, Hortensia's students (to paraphrase Shelley's 'Defence') must be able to imagine what they know. As *Botanical Dialogues* and other botanical writing by women reveal, the study of botany teaches us about plants and so much more.

Notes

1 See, for instance, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books.' *Children's Literature* 14 (1986): 31-59.

2 I have followed Shteir (*Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) and other sources in spelling the name 'Jacson,' although it sometimes appears as the more common 'Jackson.' Since Jacson did not publish under her name but as 'a lady,' one cannot determine spelling from the publications.

3 I of course refer to Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago, 1984), a figure somewhat akin to Virginia Woolf's earlier Angel in the House from *A Room of One's Own* (1929) who also plays havoc with the woman writer.

4 As Shteir has pointed out, Jacson is concerned to avoid the scorn of being a learned lady and at times seem to echo the proprieties of conduct literature in an age of 'retrenchment' (117). And yet, her discussions of female education are conflicted and sometimes muddled. After acknowledging that 'the world' limits women to 'the exercise of their fingers,' Hortensia goes on to say that 'The world improves, and consequently female education . . .' (239). In this way, I think, Jacson critiques the ideology that she seems to support: the future will be different.

5 Alan Bewell ('Jacobin Plants': Botany as Social Theory in the 1790s.' *Wordsworth Circle* 20.3 [Summer 1989]: 132-39) quotes Charles Alston as claiming that Linnæus was 'too smutty for English ears in 'A Dissertation on the Sexes of Plants' [1771] (132) and Luisa Calé notes that William Smellie's entry for the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1773 claimed that 'obscurity is the very basis of the Linnæan system' *Romanticism on the Net* 17 (February 2000); accessed February 20, 2008. <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scato385/17botany.html>>

6 James Sowerby (1757-1822) illustrated and published his *The English Botany; or Coloured Figures of British Plants* from 1790-1813. William Curtis (1746-1799) began publishing his hugely popular *Botanical Magazine* in 1787.

7 Nehemiah Grew was an early botanist and author of *The Anatomy of Plants* (1682).

8 The reference is to Johann Hedwig, (1730-99), the German botanist who was an authority on mosses. Although Jacson calls seeds into question here, she does indicate below that ferns bear seeds.



JANE AUSTEN IN JAPAN BY HATSUYO SHIMAZAKI, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Hatsuyo Shimazaki, a visiting fellow at Chawton House Library in October and November 2007 and a founding member of the Jane Austen Society of Japan, writes of the author's place in the hearts of her Japanese readers.

The reception of Jane Austen in Japan has followed a different path from the one in Europe. In Europe, Austen's major novels were read in English and also translated into the native languages of neighbouring countries within a decade after their publications.¹ In comparison, it took far longer in Japan for Austen's name to be introduced. It could even be argued that her arrival was closely connected to the time when modern western culture arrived in Japan more generally.

There have been several phases in the reception of Jane Austen and her works in Japan. Since she was first introduced to Japan in the early twentieth century, her name has been recognized by the Japanese as one which signifies British culture, much like Shakespeare and Big Ben. However, the number of readers of her books was limited in the first instance due to the difficulty in understanding a different language and culture. The second phase came between

the early twentieth century and the mid-twentieth century, when some of Austen's novels were translated into Japanese and, from then, were read more widely. The Japanese translation of *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in 1926, with the translation of *Persuasion* only following in 1942. *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* were translated in 1948 and 1949, respectively.² By the late twentieth century, works of Austen in full length or their excerpts were used at universities as reading material for both students of English and other disciplines.



Soseki Natsume in 1912

Recent film adaptations of her novels and continual publications of related books seem to show a revival of her popularity in the UK and in North America, as scholars, critics and cultural commentators have observed. In contemporary Japan, a new phase of reception has been seen due to the internet and DVDs. It is the situation in twentieth-century Japan that I wish to concentrate on now.

Soseki Natsume (1867-1916), a great Japanese classic novelist, is generally accepted to be the earliest Japanese commentator to introduce Jane Austen to Japan.³ He was one of the first

delegates sent abroad at the expense of the Education Ministry of Japan under its scheme of importing the Western culture to Japan in the Meiji era (1868-1912), the Enlightenment period in Japan. He lived in London from 1901 to 1903, and studied the English literature at the University of London. After returning to Japan, he was invited to teach at Tokyo (Imperial) University and wrote an influential treatise, "Bungaku-Ron", in which he introduced Austen as follows: 'Jane Austen is a leading authority in realism. In respect of her writing, with consummate skill by choice of a domestic setting but lively words, she is far greater than male masters of the field. I would say those who do not understand Austen do not understand what artifice is in realism'.⁴ It must have been natural for him to praise Austen as when Soseki became a novelist himself, he was also evaluated in his presentation of human nature in his writings. Though Austen's books were not read by ordinary people who could not understand English, Soseki became a mediator of Austen's good reputation in Japan through his highly valued masterpieces and criticisms.

From the early twentieth century to the mid-twentieth century, when works of western literature began to be translated, a Japanese woman writer, Yaeko Nogami (1885-1985), wrote a novel, *Machiko* (1928-30), which was based on *Pride and Prejudice*. She was the wife of Toyochiro Nogami, a disciple of Soseki. The title of the book represents the name of the heroine, and means a girl who learns the truth. Born into a middle class family, Machiko grows up to be a beautiful woman of twenty-three years old. After her father's death, she lives alone with her mother as her brother and sisters are all married. It is Machiko's responsibility to get married, and she is introduced to a suitable man. However, she feels uncomfortable with this arranged marriage. Meanwhile, she desires to study and sits in a sociology class held at a university recently opened to female students. This awakens the heroine to women's oppressed position, and she hopes to choose her husband on her own terms. This book appeared in the transition between the old Japan and the Modern Japan, in a manner of speaking, a time when the traditional values of Japanese culture were changing in the process of Japan becoming modernized. It was not easy for a woman of Machiko's situation in the late 1920s to choose to study instead of getting married. Nogami focused on Austen's appeal for woman's independent mind in *Pride and Prejudice*, creating her own story which describes the situation of Japanese women at the time in *Machiko*, and cast them as questioning their role in society.

Austen became much more popular with Japanese readers after the 1960s, a time when the Japanese economy was growing rapidly, and vast quantities of western products such as clothes, food, electrical appliances, music and

movies flew into Japan. While an increasing number of people went abroad for business, to study and to sightsee, the Ministry of Education of Japan placed an emphasis on teaching English as the compulsory foreign language from junior high school to high school. At the university level, novels written in English were read in classrooms as a good device for those who were studying English seriously so that they could learn the cultural background as well. As Soseki's praise for Austen still held influence, her books were one of the most read by students. However, the popularity of Austen was always behind that of writers such as Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters. One of the reasons for the increased popularity of the works of the Brontë sisters was no doubt owing to multiple productions of film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. To the eyes of Japanese women of the new age, heroines in those works must have looked more active and independent than the heroines of Austen's works. In addition, their romantic elements stimulated the Japanese women more into exploring a foreign country and its nature.

Finally, in the last ten years, the opportunity came for Austen to overtake other writers of the nineteenth century, owing to computer technology that changed the speed of exchanging information and cultural products. In the first place, productions of film adaptations of Austen's novels were imported to Japan and caused an increase in her popularity. Soon after *Sense and Sensibility* was remade into a film in 1995, it was aired on TV. Likewise, *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) of BBC and the *Emma* of film version (1996) and ITV version (1996) appeared on TV, introducing audiences who had never read Austen's novels. Also, the commercial success of the film *Bridget Jones' Diary* (2001), attracted Japanese fans in their 20s and 30s, all of whom strove to learn more about the background to *Bridget Jones' Diary*, and hence now have interests in Jane Austen. These consumers post frequently on both web pages and online forums, and come back to read Austen's novels and their Japanese translations. Furthermore, publishers have produced English language educational materials with DVDs and CD-ROMs with excerpts from the production mentioned above, all of which informs readers who wish to be more 'involved' in the world of Jane Austen.

In conclusion, when examining the reception of Austen in Japan, it is apparent that there have always been mediators to introduce Austen's novels to Japanese readers. Unlike the neighbouring European countries which surround the UK, most Japanese readers did not have opportunities to read her books directly. In other words, Japanese readers in the early days needed guides to get used to the extraneous European culture through the process of absorbing it into our native Japanese culture. However, this left the substance of her fictional

world unclear, as the evaluation on her writings was dependent on these mediators' judgement. Although Soseki and Nogami treated Austen as a master, holding the ability to see through the reality of the human nature composedly, publishers and film distribution firms tend to name her works and their adaptations rather sensationally, such as 'the origins of romance', in order to appeal to younger female readers and audiences. It is ironic how this misleading image of Austen and her works is contributing to her increasing popularity. People who know Austen only by name or through adaptations have only a broad grasp of the world presented in her novels. However, and less negatively, this new technological phase could be a challenge for us to catch up with the trend of studies on Austen and her reception around the world. By sharing information through the internet in real time, each Japanese fan will be able to explore her world without a mediator and to therefore form conclusions of their own.

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日本オースティン協会
 2007

The Journal of the Jane Austen Society of Japan 2007

The long-awaited Jane Austen Society of Japan (JASJ), of which I am a founding member, was established in 2006. Although there are a large number of people studying Jane Austen in Japan, there have not been any independent organizations which set her for their centre of studies, although there are Japanese societies for women writers such as Virginia Woolf and the Brontë sisters. Studies related to Jane Austen have only been

discussed in larger organizations such as The English Literary Society of Japan and The Johnson Society of Japan, or at smaller study groups. Therefore, systematic studies on Austen were left out, and depended on individual efforts. The growing popularity of Jane Austen discussed above, as well as a more general focus on women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, brought home to us the necessity of establishing this society.

The aims of JASJ consists of the four principles laid out below.

- (1) Holding Annual General Meetings throughout Japan to facilitate communication between researchers.
- (2) Formulating the structure of the society which can be the centre of studies on Jane Austen and her contemporary authors in Japan and offering a place where members can exchange information.
- (3) Issuing newsletters to members in Japan and disseminating the results of our research and activities to research organizations such as The Jane Austen Society of the UK, The Jane Austen Society of North America and The Jane Austen Society of Australia.



Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo

- (4) Publishing academic journals and books by its members.

The preparatory conference for the foundation of JASJ was held on June 24, 2006 at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo, and attracted 178 participants from all over Japan. The contents of this inaugural conference help to explain the nature of the society more generally. In the morning, two papers were read by post-graduates, and a special paper was read by a professor. Each paper's topic was "an illegitimate child", "the use of dash in *Emma*", and "the significance of studying Austen at present days", respectively. After lunch, there was a general meeting discussing the establishment of the society. The afternoon programme started with a symposium on film adaptations

of Austen's works, with the participation of four speakers including an editor of a film magazine. A special lecture on "reading Jane Austen" by an assistant professor followed. The closing speech was given by a newly elected chair of JASJ, Professor Hiroshi Ebine.

One of the characteristics of JASJ is in its openness. It does not define the area of studies only to Jane Austen and her works but accepts papers on other writers' works and topics in the age of Austen. It aims at gaining comprehensive views on the works of writers between 1780s and 1810s. Also, JASJ encourages young researchers to actively participate in the society, and sets different levels for the submission of papers according to their progress in their studies, at undergraduate, MA, PhD, and post-doctoral level, as well as for experienced researchers. In addition, the board of referees gives applicants detailed comments when assessing submitted papers for both the conference and the journal, thus providing valuable feedback on how to improve. While the society needs to offer a place for researchers to bring the results of their studies and discuss them at the highest level, it also needs to capture the imaginations of the younger generations that can take research forward in the future. In the background of these principles, there is again the ambiguity and the difficulty in the popularity of Jane Austen. Although it seems her name is becoming more popular than ever, English literature as a subject to study at universities is much less popular in Japan. Novels have been replaced by textbooks of oral communications or excerpts from newspapers and journals from the classroom at universities, and students tend to choose subjects that are related to science, business and contemporary issues. Therefore, the recent popularity of Austen is in danger of remaining a mere fashion created by the media.

In conclusion, then, part of JASJ's task is to overcome the dilemma brought by the popularization of Jane Austen in Japan. If modern technology such as DVDs and blogs on websites helps young people to be attracted to Jane Austen, researchers can also collect information and make contact with researchers around the world through the internet. JASJ has already started some activities from its principles mentioned above. In 2007, the first journal was issued, and the first AGM and the first reading group were assembled. The second AGM is going to be held in June 2008. We hope our society will have an important part to play in the global network of Austen studies.

Notes:

1 For example, a series of extracts from French translation of *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in 1813, half a year later from the first printings of the English version. The first complete French translation of *Sense and Sensibility* appeared in 1815. David Gilson, "Later Publishing History, with Illustrations" in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. by Janet Todd. Cambridge UP, 2005. pp. 121-59.

2 Japanese translation of *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* appeared as late as in 1978 and 1965 respectively.

3 The very first person who introduced Austen to Japan is believed to have been Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), Greek-born Anglo-Japanese author.

4 My translation. Soseki Natsume, *Bungaku-Ron* (A Treatise on Literature), 1907. Vol. IV, Chap. 7.

Chawton House Library Members

The Library is most grateful to Professor Frank Hogg for generously giving his support by becoming a member. Frank Hogg was the president of the School Library association (SLA) from 1977-2003. He founded the College of Librarianship in Wales, which is now the Department of Library and Information Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth.

For the various ways to support the Library, please see our website.



‘EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IDENTITIES’: AN
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR POST-GRADUATES
AND ACADEMICS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR
CAREER. 27TH AND 28TH JUNE 2008.

Notions of, and concerns with, identity are an enduring presence in all aspects of the cultural landscape of the eighteenth century. The identity of nations, regions, religions, political parties, individuals, women, men, animals, material objects, authors; we could construct an almost endless list of the definition and negotiation of identities. ‘Identity’ is, then, a repeated motif in eighteenth-century culture in its physical landscapes and artistic and literary outputs, it is a subject that naturally lends itself to inter-disciplinary exploration. It is no surprise that ‘identities’ should be theme of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (BSECS) 2008 conference for post-graduates and academics in the early stages of their career. The conference takes place on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th of June 2008 at the University of Winchester and Chawton House Library.

BSECS was formed in 1971 to promote the study of the cultural history of the eighteenth century. The society’s members are scholars and members of the public from all over the world and with a diverse range of interests in history, art history, architecture, and literature. The society publishes the *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* and organises a major conference every January and a biennial post-graduate and early career conference. The invitation that was extended to the post-graduate conference to visit Chawton House is a wonderful opportunity and the theme of ‘identities’ has elicited a strong response from scholars whose research focuses on the lives and works of women writers in the long eighteenth century. Women writers such as Jane Barker, Susanna Centlivre, Eliza Haywood, Frances Burney, Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Lennox and, indeed, Jane Austen, are all represented in the scholarship that will be presented at the conference. Some of this research is included on the three conference panels that are taking place at Chawton House on Friday 27th June.

The response to the conference has also been truly international, drawing delegates from Russia, America, Australia, and of course the UK. ‘Identity’ has proved to be a topic that resonates across academic disciplines, and a fascinating range of papers have been included in the programme covering topics from the role of women in producing knowledge about exotic birds, to women’s health



*Susanna Centlivre by Peter Pelham (1720)
after D.Fermin*

manuals, English satirical prints, and what a taste for wine can tell us about national identity. BSECS encourages proposals for sessions with innovative formats; this time the session which adopts the most innovative form also takes a local subject as its focus, as it aims to examine the motivations for the philanthropic behaviour surrounding smallpox inoculations in Southampton. Because, at its core, this is a conference for post-graduates and those at the beginning of their career, sessions also include discussions of how to approach the final stages of the PhD process and what comes next, and how to publish successfully, one of which is being presented by Linda Bree, commissioning editor at Cambridge University Press and Trustee of Chawton House Library.

Like all BSECS conferences this conference has both an academic and a social purpose, giving delegates an opportunity to meet one another, to share ideas and to provide a friendly and supportive environment, particularly in this case, for presenters delivering what may be their first ever conference paper. The conference is open to members and non-members of BSECS. All the details of the conference and the programme can be found in the post-graduate pages of the BSECS website, www.bsecs.org.uk or by contacting the conference organiser, Debbie Welham, debbie.welham@winchester.ac.uk

Debbie Welham, University of Winchester



LIBRARY BULLETIN

THE SANDFORD AWARDS - JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE AND CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY



Sandford Award presentation 2007

From left to right: Tom Carpenter, Senior Trustee Jane Austen House, Louise West, Collections and Education Manager Jane Austen House, Gareth Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive of the Heritage Education Trust, Sarah Parry, Archive and Education Officer Chawton House Library, Gilly Drummond, Trustee Chawton House Library and Olivia Thompson, Freelance teacher.

The Sandford Awards are awarded annually by The Heritage Education Trust in recognition of good quality educational programmes at historic sites. Jane Austen's House Museum and Chawton House Library work together to provide an education service to schools on the themes of Jane Austen, her life and work. In 2007 we were invited to apply for a Sandford Award and our application was accepted for judging. This took place in March when a Judge shadowed us on what was otherwise a normal school visit.

School and student visits to Jane Austen's House and Chawton House Library follow the same basic pattern. The visits

begin at Jane Austen's House. Here the group has a powerpoint presentation, introducing them to Austen's work, life and times. This is followed by an opportunity to visit the house and a handling session of objects. A discussion about costume can also be included at this point. After lunch, the focus moves to Chawton House Library. The groups walk up the lane from Jane Austen's House to the Library. This walk also adds context to the visit as Austen does refer in some of her letters to walking up this road to Chawton House.

A brief introduction to the house is our opportunity to tell the group more about Edward Knight's ownership of

Chawton House and Godmersham Park. This is followed by a tour of the major downstairs rooms and the students are encouraged to make comparisons between the lifestyle enjoyed by Edward Knight and the more modest day-to-day life of his sisters and mother in the cottage. This is followed by a visit to the main Reading Room of the Library.

Books from the collection that reflect the Austen novels that the group are studying are displayed and discussed. We always ensure that we know in advance of any school or student visit which Austen novel the group is studying. Being able to show the group books that have a connection to the novel that they are reading adds greatly to their understanding and interpretation of Austen's work. For example, if the group are studying *Pride and Prejudice* one of the books displayed is the famous *Sermons to Young Women* by James Fordyce. The reaction of the students is often surprise that Austen was referring to real books in her novels and, in the case of Fordyce's *Sermons*, they gain an understanding of exactly why Lydia refused to listen to Mr Collins reading from it! By highlighting that the books Austen mentioned in her novels were real, and probably well known to her contemporary readers, the students gain an insight into why Austen shows certain characters reading or being aware of specific books.

After the visit to the Library there is a Regency dancing session in the Great Hall. The group learn and perform a dance, often in replica Regency costume, and learn about the social conventions of a ball or assembly. The costumes have been made as accurately as possible to reflect the clothes of the period so the unfamiliar styles and ways of fastening the costumes adds greatly to the students understanding of the period.

We received the results of the judging day in July and were delighted to learn that we had been successful in gaining an Award. The award ceremony took place in November 2007 at the The Royal Air Force Museum at Cosford in Staffordshire and was a wonderful networking opportunity to find out how other museums, historic sites and gardens run their various educational programmes. Jane Austen's House Museum and Chawton House Library also had the distinction of being the only properties working in partnership. A great strength of the educational service that we offer schools and colleges is the opportunity to see two properties, within walking distance, on the same day and with strong links to one important historical and, in our case, literary figure.

One of the strengths of the Sandford Award is that it is only valid for five years. After this time we will have to apply to be re-assessed so this will be a helpful way to ensure that we always work towards keeping the material fresh and relevant to visiting schools and colleges.

Anyone wishing to arrange a school or college visit focussing on Jane Austen and her work should contact Louise West at

Jane Austen's House for further details.

Jane Austen's House Museum
Chawton
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1SD
Tel: 01420 83262

For any school and college visit enquiries on authors other than Austen please contact Sarah Parry at Chawton House Library.

Tel: 01420 541010
Email: sarah.parry@chawton.net

Sarah Parry, Archive and Education Officer

Chawton House Library Reading Group

The Library runs a reading group for the discussion of the work of women writers, 1600 to 1830, The group meets each month, September to May, usually on the third Monday of the month at 2pm.

The reading group had a busy time between September 2007 and May 2008 reading a diverse collection of books including *The Turkish Embassy Letters* by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and *Marriage* by Susan Ferrier.

Afternoon tea is available during the Reading Group meetings for £2.50 per person.

Chawton House Library Reading Group Schedule

- 15 September 2008 *The Adventures of David Simple* by Sarah Fielding
 - 20 October 2008 *The Wanderer* by Frances Burney ISBN-13: 978-1419187070 (or, Oxford imprints secondhand)
 - 17 November 2008 *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* by Dorothy Wordsworth
 - 15 December 2008 *Persuasion* by Jane Austen
 - 19 January 2009 *Mary* by Mary Wollstonecraft
 - 16 February 2009 *Beaux and Belles of England* by Mary Robinson
 - 16 March 2009 *Narrative of two Voyages to Sierra Leone* by Anna Maria Falconbridge
 - 20 April 2009 *The Italian* by Ann Radcliffe
 - 18 May 2009 *The Last Man* by Mary Shelley
- For more information please contact the Library on 01420 541010 or info@chawton.net



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 26 Jun 2008

Chawton House and Gardens Open Day

10.30am – 4.30pm

As part of Alton's Jane Austen Regency Week 21 – 29 June, explore Chawton House, the library and gardens.

Entertainment includes Regency dancing, Jane Austen readings, Shire horse demonstrations and children's activities. Light refreshments available.

Admission £6, children free

Friday 4 July 2008

Louis de Bernières & the Antonius Players, Champagne Reception and Concert

Join us for music, poetry and laughter at this very special evening performance by the award-winning writer and accomplished musician, Louise de Bernières, and the versatile and talented Antonius Players.

6.00pm Champagne Reception in the Great Hall

7.00pm Performance at St. Nicholas Church

9.00pm Supper with the performers

Tickets: £20 (Reception and concert)

Supper tickets: £60 (reception, concert and two-course meal with wine)

Sunday 17 August 2008

Longstock Park Water Gardens, Charity Open Day

2pm – 5pm

Enjoy a visit to these beautiful gardens and help raise money for the joint children's garden education project between Chawton House Library and the Hampshire Gardens Trust.

Admission is £5 for adults and £1 for children (under 14) with all proceeds going to charity.

Thursday 31 July 2008

Chawton House and Gardens Open Day

10.30am – 4.30pm

Entertainment includes Regency dancing, Jane Austen readings, Shire horse demonstrations and children's activities. Light refreshments available.

Admission £6, children free.

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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