

The Female Spectator

CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY

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THE CHAWTON COOKERY COLLECTION

By Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, Boston College

In the spring of 2008, Gordon Ramsay provoked quite a stir in the media by insisting that British chefs should be forced by law to restrict themselves to foods that are seasonal and local. While the first comment places Ramsay squarely within a tradition of British cookery that has always emphasized foods in their time, the second comment puts him slightly at odds with history. A survey of the many cookery books in the Chawton House Library evokes an eighteenth-century cuisine bearing the unmistakable stamp of international influence. During the long eighteenth century, diners were clearly enjoying a range of imported foods cooked in a variety of styles borrowed from abroad. No knowledgeable person will be surprised that eighteenth-century cooks had a ready stock of spices at hand – including ginger, cloves, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, turmeric, and several kinds of pepper. But what are we to make of a late eighteenth-century recipe for ‘lazagne soup,’ with its simple ingredients of flat macaroni, butter, parmesan and ‘grewiere’ cheeses? How international was eighteenth-century cookery? Moreover, what wider social and political forces appear to be at work in these cook books?

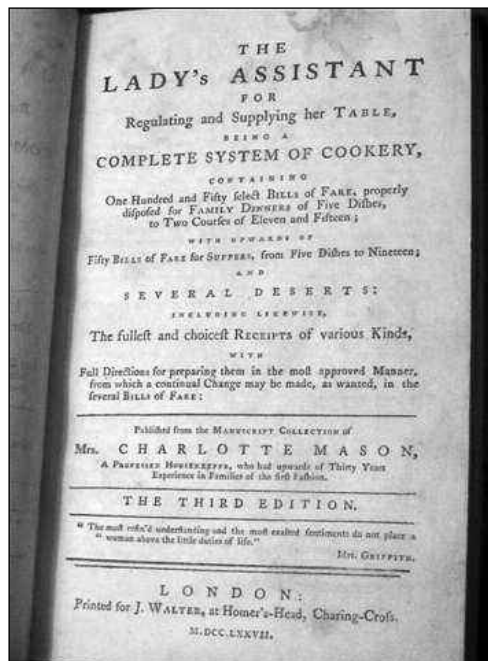
To be sure, cook books were very big business in the eighteenth century. According to *A Short Title Catalogue of Household and Cookery Books published in the English Tongue 1701-1800*, compiled by Virginia Maclean, over 130 cookery and foods books that included recipes or ‘receipts’ for everyday and special occasion foods appeared during the eighteenth century. The most widely-read of these saw as many as twenty editions. Not included in this number are the numerous books focusing on brewing, distilling, and the making of wine and cordials and medicines, as well as special topic books addressing the production of single foodstuffs, such as bread or cheese. Books on diet and health, although not cookery books per se, were also very popular.

The authors of the cookbooks came from a range of social situations. At the top end of the social ladder, male cooks—

closer perhaps to our modern day ‘master chefs’ – wrote for ‘families of distinction’, especially those living on large estates, where the elaborate display of the family’s resources was surely the point. In 1734, John Middleton, ‘cook to his Grace the late Duke of Bolton’, offered up his collection of 500 recipes –from ragout of woodcock to ‘farce tenches’ [stuffed fish]. His ‘grand sallet, the newest and best way’ must have been a dazzling sight, with its astonishing array of spring greens, including violet buds, cowslip buds, strawberries, primroses, brooklime, water-cress, young lettuce, spinach, alexander buds, plus its many condiments, including samphire, olives, capers, broom-buds, cucumbers, raisins, currants, almonds, barberries, and pickles. All of this, and more, was to be assembled and displayed on a wax castle, complete with tours representing the four seasons.

Of greater use to housekeepers of the middle ranks would have been a series of cookbooks written primarily by female housekeepers who geared their message to those of more limited means. Hannah Glasse remains, perhaps, the best known of these, for *The Art of Cookery Made Plaine and Easy*. While she writes of her belief that she is the first to address a branch of cookery which “nobody has yet thought worth their while to write upon,” in fact she was soon joined by

other women writers, also addressing themselves to the middle ranks – Ann Peckham, of Leeds, for instance, or Mrs. Mason, a professed housekeeper, who had ‘upwards of thirty years experience in the first fashion’. Parts of Mrs. Mason’s cookbook, first published in 1773, are still family-friendly today, as her simplest dinners consist of familiar ingredients plainly prepared – a fish course of boiled skate with a shrimp sauce, followed by mince pies, stewed spinach, some roast beef, and a salad on the side board. Yet even the middle ranks must have had their moments of extravagance: Mrs. Peckham provides a recipe for boiled peacock, in which the bird’s skin was ‘flead’ (separated from the carcass) and subsequently stuffed with its own minced flesh, suet, seasoning, and egg. The bird was then sewn back together and boiled.



The title page from *The Lady's Assistant for Regulating and Supplying her Table ...* by Charlotte Mason (London: 1777)

The Female Spectator

In this issue there is an exploration of the cookery books and consideration of the proper, or not so proper, behaviour of young women using books in the collection.

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In between the gentleman's cook with his purview of the grand estate and the experienced housekeeper writing for the woman managing her family was the writer whose experience came mostly from running a tavern, coffee house, or public ordinary – John Farley, for instance, or Richard Briggs. Regardless of the nature of the writer's origins or expertise, all articulate a desire to educate and to inform. Many expand to convey additional information on simple housekeeping techniques. Hannah Glasse, for instance, offers advice on getting rid of bugs and – for the benefit of the house-maid – how to sweep a floor (throw down a little wet sand, she counsels, to prevent the dust from settling in the bedding). Not surprisingly in an age of sea voyage, several cookbooks offer a special section on how to prepare the 'necessary articles for sea-faring persons'. In the earlier part of the century, recipes for medicinal substances could occupy a great deal of space. Writing in 1734, Elizabeth Smith aims to provide food that is 'suitable to English constitutions and English palates, wholesome, toothsome, all practical and easy to be performed'. But she also appears to have believed herself an expert on a number of medical conditions from vomiting, to worms, to plague, to 'a distemper got by an ill husband'. 'For any man or beast bitten by a mad dog,' the recipe includes sage leaves, garlic, treacle: 'must be given three days before the new or full moon next happening after the Party has been bitten.' Yet by 1800, with improving medical expertise, advice like this must have seemed as quaint to readers as it does to us now.

Though it is difficult to generalize, several trends seem to have characterized the treatment of food between the earlier and later parts of the century. The first is an increasingly cosmopolitan attitude toward cuisine, a growing awareness of quality food from a global market and of foreign cooking techniques as well. In the early decades of the century, cookbooks evince a heavy reliance on local fish, game, and fowl. Perhaps most disconcerting to modern readers is the range of wild birds that were regularly eaten – larks, spatch-cooked or cooked on a skewer with a bit of sage between their legs, were especially popular, as were cranes, herons, and even swans (while cranes are no longer found in England, herons and swans are, of course, currently protected by British law). In an age of no refrigeration and only the most basic means of food preservation, knowledge of how to obtain and purchase the best products was essential. Cookbooks often include advice on how to recognize the freshest vegetables, fruit, and meat. When purchasing a lamb, for instance, a buyer should be able to detect a bright and plump eye, while the vein in the neck should retain its azure blue color.

Should the meat spoil, various methods could be employed to render it edible again. In 1734, Elizabeth Smith recommends that 'to recover venison when its stinks', one need only soak it in salt water. Indeed, eighteenth-century cooks appear to have had a high tolerance for the putrid. A recipe in Smith's cookbook for 'fine hanging beef' takes the concept of 'aged beef' to the extreme. First she recommends hanging the 'naval' piece as 'long as you dare for stinking, and till it begins to be a little sappy'. Then the beef is to be washed with sugar, rubbed with salt-petre (sodium nitrate) and bay salt, then pounded and rubbed with more salt and sugar – and then left for another seven days. The meat would then be boiled before serving. Two or three minutes should

‘take off the mouldiness’, advises Smith. We cannot know for certain what need or taste necessitated this complicated process for rendering beef. Similarly, it is hard to know what to make of another strategy that involved disguising one kind of meat so that it resembled another. Elizabeth Raffald for instance, provides instructions for ‘transmogrifying’ pigeons, as well as for roasting pigs in imitation of lambs, and dressing a leg of mutton ‘to eat like venison’.

Over the course of the century, advances in agricultural practice, leading to the improved cultivation of livestock, and improvements to Britain’s transportation system – and in its roads in particular – meant that cooks had access to a wider range of groceries. Citrus fruits – especially lemons, limes, and Seville oranges in their season, begin to appear with regularity, especially as garnishes for a wide range of dishes. Though some of these might have been grown locally in hothouses, many more were probably bought in local markets. Local fowl, fish and game yield, to some extent, to a different range of ingredients, including imported cheeses such as parmesan and gruyere. A wider range of salt-water fish could now be transported inland in barrels filled with salt water. In addition, a widening foreign vocabulary for both ingredients and cooking techniques suggests an increasingly familiarity with what was being eaten abroad. With British expansion into the Caribbean, West Indian turtle soup becomes a common delicacy, for instance.

In 1777, Mrs. Mason was familiar enough with Italian olive oils to express a preference for those coming from ‘Lucca and Florence especially’. Her predilection brings us back to our eighteenth-century ‘lazagna soup’. The dish – as described in George Dalrymple’s 1781 publication *The Practice of Modern Cookery, Adapted to Families of Distinction as well as those of the Middling Ranks of Life* – was in fact a primitive relative of the modern favourite, calling for a layering of ‘flat macaroni’, butter, and parmesan or gruyere, but without a béchamel to bind a dish. To finish, ‘add as much good broth as will fill your dish’. In fact, Italian pasta appears with increasing regularity toward the end of the century. Though spaghetti is decidedly absent, vermicelli appears to have been a staple in many household. Occasionally, Italian sauces also make their appearance, although the British would not adopt the practice of eating tomatoes until the nineteenth century. In 1798, William Henderson provides a recipe for a ‘Sicilian sauce’ consisting of ‘coriander seeds, cloves, lemons, and ham’ which he recommends for roast fowl. The presence of an Italian culinary influence surely owes something to the increased numbers of travellers making the grand tour of the continent. Yet not all travellers were equally open and tolerant of new culinary experiences: on her way across Europe to India in the 1770s, writer Eliza Fay was thoroughly disgusted by her first encounter with hollandaise sauce.

During the long eighteenth century, the English embrace of Italian recipes was, for obvious reasons, less ambivalent than their adoption of French cuisine. Between 1700 and 1820, Britain was at war with France for no fewer than 32 years, as the British military saw action against France during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the Seven Year’s War (1756-1763), the Revolutionary Wars (1793-1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). Throughout any one of these periods – and quite possibly in the time in between – many



The frontispiece from The Compleat Housewife by Elizabeth Smith (London: 1734)

British cooks may have felt it their patriotic duty to reject what Mrs. Peckham called the ‘nauseous hodge-podge of French kickshaws’. But in their overall response to French cooking, the cook-book writers run the gamut, from those like Hannah Glasse, who bemoaned the preference for a ‘French booby’ over a ‘good English cook’ to the aforementioned George Dalrymple, whose recipes are titled in both French and English. ‘Bouillon pour adoucir l’Acrite du Sang’ is, for example ‘Broth to sweeten the Sharpness of the Blood’. In some circles, custom may have dictated a suspicion of what was not native in origin, yet in truth the lure of French cuisine seems to have been irresistible. Elizabeth Raffald sounds almost apologetic as she writes, ‘although I have given some of my dishes French names, as they are known only by those names, yet they will not be found very expensive’.

Those promoting local fare would have had tradition on their side, as the Puritan revolution of the last century would have done much to advance the twin ideals of simplicity of diet and frugal and self-sufficient husbandry. But those with more adventuresome palates could have also called on a historical precedent that had always shown a keen interest in what the wider world might proffer. As John Farley wrote in 1796, ‘the introduction of trade and commerce into Europe, soon made us acquainted with the products of other countries, and rich foods and spices, which the winds wafted to us from the remotest regions of the globe, were soon sought after with fondness and avidity’. Farley’s comment describes a British palate that has always embraced what the world has to offer.

What light then, do these eighteenth-century cookbooks shed on the question of an indigenous and ‘traditional’ British cuisine? To begin, the return to a customary form of cookery would entail the banishing of certain favourite English

foodstuffs. Tomatoes, as mentioned, had not yet found their way onto British plates. In addition, potatoes of any kind were relatively rare in English cookery (though they were, of course, popular in Ireland and the American colonies). Though Hannah Glasse does mention a ‘currey chicken’ requiring ginger, pepper, and tumeric, the widespread British enthusiasm for Indian dishes – including Britain’s favorite “national dish” chicken tikha masala – had not yet come into being. ‘Garlicks’, as Amelia Simmons wrote, ‘though used by the French’, were typically thought ‘better adapted to the rules of medicine than cookery’. At the same time, almost everything at hand, including oysters, onions, mushrooms, cucumbers, beetroots, turnips, cabbages, melons, and walnuts, could be pickled, resulting in a range of tasty treats out of season. In addition, a ‘traditional’ approach also included lots of fritters. Apple, parsnip, oatmeal, ‘skirret’ (a kind of water parsnip) appear to have been great favourites.

To be sure, Gordon Ramsay has one thing right: the call for foods eaten in their season would have surprised no one in the eighteenth century. However cookbooks suggest some variance in their ideas concerning what was in season when. Cookbooks routinely contain two kinds of diagrams or charts. The first stipulates what should be laid on the table where and when, with elaborate and precise directions for the layout of various dishes on the dining table. The second kind of chart lays out recommended bills of fare by the month. In 1739, for instance, Mrs. Harrison prefixes her book with ‘a copious and useful BILL OF FARE of all manner of provisions in season, that no person need be at a loss to provide an agreeable variety of dishes, at moderate expense’. February brings nearly twenty possible options. In one variation, a first course of fish, either turbot with shrimps and oysters garnished with sliced lemons, or eels rolled in bread crumbs with sweet herbs and spices, was to be followed by a second course of neat’s (cow’s), tongue, and udder, roasted with venison sauce, or trotters to be served up with a ‘tanzey’ (pudding), tarts, and cheesecakes. Pear pie, and a cream apple or hot and buttered pies concluded the menu. In contrast, in 1800 in a somewhat simplified account for the same month, Mrs. Moxon recommends a first dish of fish, then a second of roasted fowls or wild ducks, or a ‘collar’d pig’ (bones removed, rolled, and tied with string), followed by cheese cake, stewed apples and curds, and mince pies.

For a typical October meal, Mrs. Harrison advocates a first course of haunch of doe venison with salted and boiled cabbages, cauliflowers and roots, neat’s tongue and udders, or stewed carps, or fish to be garnished with spatch-cocked eels and sliced lemon and horseradish. The second course, like the first, takes advantage of the hunt, offering wild ducks to be served with gravy and claret sauce, larks, or chine of salmon. This meal concludes with seasonal fruits – apples, pears, nectarines, plums, mulberries, and grapes. In 1800, the ‘seasonal’ has been widened to include, in Mrs. Moxon’s account, a first course of stewed tench and cod’s head, roast pork or goose, or boiled fowl and bacon. For the second, Mrs. Moxon specifies wild fowl, a hare with jellies, or a roasted lobster and fried cream. To close, preserved quinces or stewed pears or orange cheese-cakes.

In the wide range of ‘seasonal’ fare preserved in these two menus, nearly sixty years apart, we can detect not only an eighteenth-century enthusiasm for foods in their time, but

also the eager embrace of good eating from an abundant and extensive larder. If any attitude routinely cuts across the cookbooks, regardless of the writer’s background or his or her intended audience, it is the clear and certain sense that Britons were uniquely blessed in their natural circumstances. In the words of Nott,

our Lot has been case in this happy Island Great Britain like another Canaan, may properly enough be call’d a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, so richly is it stor’d with Flesh, Fowl and Fish, in an admirable Variety, esculent [edible] Roots, herbs, & c for Sauces and Sallets; Fruits, as well for making Wines and other potable Liquors (which, well order’d, are not inferior to those brought to us from foreign Countries) as well as for Furnishing out Deserts at Banquet [...] No neighboring Nation can boast of Superiority, nay, nor even pretend to compare with us, to an Equality.

Yet, despite his evident satisfaction with the natural abundance of his native island, Nott eagerly adopted and passed on to his readers the ‘many Receipts, according to the Practice of the best Masters in the Arts of Cookery and Confectionary of France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and other Countries’.

In Nott’s comment we can perceive the twin thrust that has characterized British cooking at its best, a dual focus we can see in cookbooks from the eighteenth century. On the one hand, eighteenth-century writers consistently express an investment and pride in what was available locally. On the other hand, they also convey the realistic realization that a living cuisine – like any living culture – necessarily grows and evolves. Like Blue Willow ware, the famous eighteenth-century porcelain, decorated with ‘oriental’ scenes from English imaginations and produced to English specifications in Chinese factories, British cooking was no less savored for its delightful and creative inauthenticities.

Works Consulted at Chawton House Library:

Richard Briggs, *The English Art of Cookery, According to the Present Practice being a Complete Guide to all Housekeepers* 2nd edition (London: G. G. and J. Robinson London, 1791)

George Dalrymple, *The Practice of Modern Cookery, Adapted to Families of Distinction as well as those of the Middling Ranks of Life* (Edinburgh: C. Elliot, and London: T Longmann)

John Farley, *The London Art of Cookery and Housekeeper’s Complete Assistant* 8th edition (London: J. Scratcherd and J. Whitaker, 1796)

Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plaine and Easy* 8th edition (London: A. Millar and R. Tonson, 1763)

Sarah Harrison, *The Housekeeper’s Pocket Book and Compleat Family Cook* 2nd edition (London: R Ware, 1739)

William Augustus Henderson, *The Housekeeper’s Instructor or the Universal Family Cook* (London: W. & J. Stratford, c. 1798)

Charlotte Mason, *The Lady's Assistant for Regulating and Supplying her Table—Being a Complete System of Cookery* 3rd Edition (London: J. Walter, 1777)

John Middleton, *Five Hundred New Receipts in Cookery, confectionary, etc.* (London: Thomas Astley, 1734)

Elizabeth Moxon, *English Housewifery* 14th edition (London: Andrew Hambleton and H. & G. Mozley, 1800)

John Nott, *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary, or the Accomplish'd Housewife's Companion* 4th edition (London: C Rivington, 1733)

Ann Peckham, *The Complete English Cook; or, the Prudent Housewife* (Leeds: Thomas Wright, John Binns. et alia, 1790)

Elizabeth Raffald, *The Experienced English House-keeper for the Use and Ease of Ladies, House-keepers, Cooks, &c. etc. Wrote Purely from Practice* (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1769)

Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery or the Art of Dressing* (Troy, NY: n.p., 1808)

John Simpson, *A Complete System of Cookery on a Plan Entirely New Plan* 2nd edition (London: W. Stewart, 1807)

Elizabeth B Smith, *The Compleat Housewife: or Accomplish'd gentlewoman's Companion* 6th edition (London: J. Pemberton, 1734)



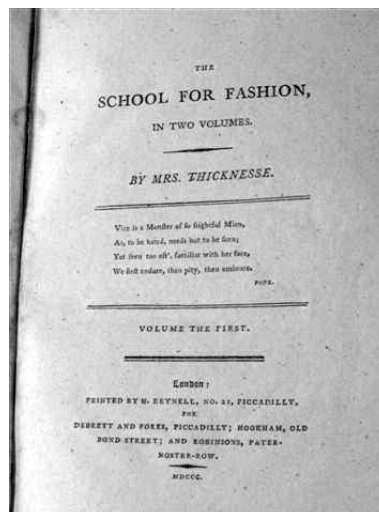
'PARTLY ADMIR'D & PARTLY LAUGH'D AT AT EVERY TEA TABLE' :: THE CASE OF ANN THICKNESSE (NÉE FORD) AND THE SCHOOL FOR FASHION (1800)

By Danielle Grover, University of Southampton

Diverting her confident gaze away from the viewer, Ann Thicknesse sits amongst luscious fabrics and musical emblems for Gainsborough when he paints her in *Portrait of Mrs Philip Thicknesse* (1760). Surrounded by a passionate red background, she sinks into her chair. Her legs are crossed; the masculine viola di gamba loiters behind her, the lute balances on her lap. The sheet music threatens to topple to the ground. Her head tilts up. Her pose is confident.

Aware of the controversial figure he was painting, Gainsborough decided not to exhibit the portrait of Ann Thicknesse at public exhibition.² Gainsborough had perhaps considered the opinion of his acquaintance, Mary Delany, who visited his painting room in 1760, and was struck by 'Miss Ford's picture, a whole length of her guitar, a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold; but I should be very sorry to see anyone I loved set forth in such a manner.'³

Extraordinary boldness, which Delany argues was a feature of Gainsborough's painting, stands out in Thicknesse's only novel, *The School for Fashion* (1800), which is held at Chawton House Library. By examining the radicalism of Thicknesse's novel, alongside a sketch of her life, this study considers Thicknesse's bold criticism of the female education system, arguing that this lesser-known figure made a significant contribution to the literary and musical world at a time when the content of women's education was hotly contested.⁴ Features of the plot and theme of *The School for*



The title page from *The School for Fashion* by Ann Thicknesse (London: 1800)

Fashion appear to seep into Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*, which was published fourteen years later. Both novels certainly comment on the social prejudice surrounding women who move from amateur to professional musicianship.⁵ Interestingly, Jane Austen copied Thicknesse's musical composition entitled 'The Fandango', into book 2 of the Austen family's music collection, which is owned by the Jane Austen Memorial trust and located at Jane Austen's House Museum in Chawton.

As a highly accomplished woman, Ann Thicknesse (1737-1824) was musical, well-educated and multi-lingual, speaking five languages.⁶ Passionate about pursuing a musical career, she played several

instruments, and was best known for her performances on the English guitar and viola de gamba. One of her publications, entitled *Instructions for playing the musical glasses* (1760), is acknowledged, by *Grove Music Online*, to be the first manual for playing on musical glasses (bell-type instrument made of glass, which if rubbed in a certain way, will respond like stringed instruments).⁷ Hints of Thicknesse's rebellion against convention are apparent through the acknowledgment, made by *Grove Music Online*, that Ann Ford was a notable performer on the musical glasses, an unusual instrument in the eighteenth century. Although her father, Thomas Ford, allowed Ann to perform in Sunday concerts, he thwarted her progress by forbidding her from performing music publicly at a time when musicians were held in disrepute. Determined and defiant, Thomas Ford resorted to arresting his daughter

twice to prevent her public performances. Rebelling against her father, however, Ann Ford held her first subscription concert in 1780 and performed a series of subsequent concerts daily between October 24 and October 30, 1780. Additional scandal and controversy was provoked by Ford's performance on the viola de gamba, the larger instrument shown in the background of Gainsborough's painting, because this was viewed as a specifically masculine musical instrument.

Desired by the Earl of Jersey, who offered Ford £800 to be his mistress, Ford continued with her musical career, despite the Earl trying to sabotage her concert. Her published pamphlet entitled *A Letter from Miss F—d to a person of distinction* (1761) defended her position against the Earl. Astoundingly, the pamphlet sold 500 copies within the first five days after publication.

On 27 September, 1762 Ann became the third wife of Mr Philip Thicknesse, gaining additional social status. After the couple's travels to Italy, Philip Thicknesse died in 1792 in Boulogne. Ann Thicknesse was subsequently imprisoned during the Terror in France. After the execution of Robespierre, in July 1794, Thicknesse's musical talent and ability to perform music professionally secured her release from prison. Shortly after, in 1800, she published her novel *The School for Fashion*, a semi-autobiographical piece.

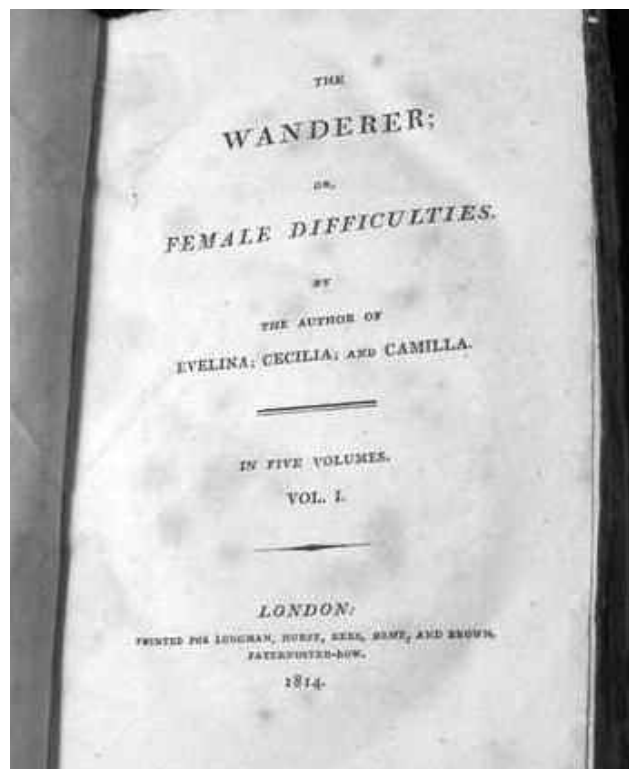
At first glance, *The School for Fashion* could be defined as a novel, yet it has strong elements of autobiography and echoes of an educational treatise, thus resisting any particular genre. Thicknesse states that her work (p.1) 'consists only (a few moral reflections expected) of plain simple FACTS'. It highlights the hypocrisy and superficiality of a variety of fashionable characters. Focussing on the struggles of a talented musician in her bid to perform music publicly, it charts her struggles against fashion as she battles against the cultural expectations of women and social prejudice.

Making her disgust for fashion glaringly obvious in her *Dedication*, Thicknesse's first comment illustrates the irony of her choice of title. During an age when many authors dedicated their texts to esteemed, royal or fashionable people, Thicknesse defies this convention by declaring that

I shall not dedicate these volumes to any leading person in the fashionable world, the elegance of whose manners, the variety of whose accomplishments, the splendour of whose taste, and the confidence of whose mind, has made her an object of general attention and imitation;---no;---I shall dedicate them to FASHION HERSELF, and instead of endeavouring to conciliate favour and patronage by the seducing power of adulation, by gilded falsehood and flattering misrepresentation, I shall endeavour to deserve, if I do not obtain, protection, by unfolding the follies, indecorums, vices and crimes of my patroness' (v-vi)

So convinced is the narrator about the evils of fashion, she positions fashion as an allegorical character as she reports that

When you [fashion] presume to dictate, or rather destroy, principles and influence manners; when you take upon you to occupy the place of reason and experience; when you assume the province of forming character, the consequences become very alarming and dangerous to the health (p.xii)



*The title page from
The Wanderer
by Frances Burney (London: 1814)*

Like the heroine of Burney's *The Wanderer*, the heroine of *The School for Fashion*, Euterpe, struggles with the expectations of fashionable society. Several reflective chapters in this text further criticise fashion and the system of female education, which requires women to learn fashionable accomplishments (leisure activities such as music and dancing), for their own amusement rather than as an occupation. Expressing a critique of the female education system, which was remarkably similar to that of Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the narrator blames a faulty system of education for the lapse in morals amongst the fashionable. The narrator criticises 'an erroneous mode of education in which more pains are taken with their external appearance, and frivolous occupations, than with their morals or the improvement of their minds' (p.112)

In chapter xxiv, similar sentiments about the dangers of the female education system are reiterated through the voice of Mrs Stately:

P.217 [Mrs Stately] 'lamented with infinite concern, the depravity of the fashionable world; laying the blame entirely upon erroneous mode of Education, as their

morals, she observed, were seldom or ever attended to at school; that their external appearance and a few frivolous accomplishments in which they were likewise generally very superficial, were regarded as matters of the highest importance, whilst the improvement of their minds were absolutely neglected

As well as criticising fashion and the eighteenth-century female education system, in chapter xvi, the narrator attacks society's decision to unquestioningly place men in important roles in society, rather than women. Like Ann Thickeness herself, Euterpe is kept under arrest to prevent her public musical performance in chapter xix.

The text reaches its climax as Euterpe decides to perform publicly, regardless of the advice of her friend Mrs Stately. In a similar situation to *The Wanderer's* Juliet, who anxiously awaits her first public performance, Euterpe's first experience of public performance is terrifying, suggesting that the text does not idealise public performance, but rather advocates freedom of choice to perform:

The first night of her appearance was the most dreadful to Euterpe she had ever known; it seemed to her like going to an execution, and she was very near fainting away twice; and to add to her terror of mind, someone was so imprudent as to inform her that Fielding's people were endeavouring to enter the house to put a stop, by her father's interference, to her performance (p.174)

Military terms, such as 'execution' and 'terror', forcefully describe Euterpe's anxiety about performing.

One of the strongest criticisms that occur in volume 2 is the injustice that women cannot capitalise on accomplishments, such as music, for economic gain. Despite Euterpe retiring to the country in volume 2, a sustained attack on repressed female liberty and the superficiality of accomplishments continues in the conversation between Mrs Tudor and Lady B

Can it be any thing but a *weak* prejudice, assisted by a wrong headed pride that should think a young woman culpable for endeavouring to gain subsistence by her talents, provided she conducts herself with modesty, prudence and propriety? Is there any difference, at least I see none, between a young woman singing, painting, or acting for a livelihood, and a lawyer, a physician, or a man either in the army or navy, earning their bread by *their* abilities? It seems to me that the *disgrace* which a young woman incurs by publicly exerting any of the above talents is being paid for it! For what does she do, that appears so criminal, but exercise more publicly indeed, those very elegant accomplishments, that persons of the very highest rank are so very anxious to attain for their own and their friends amusement? Why should it be looked upon as a greater disgrace for a woman to earn a living by her talents than a man? [...] For my part, I am of this opinion, that if young women were *well educated* and were taught

to become *proficients* in whatever art or science they might have an inclination to study, there would not be so many unhappy girls on the town, who are too *genteely* brought up to get their bread any other way than *that* which their misfortunes have led them to! It is true they are taught at school a great many fine accomplishments in which they are often so very superficial that they only serve, pour passer le temps (volume 2, pp.14-17)

Such a declaration, which rejects accomplishments as mere decorative female activities and questions both the social prejudice surrounding professional women and gender inequality, also appears in Burney's *The Wanderer*. When contemplating the difficulty of success in the music profession, Juliet vocalises the difficulty that professional women face and the social snobbery that is criticised in *The School for Fashion*:

How few, she [Juliet] cried, how circumscribed, are the attainments of women! And how much fewer and more circumscribed still, are those which may, in their consequences, be useful as well as ornamental, to the higher, or educated class! Those through which, in the reverses of fortune, a FEMALE may reap benefit without abasement! Those which, while preserving from pecuniary distress, will not aggravate the hardships or sorrows of her changed condition, either by immediate humiliation, or by what, eventually, her connexions may consider as disgrace! (p.289)

To illustrate the foolishness of girls learning accomplishments for the sake of a good marriage, Mr Tudor tells the tale of Mr H's daughter who attends boarding school and learns accomplishments insufficiently to be able to use them for economic gain. Recounting his conversation with Mr H, Mr Tudor remembers his words to Mr H:

"I am sure you will rue the day that you ever sent your daughter to a boarding-school to fill her mind only with ideas far above her station, and the school you put her to, I know is a very genteel one[...] I tell you again, your bringing her up in that style of elegance will be her utter ruin, unless you could have either given her a fortune, or have taken care that she should have been so well instructed in any one particular branch as to have been able to have procured for herself a maintenance, for you may be assured, she will not long employ her talents, small as they may be, in just amusing you over your pot of porter [...] I heard that this fine accomplished Miss was seduced by a low shopman in the town and now is become a common prostitute!" (volume 2, pp.24-6)

Ann Thickeness's *The School for Fashion* echoes some significant arguments about the superficiality of elegant accomplishments, such as music, in the late eighteenth-century female education system. In her book, she advocates artistic freedom and female independence. Burney draws on accomplishments as superficial means of entertainment in her

final novel, *The Wanderer*, which raises questions about whether Thicnesse's book influenced one of the most famous female authors of the long eighteenth century. As has already been mentioned, Thicnesse was certainly known to Jane Austen as she included her composition in her music collection. She attracted attention through her bold choice of musical instruments and her very decision to perform publicly. Painted by Gainsborough, courted by the Earl, arrested, imprisoned and the writer of two controversial texts, Ann Thicnesse contributes to the debate on female education in the long eighteenth century, a debate in which so many of her contemporaries were engaged.

Notes:

- ¹ Gainsborough's comment is detailed in Nicola Kalinsky, *Gainsborough* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995), p.54
- ² Michael Rosenthal, 'Thomas Gainsborough's Ann Ford', *The Art Bulletin*, December 1998
- ³ Mrs. Delany is quoted in Joseph Burke, *English Art 1714-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 213-14
- ⁴ All subsequent page numbers from *The School For Fashion* are taken from the following edition: Mrs Thicnesse, *The School for Fashion in two volumes* (London: H.Reynell, 1800)
- ⁵ Frances Burney, *The Wanderer or Female Difficulties*, edited by Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L.Mack and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

⁶ Due to limited biographical information on Ann Thicnesse, most of this background information was obtained from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Ford

⁷ 'Musical Glasses', *Grove Music online: The World's Premier Authority on All Aspects of Music*:
http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=692290421&bitnum=1§ion=music.19422

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- Ann Ford: *Instructions for the Playing of the Musical Glasses* (London, 1761)
- A Letter from Miss F—d to a person of distinction* (1761)
- Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of Mrs Philip Thicnesse* (1760), Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH
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LIBRARY BULLETIN

A BURNEY DISCOVERY

This is a personal story of chance discovery of a painting and some detective work to identify artist and subject. itself to inter-disciplinary exploration.

In February 2000 I visited an Antiques Fair at Olympia, planning to find and buy an eighteenth-century cup and saucer to celebrate finishing my book *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of King George III*. Instead, my eye was caught by a small black and white picture on a dealer's wall. It was too high up to see clearly, but it showed, I thought then, a fashionably-dressed young woman leaning on an elbow and writing. An older man was entering the room, gesturing as if about to speak, but the most curious feature of the picture was a central portrait of Dr Johnson. The dealer had labelled the painting 'Period Piece of the 1770s by John Collet' and he pointed out the initials IC inscribed on the carpet. Caught by what I fancifully thought might be Burney herself writing *Evelina* under the eye of her admired Dr Johnson, I ended by buying it for three times what I might

have paid for a delicate porcelain cup and saucer.

It was only later that I realised that the Johnson portrait reproduces in miniature the one painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, probably in 1778, for brewer and Member of Parliament Henry Thrale to hang among his gallery of friends at Streatham Park. Burney too became a regular guest of his wife Hester after *Evelina's* publication in the same year, so my picture could not be earlier than that date. Thus began an intriguing search to identify both painter and figures, with a few red herrings on the way (how were Collet and the Thrales linked? were the figures intended to be the Thrales?)

Kim Sloan, Curator of the British School in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, provided the first lead. She dismissed any attribution to John Collet, and counselled ignoring the IC initials as they could have been a later addition. Then she suggested that the painting might be by Burney's cousin Edward Francesco Burney, best-known for

his portrait of her in the National Portrait Gallery. Edward came to London in 1776 aged sixteen to enrol in the Royal Academy Schools under Sir Joshua, while living with his uncle, Dr Charles Burney. On Kim Sloan's advice a copy of the painting was sent to Professor Patricia Crown of the University of Missouri, the expert on the artist. She replied that it *might* be a Burney, the drawing style having 'many points in common with Edward Burney's work circa 1780', but that she'd need to see the original, which she would be happy to do when she came to London shortly. She was sure that the painting had been cut down to an oval from a rectangle and 'intended as an illustration for a book or a play'. However, the IC initials might stand for Isaac Cruikshank (1764-1811) and she urged me to look at work by both men at the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art in Bloomsbury. There I discovered drawings by Cruikshank with the IC initials exactly as on my picture. The identity of the artist seemed proven when another art expert declared on stylistic grounds for Cruikshank. In disappointment, I tucked the picture away in a cupboard and tried to forget about it.

But it wouldn't stay forgotten. Cruikshank came to London in 1783 at the age of nineteen, and in 1791 designed a frontispiece entitled 'Mrs Thrale's Breakfast Table' for a collection of *The Witticisms, Anecdotes, Jests, and Sayings, of Dr. Samuel Johnson*, so there was some connection, but why should he have felt it necessary to label a portrait of Johnson? Moreover a costume expert dated the woman's dress as not later than 1780, which made it likely that the painting dated around then, too early for Cruikshank (the man's clothes were dated to the 1760s, suggesting someone retaining the fashions of youth).

While consulting the experts I'd been shown a sketch by Edward Burney of Omai of Otaheite, the Polynesian who returned with Captain Cook in 1774 and took London by storm. Omai was depicted in native dress (though he had been fitted out with western clothes for his entry into London society and when he dined in the Burney household, Frances Burney described him as clad in 'a suit of Manchester velvet, Lined with white satten, a *Bag* [wig], lace ruffles, & a very handsome sword the King has given to him'). Remembering this sketch I recalled that in the British Library I had once transcribed a letter to Burney from her sister Charlotte, recounting Edward's dressing up as Omai for a masquerade. Out of curiosity I hunted out the letter, dated in April 1780, and found that Edward had made a copy of Sir Joshua's oil portrait of Omai in order to devise his costume, also inventing a 'cosmetic of his own' to stain his hands and mask. He so thoroughly disguised himself that Charlotte thought his own father would not have recognised him.

Though this was of interest, I had completely forgotten that she continues:

But I have something to tell you about Edward that I think you will not be displeas'd at – He has just finished 3 stained Drawings in Miniature Designs for Evilina [*sic*] – & most sweet things they are.

One after another she describes his choice of scenes for illustration, crucially that for the second volume, which I read excitedly:

The Subject for the 2nd Vol: is the part where Evilina is sitting in that dejected way leaning her arm on the Table, and Mr Villars is watching her from the door before she perceives him.

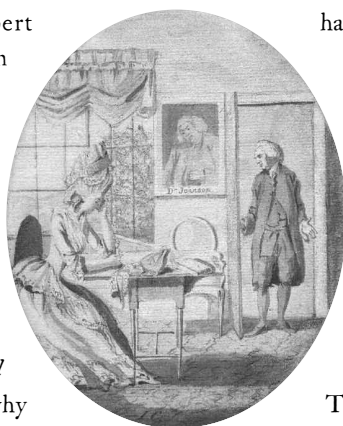
In the novel, Evelina has returned from London to the seclusion of her guardian's country home, depressed by the unsatisfactory turn her relationship with Lord Orville has taken. One morning she writes to her friend Miss Mirvan that though she had breakfasted cheerfully enough with Mr Villars:

The moment I was alone, my spirits fail'd me; the exertion with which I had supported them, had fatigued my mind: I flung away my work, and, leaning my arms on the table, gave way to a train of disagreeable reflections, which, bursting from the restraint that had smothered them, fill'd me with unusual sadness. This was my situation, when, looking towards the door, which was open, I perceiv'd Mr. Villars, who was earnestly regarding me.

This passage was identification enough, but after describing the third scene Charlotte went on to speak of Sir Joshua's approval of Edward's work:

he said some very handsome things of them, & was much pleas'd with a picture (that Edward has introduc'd into Mr Villars's parlour) of Dr Johnson, as he thinks it very natural for so good a Man as Mr Villars, to have a value for Dr Johnson

By happy coincidence the day of revelation was 13 June, Burney's birth date. Not long afterward Patricia Crown accepted the painting as by Edward Burney and showing 'the characteristics of his earliest style'. Later on in his career, she said, he would not have 'screwed up on the perspective' and would have handled the drapery of Evelina's dress differently. But the figure of Mr Villars with its open-handed gesture she described as 'typically Edwardian'. It also emerged that he had the previous year made a full-size copy of the Reynolds' portrait of Dr Johnson for his uncle, which explained his intimacy with it. As for the IC initials, Professor Crown suggested that in the nineteenth century some unscrupulous art dealer, finding the illustration unsigned, forged the initials and added the labelling of the portrait for a generation less familiar with Johnson.



Evelina and her Father
by Edward Burney (1791)

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The three illustrations never appeared in any edition of the novel, but were displayed in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1780 at Somerset House. Burney was delighted with them, especially at being thus linked with Dr Johnson, writing to him of her pride in 'our appearing together thus in Public'.

Sadly, the whereabouts of the other two illustrations is unknown. Charlotte says that the one for the first volume showed a comic incident at Ranelagh with Madame Duval and Monsieur Du Bois, while the third depicted the meeting between Evelina and her father (this scene, so affecting to the eighteenth-century sensibility, was illustrated again by Edward Burney for a 1791 edition of *Evelina*, and in this he attired the heroine in a costume fashionable at that date).

My search reached a happy conclusion but now I feel it is time to find a new home for the picture, to enable more to see it. So I am passing it on to Chawton House Library (in the first place on loan but in the expectation ultimately of gifting it). There could not be a fitter setting for the artist's homage in miniature to the novel, his cousin, his tutor, and the great man of English letters.

Hester Davenport

Burney's biographer and Friend of Chawton House Library

VISITING FELLOWS AT CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY

2008-2009

Since October 2007, we have been pleased to offer Visiting Fellowships for researchers wishing to use the collection. Readers of *The Female Spectator* have read work of these scholars over the last three issues. Building on the success of this fellowship programme, we are now pleased to be able to increase the amount of places available, enabling us to offer eighteen successful scholars the opportunity to work and stay within the grounds of Chawton House from October 2008. The following summary provides some information about the range of projects we are pleased to be able to support in the coming academic year.

Claire Harman will be joining us in October to complete her current project, a book about Jane Austen's reception and the growth of her fame. The book, entitled *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, is due to be published by Canongate in 2009. Claire is the author of several critically acclaimed biographies, including one on Frances Burney. Olivia Murphy, DPhil candidate at the University of Oxford, will be with us during October and November examining the link between Jane Austen's reading and her writing, with particular focus on Austen's critical practices in *Emma*. Pauline Morris, PhD student at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle, will also be in residence during October. Pauline's doctoral thesis is an examination of the gendered aspects in the representation of depression in literature in the period 1660 – 1800 and she is particularly interested in the writing of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Throughout November, Wendy Robins, PhD candidate at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy, will be concentrating on the work of Catharine Macaulay and early feminism for her doctoral thesis. In November and December, PhD candidate Sandra Alagona joins us from Claremont Graduate University. Her dissertation explores and identifies the ways in which Jane Austen and Margaret Fuller engaged the revolutionary ideas of their times. Also in residence during November and December is Matthew Grenby from Newcastle University. Matthew will be working on his current book project, *The Child Reader and the Birth of Children's Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century* and will be working on identifying the process of how this separate, stable and profitable branch of the print culture began. During the winter months of December and January Rebecca Davies, PhD candidate at Aberystwyth University, will be in residence. Her thesis is entitled 'Representations of Maternity in Women's Educative Writing 1740 – 1805' and she will particularly use her time in the Library to focus on the writing of Ann Martin Taylor.

2009 sees the arrival of Christina Lupton, Assistant Professor, Department of English at the University of British Columbia. Christina will use her time to work on her new project, a book length study with the working title of 'Marriage as a Literary Problem'. Amanda Springs, PhD student at the City University of New York Graduate Center, will be at the Library from January through to March. Her dissertation is

an examination of female authors of satire during the long eighteenth century. In February and March, Marie Nedregotten Sørbo will be working on a study of Austen translations into Norwegian entitled *Paraphrase and prejudice: Austen for Norwegians*. Also with us during February and March is Emily Friedman, PhD candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia, who will be working on her dissertation 'New Senses of Ending in the Eighteenth-Century Novel'. In March and April, Imke Heuer, who has recently successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of York, will be working on a critical edition of two unpublished plays by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Zillia and The Hungarian* as part of a larger projected edition of Devonshire's six manuscript plays. Richard Lane, Professor of English at the Vancouver Island University will be joining us in April and May to work on his recently commissioned Routledge Concise Histories Series book which will focus on revisiting and reassessing Frances Brooke's role in the history of Canadian literature. Throughout April, Danielle Spratt, a PhD candidate from Fordham University will be using the Library to continue work on her dissertation entitled 'The Scientifically Marked Body: Deformity and Emasculation in the New Scientific Tradition'.

During the summer months of 2009 we will be hosting Susan Allen Ford, Professor of English from Delta State University. Susan is the editor of *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal and Persuasions On-line*, and will be using the months of May and June to carry out research for a book that she is currently working on that looks at the complex interplay of readers and texts that Jane Austen mobilizes in her novels. Also in residence during May and June is Victoria Joule, Associate Lecturer from the University of Plymouth. Dr Joule will be researching a full-length study into the literary life of Delarivier Manley that appreciates her particular literary self-representation. In June, Lucy Morrison, Associate Professor of English at Salisbury University will join us. Lucy will be undertaking work here at Chawton House Library that will further contribute to the understanding of British Romantic female writers professionalisation as writers. Finally, in June, Elizabeth Raisanen, PhD student at University of California in Los Angeles will be joining us to research for her doctoral dissertation entitled 'Reading the Pregnant Body in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century England'.

We look forward to welcoming all of these scholars, and in particular to the contribution they will make to the academic programme at the Library. Readers of *The Female Spectator* can look forward to hearing more about their research in the pages of this newsletter.

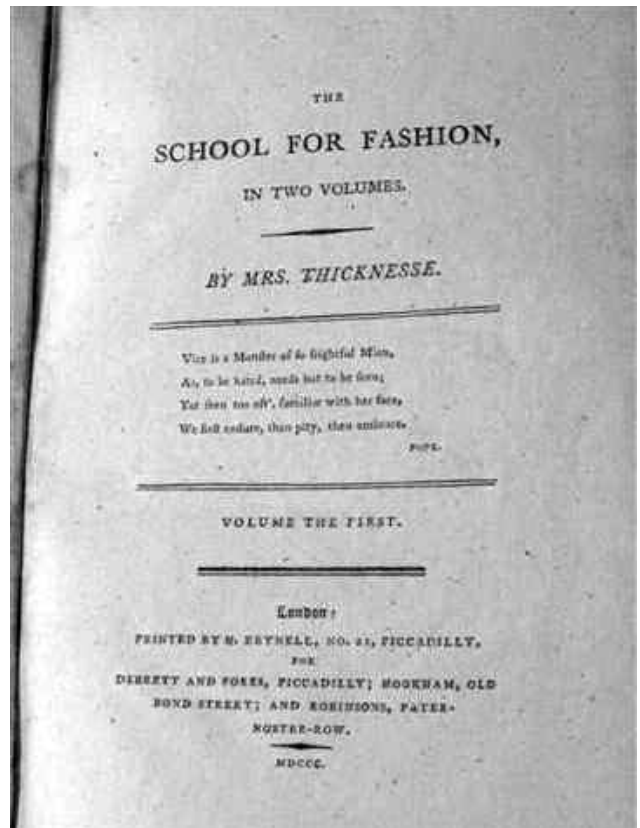
Sarah Cross
Chawton House Library

A Level Student Visits: Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

At Chawton House Library we are able to place the texts of the *The Rover* and *Frankenstein* in context both historically and culturally. A study visit includes a tour of the house in which life for all the household, at the time of the text's writing, can be explored. The tour of the house is followed by a visit to the Lower Reading Room where an exhibition will be presented of some of the collection's holdings relevant to the text, its author and subsequent critical acceptance.

For further details please contact the Librarian, Jacqui Grainger, jacqui.grainger@chawton.net or the Archive & Education Officer, Sarah Parry, sarah.parry@chawton.net.

Fellow's lecture: Edith Wharton by Professor Hermione Lee, Wolfson College, Oxford



Professor Hermione Lee gave a very well attended lecture about her latest biography about the Ame



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 13 September 2008

Heritage Open Day

Entertainment includes and exhibition in the Reading Room of some items from the collection, Regency dancing, Jane Austen readings, Shire horse demonstrations and children's activities.

Admission free.

Thursday 16 October 2008

Fellow's Lecture: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to know: Byron and Women.

Peter Cochran, a well-known expert on Byron, talks about the man and the important women in his life, including his wife Annabella, his half-sister Augusta, his confidante Lady Melbourne, and his Italian mistress, Teresa Guiccioli.

Thursday 6 November 200

Fellow's Lecture: Star of the Morning: the extraordinary story of Lady Hester Stanhope

Kirsten Ellis talks about her new biography of Hester Stanhope, known to the Bedouin Arabs, whose cause she championed, as their 'Star of the Morning'.

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 – in spite of Swift's dismissal of her as 'the most profligate whore in either kingdom'.

Thursday 15 January 2009

Fellow's Lecture: Rediscovering Women Writers

Nicola Beauman, founder of Persephone Books talks about rediscovering and promoting women writers. Persephone Books reprints neglected novels, diaries, short stories and cookery books, mostly by women and mostly dating from the early to mid-twentieth century.

Lecture tickets are now £10 (£7.50 for Friends and 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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