

# The Female Spectator

CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY



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## CHAWTON CHRONICLES: A LETTER FROM THE CEO

A very warm welcome to the latest edition of *The Female Spectator*

2013 has been a busy and exciting year for all of us at CHL as we celebrated our tenth anniversary. A great deal has been achieved in the decade since the Library first opened its doors to readers and visitors. Indeed, as I mentioned in my CEO letter back in the summer, I am firmly of the belief that CHL has already 'made a significant contribution to the discovery, rediscovery, positioning and repositioning of women writers and has helped foster a better understanding of their contribution to our literary heritage'. However, I also emphasised that we should not rest on our laurels – the world is changing fast and we, of course, need to change with it. At the centre of this evolution are people, particularly staff and volunteers at the Library, who are both our biggest investment and greatest strength. I am delighted, therefore, to welcome through these pages, two new colleagues – Keith Arscott as Chief Development Officer and Dr Darren Bevin as Librarian. Keith joins us from the Covent Garden-based charity, Contact the Elderly, where he was Chief Executive (see page 3 for more details). Darren was previously Librarian within the Faculty of Divinity Library at the University of Cambridge and you can read more about his appointment on page 3. These are key positions for Chawton and I hope you will have the opportunity to meet or correspond with both Keith and Darren over the coming years.

Meanwhile, we have plenty to look forward to in 2014, a year which sees the 200th anniversary

of the publication of *Mansfield Park*. Amongst other things we have scheduled a Mansfield Park Symposium (information on page 5), education days related to the novel for schools and colleges, and a number of lectures including the intriguingly-titled 'Death at Mansfield Park'!

We have also recently announced plans for the Jane Austen Short Story Award 2014. The award, which was inaugurated in 2009, is for short fiction inspired by Austen's novels and has attracted entries from all over the world. The two previous competitions were judged by celebrity novelists Sarah Waters and Michèle Roberts and resulted in the publication of anthologies entitled *Dancing with Mr Darcy* and *Wooing Mr Wickham*. CHL is offering cash prizes, writers' retreats and publication to the 2014 winners. Details are available on the CHL website: [www.chawtonhouse.org](http://www.chawtonhouse.org)



Stodart Piano in the Great Hall at Chawton House Library

From creative writing and literature we move to music – we know from the Knight family records (and Jane Austen's letters and diaries) that Chawton House was often the venue for small concerts and family musical evenings. It seems highly fitting, therefore, that the house will soon be filled with music once again. Elsewhere in this edition, Elizabeth Coulson, our Volunteer Music Coordinator, writes about the arrival of the newly restored Stodart piano – the focal point for upcoming performances. I am grateful to Elizabeth and University of Southampton colleagues Professor Jeanice Brooks and Professor David Owen Norris, for their unstinting efforts to obtain the piano for use at Chawton and also for their combined roles in mapping out a programme of concerts.

# *The Female Spectator*

Winter 2014

## Editors:

Academic: Stephen Bygrave

General: Sandy White

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I hope that these short outlines of activity give a sense of the range and vitality of initiatives we are involved in – and what better place for them to be happening! Indeed, I was at an event in London not so long ago when an eminent university Professor remarked, 'Chawton House Library is rather special, isn't it?' It certainly is and, in the enormous diversity that is the UK education sector today (with its massive array of libraries and special collections), preserving and publicising CHL's specialness and specialisms is one of our most important tasks. This can be done by emphasising its historical significance, its importance as a unique national institution, its undoubted contribution to scholarly achievement, its spirit of place, and the variety and richness of its undertakings. But as I have already said, we need to be aware of the pace of change around us – economic, social and cultural. As John F Kennedy said: 'Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future'. I am pleased to say that we are looking to the future, with no geographical limits to our advance. John Wesley observed that the world was his parish. An institution such as CHL ought to be equally cosmic in its outlook and, in the pursuit of this global view we will continue to build successful partnerships by communicating and collaborating with ambition, boldness and confidence.

To ensure our continued progress requires a great team – enterprising staff, committed volunteers and a thriving membership. Chawton House Library is very fortunate to have all three and I would like to thank everyone for helping to make 2013 such a memorable year. We are particularly indebted to our members and friends (including those who join us through the North American Friends of Chawton House Library whose Board, led with great passion by its President, Professor Joan Ray, continues to be a source of tremendous energy and considerable backing) who act as compelling ambassadors and advocates for our ventures and developments. Without this support it would be impossible for us to make headway in the delivery of our exciting mission.

Many thanks to all, Happy Holidays, and very best wishes for the New Year.

*Stephen Lawrence*

## NEW FACES AT CHAWTON



Keith Arscott, Chief Development Officer

As the new arrival in October, it is a privilege to be introducing myself to you and to tell you how proud I am to be working at Chawton House Library.

The 'great house' by virtue of its setting and its history right up to the present day, has become part of the very fabric of the nation and its literary heritage. Thinking about it all simply takes my breath away – and I know it always will.

Until a couple of months ago I was working in Covent Garden – funnily enough on Henrietta Street – just two doors down from where Jane Austen stayed when visiting her brother, Henry, in London. Little did I know that I would be following Jane's footsteps all the way back home to her Hampshire heartland in Chawton! What has also been so very special for me, is the warmth and kindness of the welcome I have received from everyone involved in CHL – from Trustees, staff, volunteers, Visiting Fellows and academics alike; thank you all so much.

My background and experience is from both the business world and the charity sector – my new role, as Chief Development Officer, is to use my fundraising, business development, communications and marketing experience to the best of my ability, to help further the cause of Chawton House Library and to hopefully bring it added financial robustness and stability. My good fortune is that fundraising is very much a team effort and I know that I will have everyone's support in helping me to achieve the level of financial support needed. Securing such funding will not only enable CHL and its heritage to be maintained and cherished, but will also enable it to have continued impact as a centre of learning and a profound inspiration for future generations to come.



Darren Bevin, Librarian

I first saw Chawton House Library a couple of years ago when visiting the region with family and friends. I was particularly struck by the tranquil nature of the area as I strolled down the driveway. The building was closed but it was still an opportunity to admire the landscape and explore St Nicholas Church following a visit to Jane Austen's house earlier that day. Since then, I have had the pleasure of a tour of the interior of Chawton House Library by Sarah Parry to uncover the range of activities and events that are held in the various rooms, and to view the paintings, tapestries and, of course, the fascinating collection of texts.

Browsing the Chawton House Library website reveals the wide range of activities and events that occur throughout the year including the Heritage Open Day which, last September, attracted over 1,100 visitors. I have just moved to Chawton from Cambridge and each September the University holds 'Open Cambridge', featuring a programme of talks, tours and exhibitions. At last year's weekend of events, I visited King's College Library to view a range of items from their special collections. The exhibition included a section devoted to Jane Austen that showcased the manuscript of her unfinished novel, *Sanditon*, which was given to King's in 1930 by Mary Isabella Lefroy. The manuscript is available online at Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts website but for me there is always a unique and intimate pleasure in studying the original.

I worked for four years at the Divinity Faculty Library at Cambridge University assisting staff and students with their research and studies. The range of activities I was involved with meant I was continually stimulated, but I did feel towards the end that I needed a fresh challenge. I am extremely grateful to be given this opportunity to be the Librarian here at Chawton House Library and working within a team that looks forward to the next ten years.

# GOSSIP AND PLACE: LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU'S SIX TOWN ECLOGUES

By Jessica Cook, University of South Florida  
(a Chawton Visiting Fellow in February 2013)

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Town Eclogues* (1715-1716) are a pastoral cycle of six poems, named for each day of the working week, similar to John Gay's *The Shepherd's Week* (1714). Each eclogue takes the form of either a monologue or a dialogue between two or more speakers, all supposedly based on real people in Montagu's social circle. The reader is allowed to eavesdrop as the various characters complain about unfaithful lovers, exchange stories of seduction and loss, and gossip about London's elite. Montagu did not intend to publish the poems, and they were originally circulated in manuscript. However, Edmund Curll published a pirated version in March 1716 as *Court Poems*, which included only three of the eclogues. The Advertisement for *Court Poems* plays up their scandalous nature, marketing them as 'found in a pocket-book in Westminster-Hall' and conjecturing the author to be Montagu, John Gay, or Alexander Pope. Montagu was not explicitly acknowledged in print as the author until 1747, when Horace Walpole arranged for their publication as *Six Town Eclogues with some other Poems*.

Montagu began working on the eclogues in London in 1715, after she and her husband Edward moved from the Strand to Duke Street. Isobel Grundy points out that this move, while not far in distance, was a drastic relocation in terms of the Montagus' new 'proximity to centres of power', to both parliament and the court<sup>1</sup>. Montagu was soon 'juggling a court life, an intellectual-philosophical life, and a literary life, as well as the social life usual for a lady of her rank'<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the *Town Eclogues* are a reflection of early eighteenth-century London society and its most fashionable places. As the various characters gather around the basset-table or tea-table, in coffee-houses or their own dressing chambers, gossiping about tarnished reputations and complaining about their own failed expectations, Montagu allows us to consider how gossip and place intersect in the public imagination.



Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Walpole's 1747 edition of *Six Town Eclogues* is significant for several reasons. This edition is the first time Montagu is acknowledged as the author, and it is the first time all six poems appear in print as a complete pastoral cycle. Furthermore, it is the first instance the eclogues are printed with the full titles they are known by today, which acknowledge both the day of the week and the location of the eclogue's speaker(s). By presenting all six eclogues together and with their day markers, Walpole encourages reading the cycle as one cohesive unit, with each eclogue carrying on similar themes that build upon one another. Like Curll, Walpole also emphasizes the gossipy or scandalous material of the eclogues. However, instead of mimicking Curll's blatant marketing ploy, Walpole more subtly perpetuates the theme of gossip and scandal through the other poems he includes with the *Town Eclogues*. For example, he follows *Town Eclogues* with Montagu's 'Epistle from Arthur Grey the Footman', about the much-publicized 1721 trial of Arthur Grey, who allegedly attempted to rape Montagu's friend Griselda Murray. All the other poems in the 1747 edition share similar thematic concerns of love, jealousy, sexual desire, and the precarious nature of women's reputations. Walpole most likely chose poems that he thought perpetuated the unifying theme of scandal and gossip, as well as those that highlighted the salacious aspects of Montagu's own life and personality.

Just as Montagu acts as an elite insider, giving the reader a glimpse into the world of London's high society, Walpole positions himself as a literary insider by providing full access to poems that in some cases had not appeared in print together before. Montagu herself gave Walpole access to her own manuscript copies of *Town Eclogues* when he visited her in Italy in 1740, and she supposedly even provided notes for him identifying all the characters in the poems<sup>3</sup>. The 1747 edition of *Six Town Eclogues* allows us to consider how places are created in the public mind through their reproduction in the poem's textual space, whether that is the published collection, or the manuscript copy passed from friend to friend.

1 Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 87.

2 Ibid.

3 The British Library holds Walpole's copy of Robert Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems* (1748) with his annotations identifying the various characters in *Town Eclogues*.

# AN HISTORIC PIANO FOR CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY

By Elizabeth Coulson, University of Southampton

David Owen Norris, Professor of Musical Performance at the University of Southampton has kindly arranged for the loan of an historic piano to reside at Chawton House. This instrument is a Patent Compensating Grand Piano from 1828, built by the Stodart firm of London piano makers, founded in the late 18th century. Thanks to the kind and generous gift from the North American Friends of Chawton House Library, the case has recently been fully restored by Ian Wall, a Southampton cabinet-maker.

In 1820 the Stodart workshop invented a 'compensation frame' designed to prevent pitch fluctuation due to temperature changes. Although few other makers adopted the precise mechanism, this was an important predecessor to later bracing and allowed heavier strings to be used, creating a richer sound. The piano's Compensating Mechanism has been much admired by musical experts, and as Professor Norris says: 'it has the merit of a true *una corda*, an extraordinary sound not available on all nineteenth-century pianos'. It also has an appearance which is very well-suited to a domestic setting, and will enable Chawton House Library to hold a variety of performances with piano in the future.

A new concert series in collaboration between Chawton House Library and the Music Department of the University of Southampton was inaugurated on 10th December, 2013 with an Opening Recital in the Great Hall. As Professor Jeanice Brooks - Head of Music at the University of Southampton said, this was 'a welcome to the piano and celebration of the launch of the series'.

David Owen Norris is a well-known concert artist specialising in repertory for early pianos, and a broadcaster whose entertaining and informative programmes for BBC Radio 3 and 4 have a nationwide following. To launch the new series, Professor Norris and advanced keyboard students from Southampton introduced the Stodart piano and its music, including early nineteenth-century popular music composed and arranged for performance in the drawing rooms of estates such as Chawton House.

Steve Lawrence, Chief Executive at Chawton House Library said, 'I was delighted to see so many of our friends and supporters of Chawton House Library and Music at Southampton, as well as many new visitors, at our Opening Recital. And that, thanks to David Owen Norris, Music at Southampton and our North American Friends of Chawton House Library, we really had achieved our aim, and 'brought music back to Chawton House'.

## MANSFIELD PARK AT CHAWTON HOUSE

A Bicentenary Symposium at Chawton House Library, 8th March 2014: 10.00 am – 4.00 pm.

**Katie Halsey (University of Stirling)**  
**'Mansfield Park: Then and Now'**

Katie Halsey is Senior Lecturer in Eighteenth-Century Literature at the University of Stirling. Her publications include *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786-1945* (2012) and the edited volumes *The History of Reading* (2010), and *The History of Reading vol.2: Evidence from the British Isles* (2011).

**Deidre Shauna Lynch (University of Toronto)**  
**'Quoting Fanny: On Editing Mansfield Park'**

Deidre Shauna Lynch's books include *The Economy of Character*, *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, and the forthcoming *At Home in English: A History of the Love of Literature*. Chancellor Jackman Professor at the University of Toronto, she is currently editing *Mansfield Park* for Harvard University Press.

**Anthony Mandal (Cardiff University)**  
**'1814: A Bad Year for the Novel?'**

Anthony Mandal is Reader in English Literature at Cardiff University. The first scholarly edition of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*, was published in the Chawton House Library Series in November 2013. His current project is the *Palgrave Guide to Gothic Publishing: The Business of Gothic Fiction, 1765-1834*.

**Mary Ann O'Farrell (Texas A&M University)**  
**'The Arbitrary in Austen'**

Mary Ann O'Farrell is Associate Professor of English at Texas A & M. Her publications include *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-century English Novel and the Blush* (1997). Her current research is on Jane Austen in the cultural imagination and she is also at work on a project examining representations of blindness and of the eye.

Registration fee: £40 / £33 concessions (including refreshments and lunch).

For further details and to register please see the Chawton website:

<http://www.chawtonhouse.org/?p=57830>

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE, THEN AND NOW

By Anne Greenfield, Valdosta State University (a Chawton Visiting Fellow in July 2012).

The research I conducted at Chawton House Library focused on one of the most pervasive and popular literary and artistic tropes of the long eighteenth century: sexual violence. Sexual violence permeates the literature of this era with enormous frequency, and this trope appears regularly in myriad genres, from plays to novels to short fiction to poetry to the visual arts.

I was intrigued, above all, by two phenomena that served as the basis for my research. First, sexual violence was a highly flexible literary trope, and it was represented very differently from genre to genre and author to author. For instance, while an attempted rape scene in a tragedy like Edward Howard's *The Usurper* (1664) represented the devastating breakdown of social order, a sexual assault in a comedy like Thomas D'Urfey's *Trick for Trick* (1678) made a near-rape into a jest for which almost no remorse is shown or needed afterward. Attitudes toward sexual violence, and particularly toward victims of such acts, shifted markedly from genre to genre and piece to piece.

Second, I was interested in the degree to which attitudes toward rape differed, then and now. In legal contexts, these differences were particularly salient. During the long eighteenth century, rape was notoriously difficult to prosecute. Cases were promptly dismissed when it was found that a woman had failed to report her violation soon enough, when both penetration and emission could not be proved, when a victim's chastity or reputation was called into question, or when—as often happened—the accused had enough power or money to have friends vouch for his general 'good character'. These parameters had great effect on literary depictions of rape, in which authors hoping to evoke pathos and sympathy for a raped heroine had to take great pains to prove beyond any doubt that a legitimate rape had occurred—emphasizing her fervent resistance and her absolute chastity prior to the act. Writers also highlighted the effect rapes had on fathers and husbands, above the victims themselves, painting rape not as a loss of female sexual and bodily autonomy, but as a theft of patrilineal property and a breach in the lines of inheritance. The differences in attitudes toward rape, then and now, seemed vast.

Yet, when I conducted my research at Chawton House Library in July 2012, I little anticipated how extensively these ideologies toward rape that were popular three centuries ago continued to pervade our own culture in the twenty-first century. In fact, soon after my fellowship ended, several U.S. candidates for national and state offices made comments about rape that surprised

me in how much they mirrored these long-eighteenth-century views. For instance, in August 2012, senate candidate Todd Akin claimed that pregnancy could not result medically from rape: 'if it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing [i.e., pregnancy] down'. Akin's view held popular appeal during the eighteenth century, and can be found in the highly-successful midwives' manual *Aristotle's Compleat and Experienc'd Midwife* (1711), which claims that clitoral arousal is 'that which gives a Woman Delight in Copulation; for without this a Woman hath neither a Desire to Copulation, any Delight in it, nor Conceives by it' (10).<sup>1</sup> Soon after Akin made these remarks, another Republican senate candidate, Tony Smith, compared pregnancy resulting from rape with pregnancy resulting from extramarital sex, claiming that from 'a father's position' the two were 'similar'. This conflation of rape with unchaste sex harkens back to the eighteenth century and earlier, and it can be seen in Samuel Johnson's definition of rape as a 'Violent defloration of chastity'.<sup>2</sup> Finally, not long after Smith issued this comparison, State Assembly candidate Roger Rivard averred the ease with which women falsely claimed rape, warning that 'some girls rape easy', a phenomenon that eighteenth-century jurist Matthew Hale similarly warned against in his statement, 'it must be remembered, that it [rape] is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved'.<sup>3</sup> These recent comments from prominent politicians illustrate how enduring these blame-the-victims attitudes have been over the centuries. The pervasiveness in our own era of these eighteenth-century (and earlier) attitudes toward rape and raped women reminds us of just how important it is to provide historical context and lineage for these modern-day ideologies.

With the benefit of the resources and time made available as a Visiting Fellow, I have completed an edited collection of scholarly essays on sexual violence as it was understood and depicted during the Restoration and eighteenth century. Interpreting Sexual Violence: 1660-1800 was published by Pickering & Chatto in September 2013.

1 William Salmon, *Aristotle's Compleat and Experience'd Midwife*, 2nd ed. (London, 1711), p. 10. See also Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book. Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (London, 1671), ed. Elaine Hobby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 82; John Brydall, *Compendious Collection of the Laws of England, Touching Matters Criminal* (London: Printed for John Bellinger, 1676), p. 53. This myth was eventually called into question and rejected during the late eighteenth century by legal authorities.

2 Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1, 8th ed. (Dublin: Printed by R. Marchbank, 1798).

3 Sir Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronæ. The History of the Pleas of the Crown* (London, 1736), p.635.

# CHAWTON EVENING LECTURES

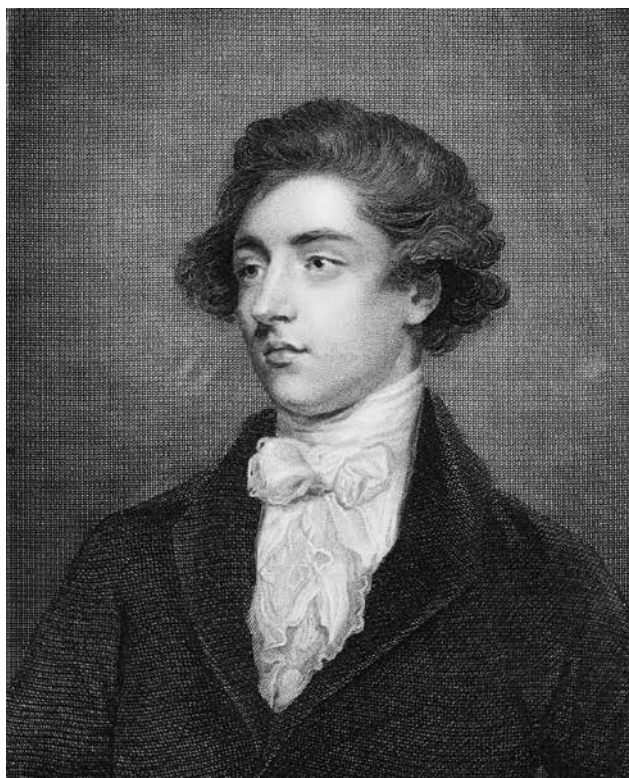
By Stephen Bygrave

Evening events at the Library in autumn 2013 have been successful and well-attended. This year we have combined some evening talks with the launch of a new book. On 16 October, Daniel Cook from the University of Dundee spoke on Thomas Chatterton, a poet who haunted generations of poets and artists long after his untimely death in 1770 at the age of seventeen. Coleridge, Southey, Robinson, and countless others dedicated elegies, odes and monodies to his memory. Keats, by his own claim, favoured the boy-poet's quirky neo-medieval idiom over Milton's Latinate style and Rossetti, Browning and Wilde, among others, rediscovered him anew in the second half of the century. Wordsworth, though, did more than any other poet to shape the reception of Chatterton, whom he famously, perhaps even infamously, dubbed 'the marvellous Boy / The sleepless soul that perished in its pride' and Daniel paid special attention to what Wordsworth gleaned from the youngster's works.

On 5 November (Bonfire Night or Firework Night in the UK) a symposium on 'The Landscapes of Female Retirement' provided intellectual fireworks too. The evening launched two books from Cambridge University Press, the first *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* by an old friend of Chawton House Library, Stephen Bending from the University of Southampton, and the second *Producing Women's Poetry, 1600–1730: Text and Paratext, Manuscript and Print* by Gillian Wright from the University of Birmingham. The papers asked what it meant for women to 'retire' in the seventeenth and eighteenth century when retirement might be pious or political, punishment or pleasure. Whether it was enforced or embraced, ideal or ordeal, retirement produced some of the period's most powerful moments of self-expression and Stephen and Gillian explored the idea of retirement in seventeenth-century women's poetry and in eighteenth-century women's gardens.

The speaker on Wednesday 20 November was the historian Hannah Greig – a former Visiting

Fellow who is also a historical consultant for film, television and theatre whose credits include the feature film *The Duchess*, Jamie Lloyd's production of *The School for Scandal* (at the Theatre Royal in Bath, 2012), and the recent BBC mini-series *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2013) and *Jamaica Inn* (2014). Hannah launched her book *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford UP, 2013), and gave a talk with the same title. Hannah introduced the Beau Monde of Georgian England, a world of gossip, intrigue and scandal. (Sometimes the mention of sexual scandal provoked gratifying gasps from a large audience.) In such a world, conspicuous consumption and



William Thomas Beckford after Reynolds  
©Beckford Trust

the right address, dinner guests, clothes, jewels and seat at the opera marked your status in society and were a passport to power. Hannah uncovered the characters striving for membership of the Beau Monde, those gaining entry and those losing it.

At the time of writing we are about to host a fourth event, on Wednesday 4 December, when Amy Frost (Beckford Tower Trust), speaks on William Beckford, one of England's most celebrated collectors, who created architectural wonders and filled them with exquisite objects, art, furniture and above all books; as an author, it is for the oriental Gothic Novel *Vathek* that Beckford is remembered, yet he also anonymously published works that

were burlesque commentaries on modern novels, including those by his half-sister Elizabeth Hervey which can be found in Chawton House Library.

Further ahead is 'Mansfield Park at Chawton House', a symposium on the novel's bicentenary to take place at Chawton House Library on March 8 2014 featuring some stellar speakers: Deidre Lynch (Toronto), Mary Ann O'Farrell (Texas A & M), Katherine Halsey (Stirling), and Anthony Mandal (Cardiff).

Details of all evening talks are advertised on the CHL website and also on the website of the Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

[www.southampton.ac.uk/scecs/](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/scecs/)

# NATURAL ARTIFICE: THE PARADOX OF BEAUTY IN EARLY-NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONDUCT GUIDES

By Kathryn Hansen, *The Citadel, USA*  
(a *Charvaton Visiting Fellow* in June 2013)

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries produced a slew of texts intended to aid women in cultivating their beauty. These texts reinforce a paradox: nature must rule supreme, yet a woman is expected to engage in sartorial and cosmetic artifice when it is warranted. Repeatedly, this conflicting advice appears in guides to appearance, and women must find ways to balance these commands. The historical review of past fashions entitled *Freaks of Fashion* (1842) provides a symbol for this tension.

*Freaks of Fashion* describes the ridiculousness of past clothing styles, and offers an emblem of fashion that encapsulates the tension between artifice and nature. A monstrous female that appears in a manuscript from approximately 1043 AD, presented as a humanoid demon with claws and wings, exhibits herself in revealing fashionable dress. *Freaks of Fashion's* author describes this image as demonstrating how 'an inordinate love of long, trailing garments and ornaments of precious metals were snares and enticements of a sinister nature' (42). Though 'nature' is often presented as positive and pure, nature can also be constructed as sinister, as here. In this sense, nature must be augmented or even combatted. Guides to enhance beauty convey this idea in their seemingly contradictory advice, often conveying the sense that nature is most dangerous when it is specifically feminine. Initially, beauty advice texts present nature as the superior guide for women, yet their authors often go on to offer their own advice as to how to supplement nature with the judicious use of artifice. The repetition of this paradox aids commercial enterprise by constructing acceptably artificial beauty as available to women for purchase.

One example of the blending of nature and artifice that governs much of the advice regarding dress is Mrs. Lloyd Gibbon's *A Treatise on the Use and Effect of Anatomical Stays* (1809). Mrs. Gibbon frets about the kinds of unhealthy undergarments that women of the bon ton wear. In contrast, she praises the symmetry of 'the female in humble

life' whose 'form is molded by the hand of nature' (29). Fashion is not the humble woman's concern because it is dangerous, and 'health, the greatest earthly blessing, is compelled to give place to this vortex' (v). Here, Mrs. Gibbon constructs health and fashion as diametrically opposed, but she offers a method to reconcile them. Mrs. Gibbon asserts that the 'foundation which nature lays, it is clear, may be much improved by art, provided this improvement is conducted with judgment' (16). The overlaying of morality upon clothing choice seems calculated to rescue fashion from the realm

of deception into which it is cast by eighteenth-century critics. The impulse to justify fashion by pressing it into the service of virtue appears frequently, suggesting that previous attempts have not worked. Judgment is all in all, and by presenting herself as one gifted with proper judgment, Mrs. Gibbon sells her expertise to help the less discerning woman blend artifice and nature in ways that accord with, rather than work against, propriety.

Mrs. Gibbon isn't alone in this endeavour to balance art and nature in precise, correct amounts. The anonymous *The Art of Dress: Or, Guide to the Toilette* (1839) addresses the need to weigh the demands of fashionable appearance against what is natural. This writer, addressing the evils of a thick waist, laments the widespread use of tight

lacing. However, this defect may be 'readily got over, or at least sufficiently modified to prevent recourse to unnatural compression, by a judicious arrangement of the dress' (39). Again, artifice appears paradoxically as the method through which experts can help women become more natural. Alexander Walker echoes this in *Female Beauty* (1837), excusing dress as being less an artifice than a necessary aid for the unfortunate: 'Without being accused of that ridiculous and absurd coquetry which demands of art those graces which nature has refused, it is allowable for all persons to endeavour to conceal any physical defects or deformities ... Putting a little wadding into the stays to conceal any irregularity in the shape, is not perhaps more reprehensible than



*Freaks of Fashion*



a sick person's sending for a physician' (335-6). By constructing some garments as medically corrective, Walker tries to steer the popular conceptions of dress away from caprice and whim, and his verb choice indicates how he endeavours to separate his methods from the mere following of fashion. In writing that coquetry 'demands' graces from art, he suggests that his advice opposes the immorality of coquetry. His recommendation by contrast works in concert with nature, simply reshaping others' views of an unfortunate woman's corporeal irregularity.

Just as nature might need a bit of correcting with a woman's shape, so too might nature be in need of a bit of augmentation from cosmetics. *The Mirror of the Graces* (1811) counsels women that 'Advocate as I am for a fine complexion, you must perceive that it is for the *real*, not the *spurious* ... *the skin's power of expression*, would be entirely lost, were I to tolerate that fictitious, that dead beauty which is composed of white paints' (51-2, emphasis in the original). Yet despite these firm words, '[w]hat is said against white paint, does not oppose, with the same force, the use of red' (52). After all, red paint evens out a complexion to make it look more natural, and '[n]ature, in almost every case, is our best guide' (56). By attesting to the fact that nature is the best example, this anonymous author invokes a morally acceptable paradox: only to make oneself look more natural are cosmetics allowable.

These texts help delineate the difficulties of navigating the rift between nature and artifice. These books and periodicals call upon nineteenth-century women to heal the breach between these seemingly irreconcilable forces through their careful balancing of virtue and consumption of fashions. Yet rather than directly oppose previously entrenched ideas about the desirability of cleaving to what is natural, these texts cannily propose a blending of nature and art to increase sales of products. The sellers of stays, padding, cosmetics, and other fashionable appurtenances marshal virtue to aid them in gaining further profits. This is true of the beauty advice books and fashion magazines as well, *La Belle Assemblée* being one example. *La Belle Assemblée* included fashion plates, like the one for a carriage dress that advertised the newest fashions created and sold by Mrs. Bell (who almost always included directions to her establishment in each edition of the fashion



Bell's Carriage Costume

magazine). The proliferation of advice for women to balance nature and artifice is thus a clever way of benefiting from the purity associated with nature to advance the necessity of art.

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# CHAWTON VISITING FELLOWSHIPS UPDATE

By Stephen Bygrave

This article is being written the day after an evening at Chawton listening to the recital by David Owen Norris and student colleagues on the 1828 Stodart piano lent by the University of Southampton which now resides in the Great Hall at CHL. This event, organised by Elizabeth Coulson, a postgraduate student in English at the university, along with Professor Jeanice Brooks from Music, is another instance of a healthy creative collaboration, now more than ten years old, between the University and the Library, of which the most visible manifestation is the scheme for the Chawton House Library Visiting Fellowships, instigated by Gillian Dow and hosted jointly by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Southampton and by Chawton House Library.

Successful applicants stay in the Stables at CHL and work in the reading rooms over a period of a month. As Fellows, they have library rights at the University, and become members, during their stay, of the Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies. A condition of their fellowships is that near the end of their stay they report on the work they have done at CHL by giving a talk at an informal seminar, most of which have taken place at the Avenue Campus of the University. This allowed the Fellows to attend events organised by SCECS, and ensured a larger audience that included Southampton graduate students. It would be invidious to pick out individual papers from all those I have heard since standing in for Gillian Dow, so I should like to list those talks delivered since the last *Female Spectator*.

In August, 'Ila Tua'one from Northeastern University, USA, spoke on the scientific voyages of Captain Cook and Bluestocking women's responses to the first visitors from the South Seas; Ada Sharpe from Wilfred Laurier University, Canada investigated two early nineteenth-century women's commonplace books from the Library's collections; Catherine DeRose from the University of Wisconsin spoke on adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* and other popular sources as a means of education in early nineteenth-century England; and Ruth McAdams from the University of Michigan investigated the sex scandal as history in the notorious *Memoirs of Harriette Wilson*.

In October, Sally Osborne, who is researching a PhD on eighteenth-century domestic medicine at Roehampton University, introduced manuscript medical recipes and Marion Durnin, who is preparing an edition of Anna Maria Hall's *Sketches of Irish Character* (1829) for the Chawton House Library series, spoke on the representation of Irishness in the illustrations for that neglected novel.

In November, Annalisa Baicchi, a linguist from the University of Pavia, Italy, spoke on linguistic expressions and conceptual metaphors in women's writing in English and Italian; Natasha Duquette, Chair of English at Biola University in California, returning for her second spell as a Visiting Fellow, spoke on the language of prophecy in the poetry and poetics of Dissenting women; Magdalena Ozarska, from the University of Kielce in Poland, spoke on the language of flowers and the Polish author Maria Wirtemberska; and Fanny Lacôte from the Université de Lorraine in France, gave an account of Elizabeth Meeke's *The Mysterious Husband* (1801) and its French translation as an instance of 'Cross-Channel Gothic'. (We hope Fanny will be contracted by the publishers of the Chawton House Library Series to prepare a new edition of this last novel from the Library's collections.)

This list makes it clear that the Library's collections have provided scholars of various disciplines from many countries of the world with a rich resource from which many of us have benefitted. Funding for administrative support for the scheme continues to be uncertain, but we hope to be able to continue and to issue a call for applications for the 2014-2015 academic year.



CHL Stables accommodation

# JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY: BATH AND BEYOND - STUDY DAY

Holburne Museum, Bath. 9.00 am – 6.00 pm,  
24th February 2014.

This event will bring together a variety of stimulating speakers from different disciplines to examine in greater depth Wright's little-known Bath period and its contexts. The morning session will explore the cultural life of Bath in the 1770s through recent historical research and ask whether Wright's place in this complex and creative society has been misunderstood. In the afternoon the focus will turn to other places: Derbyshire, Liverpool, the London exhibition galleries and the places of Wright's literary imagination, and their influence on the artist's life and work.

The study day accompanies the major new exhibition *Joseph Wright of Derby: Bath and Beyond*

(25th January – 5th May 2014). It has been made possible by a generous grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. Chawton House Library will be lending its Joseph Wright portrait of Dr Wilson and Miss Macaulay to the exhibition.

Price: £45 (Concessions £40, Students £15), to include morning coffee, afternoon tea and a ticket for the exhibition.

## How to Book

Credit card bookings may be made by calling Spencer Hancock at the Holburne on 01225 388560, email: [s.hancock@holburne.org](mailto:s.hancock@holburne.org), or in person at the Museum's information desk, or send a cheque made payable to 'The Holburne Museum' to Spencer Hancock, Visitor Services Manager, the Holburne Museum, Great Pulteney Street, Bath BA2 4DB. We can also offer a packed lunch for £6.15. Please purchase when you book. When booking, please supply your name and address so that your tickets can be posted to you.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### *Mansfield Park* at Chawton House – A Bicentenary Symposium at Chawton House Library

8th March 2014 (10.00 am – 4.00 pm).

Speakers include: Mary Ann O'Farrell, Deidre Shauna Lynch, Anthony Mandal and Katie Halsey. Registration fee: £40/ £33 concessions (including refreshments and lunch). For further details and to register please visit the Chawton website: <http://www.chawtonhouse.org/>

### Romance and its Transformations, 1550-1750

A two-day conference at Chawton House Library,  
30th June -1st July, 2014

Keynote Speakers: Professor Ros Ballaster, Oxford University; Professor Emerita Mary Ellen Lamb, Southern Illinois University. Registration details will be available at a later date.

### New Horizons: Reassessing Women's Travel Writing, 1660-1900

A three-day conference at Chawton House Library,  
10-12th July, 2014. Registration details will be  
available at a later date.





## *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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