

The Female Spectator.

VOL.1 No.4, 2015



New and improved series

Books owned by Jane Austen's niece, Caroline, donated to Chawton House Library

IN APRIL THIS YEAR, a North American Friend of Chawton House Library, Sandra Clark, came to visit us all the way from Texas, bearing gifts. And what special gifts they are! They include a first edition of Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796), and a great many books to enhance our secondary collection, and our holdings on the Gothic novel. They also included a small collection of books once belonging to Caroline Mary Craven Austen (1805-80). Here, Executive Director Gillian Dow discusses the importance of just one of the volumes in this collection, and looks at what it can tell us about women's reading, education for girls, and women's lives in the early nineteenth century.

When Sandra Clark came with her generous donation, I was thrilled to see the volumes once belonging to Caroline Austen. Caroline was the youngest daughter of the reverend James Austen by his second marriage to Mary Lloyd. As well as being the niece of Jane and Cassandra Austen, she was Cassandra's goddaughter. Indeed, Caroline is an important descendant of the Austen family, for much of what we know about her aunt comes direct from a memoir that she wrote in 1867. Her elder brother James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870) relied extensively on these unpublished notes, as Deirdre Le Faye and Kathryn Sutherland's research has demonstrated. Although Cassandra was Caroline's godmother, Jane was the favourite aunt, and her descriptions of Jane's lively wit and fun nature with children come from Caroline. It is also to Caroline's memoir that we owe the observation that Jane Austen:

'was considered to read aloud remarkably well. I did not often hear her but once I knew her take up a volume of 'Evelina' [by Frances Burney] and read a few pages of Mr. Smith and the Brangtons and I thought it was like a play. She had a very good speaking voice.'



The reference to Jane Austen's acting skills came back to me when I examined the donation from Sandra Clark. Because one of the books is a book of French plays, an 1813 edition of Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis's *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes*. All of Caroline's books now forming part of the Chawton House Library collection are delightful material objects. And in the case of this one, it is of particular interest, since it is inscribed 'Caroline Austen. The gift of her Aunt Cassandra. Jan 13 1815', in Cassandra's handwriting. There is also a great deal of marginalia, including underlining and scoring out that show these plays have been read and engaged with – even performed. There is even a little sketch of a dog, that Deirdre Le Faye has suggested might be the work of Caroline's elder brother James Edward. But who was the author who wrote these French plays for young people? And why might these plays have been considered a particularly appropriate gift for a young girl from her godmother?

Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Aubin (later comtesse de Bruslard de Genlis and Marquise de Sillery) was born in Burgundy in 1746, the eldest child in her family. Her own early education was largely neglected: she was cared for by the staff in her parents' house and taught a little catechism. When their daughter turned seven, the Ducrests decided she should have a governess, and appointed a Breton girl, Mlle de Mars. After a financial disaster in Genlis's early teenage years, the family could no

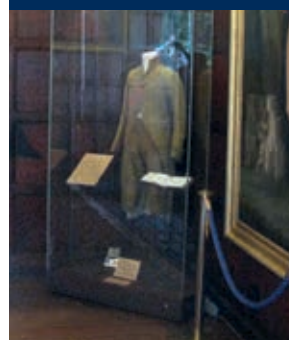
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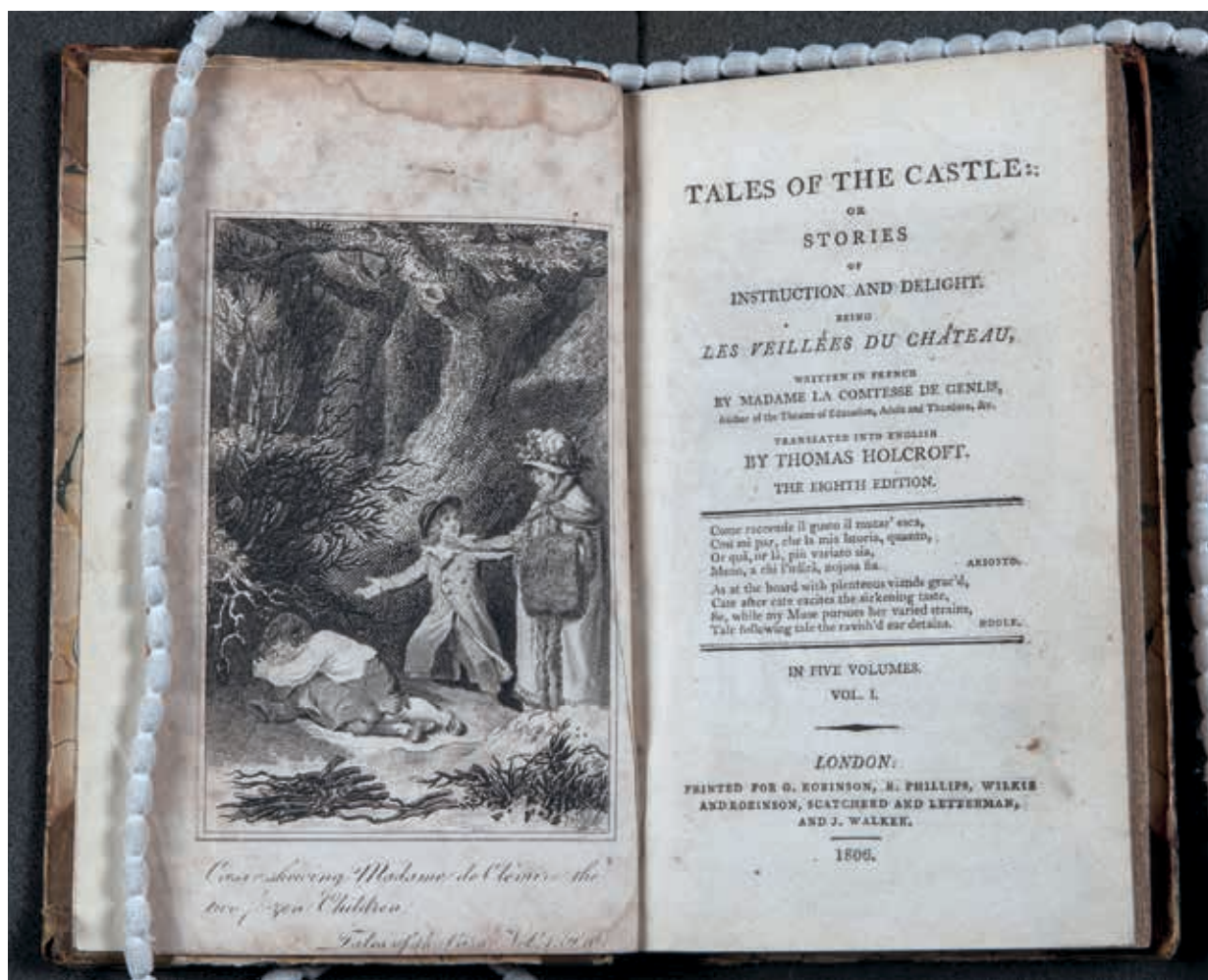
For lovers of literature

Women Writers Remembered



Celebrating long overdue recognition for early women writers

The Chawton House Library collection already contained a number of works by Madame La Comtesse de Genlis, translated into English, as a significant and influential writer of the long eighteenth century.



longer pay Mlle de Mars's wages, and eventually Genlis and her mother arrived in Paris, where they depended on the benevolence of family friends who encouraged Genlis's training on the harp. Marriage to a young nobleman, Monsieur le Comte Charles-Alexis de Genlis, followed in 1763, and in 1772, Genlis took on the position of lady-in-waiting to the Duchesse de Chartres.

In 1777 Genlis was appointed governess to the Chartres family's newborn twin daughters, and retired to an estate outside Paris, Bellechasse, to pursue a carefully thought-through system of education for them. In 1782 she was the first woman to be appointed 'gouverneur' of Royal children, and the sons of the Chartres family, the Duc de Valois (later King Louis-Philippe) and the Duc de Montpensier joined the group which included Genlis's own daughters, a niece and nephew, and, intriguingly, two young English girls. There has been much speculation about whether these girls, Pamela and Hermine, were actually the illegitimate daughters of Genlis and the Duc de Chartres. Genlis, for her part, always claimed that the girls were adopted to speak English with her young pupils: part of Genlis's educational theories on the education of girls involved an emphasis on learning modern languages. In later life, Genlis never missed an

opportunity to stress that she was largely self-taught from her early reading, and that the lack of suitable works for children and plans of education, in particular for the education of girls, must be redressed.

The *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes*, was first published in French in 1779. It was the culmination of a project that had been maturing for many years. The plays had been written for Genlis's daughters, Caroline and Pulchérie, eleven and ten years old respectively, and although the genre was not entirely new in France (both Mme Leprince de Beaumont and Arnaud Berquin had already published plays for children), the natural tone of the plays touched the selection of the public who were invited to see them. The first performances were before an audience of 60; later, up to 500 people would see Caroline and Pulchérie on the stage. It could be surmised that by 'putting her daughters on the stage' in this way, Genlis was leaving both herself and her children open to criticism. In fact, little criticism appears to have been forthcoming. Perhaps because of the sound morals of the plays, and the fact that the children were not performing with members of the opposite sex, they were met only with approval.

Translated into English and published as *The Theatre of Education* at the end of 1780, the change of title of Genlis's plays perhaps reflected the concerns of British readers that the emphasis should be placed squarely on education, rather than performance. We are used to thinking about French fiction being dangerously sentimental and libertine in this period – remember that *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Dangerous Liaisons) was published in 1782. I have often noted in my own work on this period, that Britishness, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, is often defined quite simply as not being French. But here, there is a reversal – this French work is extraordinarily puritan in many ways, and this seems to have been a main attraction in Britain. The plays are designed to instruct young girls in the importance of cleanliness and charitable acts, religious observation and duty to one's parents. They warn against vanity and pride, against superficial learning and false display of accomplishments. Crucially, there are many that have only two or three parts, all for girls. They are exactly the kind of plays that Miss Lee, the governess at *Mansfield Park*, could have given Maria and Julia Bertram and Fanny Price to perform. And clearly, they were considered to be entirely suitable plays for Aunt Cassandra to

give to her goddaughter Caroline, to help her in learning French, to instruct, and to entertain.

The four English journals which reviewed the work engaged with questions of suitability of performance. The first volume of plays, consisting entirely of dramas for young women, was reviewed approvingly by the *London Magazine* 'for the chaste and elegant plan here chalked out'. Although the reviewer notes that 'very great and just objections have been made to permitting the representation of plays written for, and performed on, the stage, by youth in academies', they are careful to point out that 'all love intrigues, low humour, and loose conversation, is secluded'. The reviewer also writes approvingly of the length of the plays, which are mainly two acts long, 'so that they may be easily performed in private families'. All the English reviews of Genlis's *Theatre of Education* stress the importance this work from a 'female pen' will have for young people, but especially for young girls and women.

The *Critical Review* recommends it 'to the few parents and guardians left amongst us, who, in the education of their children and pupils, have a regard for their moral character, and above all to the school-mistresses in this metropolis and its environs, who, we think, cannot employ their scholars better than in reading and repeating these entertaining and instructive comedies'. It seems that the young women and the governesses to whom the reviews constantly referred took note of the advice of the critics to make Genlis's plays for children a 'domestic monitor' in their families. Reading and performing these plays was an entirely suitable activity for the young Austen nieces.

Caroline, in 'My Aunt Jane Austen', wrote of the female cousins who met in Chawton when Jane Austen lived in the village:

'When staying at Chawton, if my two cousins, Mary Jane and Cassy were there, we often had amusements in which my Aunt was very helpful – She was the one to whom we always looked for help – She would furnish us with what we wanted from her wardrobe, and she would often be the entertaining visitor in our make believe house – She amused us in various ways – once I remember in giving a conversation as between myself and my two cousins, supposed to be grown up, the day after a Ball.'

Mary Jane, Francis's daughter, was born in 1807, Cassandra Esten – Cassy – Charles's daughter, was born in 1808. The 'amusements' – which clearly included dressing up – and the 'conversation' described by Caroline here are exactly the kind of private theatricals that Genlis feels should be used in the education of young girls. It's delightful to think of the younger generation of Austen girls – who could have been no more than eight or nine when this 'conversation' took place – being entertained in this way by aunt Jane, and perhaps (who knows!) even acting out some of Genlis's little plays in French. And it is most fitting that Aunt Cassandra's gift to her goddaughter is now on display underneath the mid-eighteenth century picture of Chawton House, known as the 'Mellichamp' painting. In the bottom right-hand corner, in pencil, one can read a name – 'Mary Jane Austen, 1819', a recently-discovered mark recording Francis's family's stay in the Great House that year.

Mary Jane died young in December 1836, leaving five children, the youngest of whom – a daughter, Helen Catherine, born in 1835 – was little more than an infant: was she to go on to dress up, watch or act out 'conversations', as her mother had done? Cassy had lost her own mother – Charles Austen's first wife – in September 1814, and often stayed with her maiden aunts and her grandmother as a result. Ordinary women's lives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be harder to trace than their male counterparts – we frequently get fragmented details through marriage records, birth dates of children, records of deaths. The items we now display give only a small glimpse of their lives, but it is a fascinating one. Through Caroline's books, and Mary Jane's naughty graffiti, these two playful cousins are reunited once again, and we get a greater sense of their occupations and amusements. I like to think Aunt Cassandra, Aunt Jane, and cousin Cassy would approve!

Further Reading:

Kathryn Sutherland (ed.), *J.E. Austen-Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections* (Oxford: OUP, 2002)

We are extremely grateful to Sandra Clark, for her generous donation of the books discussed in this article. We are also grateful to the Foyle Foundation, the Jane Austen Society of North America, and the Friends of Chawton House Library – all those who receive *The Female Spectator* – for the support that enabled us to purchase the display cases needed to display them appropriately so that visitors to Chawton House Library can enjoy them.



Afternoon tea at the House of Lords

IN OCTOBER THIS YEAR, our Vera Brittain / Society of Women Writers and Journalist Visiting Fellow Alexis Pogorelskin (University of Minnesota Duluth) was invited to afternoon tea at the House of Lords. She met with Baroness Williams of Crosby, prominent Liberal Democrat politician and daughter of Vera Brittain. The fascinating conversation ranged from World War One poet Mary Borden to the earlier poetry of Charlotte Smith, and the films of World War Two. And Alexis ended her visit by viewing a plaque to Emily Wilding Davison – the full story behind this plaque is featured in our 'Women Writers Remembered' article later in this issue. If you would like to hear more about Alexis's project while she is in residence here at the Library, do listen to our October podcast available on our website.



Lunch with the Burney Society

REPRESENTATIVES FROM the UK Burney Society, Helen Cooper, Miriam Al Jamil and Jill Webster, joined us for lunch recently with Jeni Buckley, the first Hester Davenport / Burney Society fellow who was in residence for the month of October. Hester Davenport was a leading independent scholar noted for her work on Frances Burney's life at the court of George III and Queen Charlotte, and the biographer of Mary Robinson. We hope she would have been pleased that the first fellowship in her name went to an independent scholar like herself.

The Visitor Experience

Reflections on the Year and Plans for 2016



THE END OF OUR OPEN SEASON IS UPON US and it is time to reflect on what went well and what we can improve on for the year ahead. According to the feedback we have had online, in our visitor book and on our feedback forms, not much! We are delighted to report continued glowing comments from visitors and, thanks to our new free-flow route, our visitor numbers have tripled. The only 'room for improvement' comments have been about the limited opening hours and we are happy to announce that these will be increasing next year and we will be opening on Sundays as well as during the week – more details coming soon.

Our visitor experience has also just had a huge boost with the new display cases that have just arrived, which were made possible with the generous help of the Jane Austen Society of North America, the Foyle Foundation, Friends of the Library, and the George Cadbury Trust. These climate-controlled display cabinets enhance the visitor experience by displaying some of the treasures of the collection as part of the tour of the house. For example, in the Great Hall, many visitors admire the beautiful Hoppner painting of Mary Robinson (1758-1800) as 'Perdita' in *A Winter's Tale*. Now they can read about Mary Robinson's life and work and view some of her published works, such as her debut novel, *Vencenza; or, the dangers of credulity* (1792) which sold out in one day, and went on to further editions and translations into French and German. Similarly, in the Dining Room, visitors can not only view the painting of Edward Knight around the time of his grand tour, but also see his original travel journal and his suit, along with the Wellings silhouette of him being presented to his adoptive parents, giving a much richer sense of his life and his connection with the house.



Coming soon for 2016, we intend to introduce some new signage in the scullery (now the shop), and more signage outside around the gardens, the shepherd's hut, and the horses.

From the Visitor Book in September & October:

'Absolutely Fabulous!' P.W.-S., Perth, Australia

'Much more than expected. Loved it!' P. & J., USA

'Staff very helpful, beautiful.' C. & M., Windsor, UK

Jane Austen and other women writers celebrated in Louisville, Kentucky

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY of North America (JASNA) AGM took place on 9-11 October in Louisville, Kentucky, and Chawton House Library was well represented, with a special timeline of women writers on display down one of the main corridors of the hotel, which sparked much interesting discussion and debate. Due to popular demand from attendees, we have now published an edited version of the timeline on our website and we are also working towards publishing printed versions in the near future.

Much fun was had by 'Will & Jane', superhero figures from the upcoming exhibition at the Folger, who have been photographed all around the world, including at Chawton House Library, and at the AGM. The Exhibition 'Will & Jane: Shakespeare, Austen and the Cult of Celebrity', is co-curated by Janine Barchas (University of Texas at Austin), one of our board members at the North American Friends of Chawton House Library (NAFCHL) and Kristina Straub (Carnegie Mellon University), and explores the parallel afterlives of arguably the two most popular writers in the English language.

During the AGM, we also had the opportunity to thank in person many of our generous members of NAFCHL and present them with their new quill pins. Our Founder and Chairman, Dr Sandy Lerner OBE, was delighted to personally present some of the pins, including to Friend and former JASNA President, Iris Lutz, and to Sue Forgue whom she thanked on behalf of all of us for becoming a member of the Bluestocking Circle.

We would particularly like to thank NAFCHL board members Janet Johnson, Bobbie Gay, Linda Dennery and Deb Barnum for their support during the AGM.



Left
Superhero figurines Will & Jane enjoy drinks and mingling with attendees from left to right: Elaine Bander, Carolyn Brown, Susan Ford and Jocelyn Harris.

Below Left
Sandy Lerner presents Chawton House Library Friend and former JASNA President Iris Lutz with her special pin.

Below Right
Will & Jane admire the Chawton House Library stall at the Emporium.



Christmas Gifts



Chawton House Library Christmas Cards

'At Christmas everybody invites their friends about them, and people think little of even the worst weather.'

Mr Elton in Jane Austen's *Emma*, first published December 1815

These Christmas Cards, showing a snowy and beautiful Chawton House Library, come in a set of 10, and feature this quotation from Jane Austen's *Emma*, published 200 years ago this December.

£5 for pack of 10



Chawton House Library Scarf

'I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves.'

Mary Wollstonecraft

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)

Beautifully hand-printed, these exclusive Chawton House Library scarves feature quotations by, on, and for women. Adorned with the wisdom of many of our favourite female authors in our collection, from Jane Austen to Louisa May Alcott, these scarves look and feel beautiful!

£22.50



Duties of a Lady's Maid

'Do you want me to answer truthfully or like a lady's maid?'

Downton Abbey (Season 4, Episode 7)

Explore the fascinating life of a lady's maid in the Regency period with your facsimile copy of *Duties of a Lady's Maid, with directions for conduct, and numerous receipts for the toilette*, published 1825, including insights on matters ranging from good tempers & civility and vulgar & correct speaking, to stays & corsets, hairdressing & use and abuse of soap!

£12.99



Signed copy of *First Ladies of Gardening*

Following their very successful talk and book signing, Heidi Howcroft and Marianne Majerus have signed these exclusive copies of their book *First Ladies of Gardening: Pioneers, Designers and Dreamers*. This book celebrates the grande dames of contemporary English garden design with the great names that have emerged since the 1950s, from Beth Chatto and Vita Sackville-West to Beatrix Havergal, Mary Keen and Helen Dillon. It also presents the outstanding gardening women and their work in contemporary garden design. Award-winning photographer Marianne Majerus captures the visual beauty of their creations.

£17.50



Mary Lawrance Botanical Notecards

Mary Lawrance (1794-1830) was a British botanical illustrator who specialised in flowers. This set of notecards features six different illustrations from Lawrance's *Sketches of Flowers from Nature* (1801) from the collection at Chawton House Library.

£3.00 for pack of 6



'Perdita' Puzzle

The image is of actress and author Mary Robinson (1758-1800), 'Perdita' in *A Winter's Tale*, by John Hoppner.

By Wentworth Wooden Puzzles 250 piece puzzle with unique 'whimsy pieces' £20.00
40 piece micro puzzle £5.00



'Mellichamp' Puzzle by Wentworth Wooden Puzzles

The image is of Chawton House c.1740 signed by Mellichamp, and hangs in the Tapestry Gallery at Chawton House Library.

250 piece puzzle with unique 'whimsy pieces' £20
40 piece micro puzzle £5.00



Chawton House Library Gift Set featuring:

- ✎ *Duties of a Lady's Maid, with directions for conduct, and numerous receipts for the toilette*, published anonymously in 1825
- ✎ *The Compleat Housewife* by Elizabeth Smith, published 1753
- ✎ The Knight Family Cookbook, a facsimile copy of this unique handwritten cookbook that has belonged to the Knight family since the late 18th Century.

£35

Compleat Housewife Gift Set featuring:

- ✎ The *Compleat Housewife* book by Elizabeth Smith
- ✎ Set of 10 notelets
- ✎ Teatowel

£15

Jane Austen Short Story Award Gift Set:

Set of three books featuring the shortlisted entries to the Chawton House Library Jane Austen Short Story competition:

- ✎ *Dancing with Mr Darcy*, introduced by Sarah Waters
- ✎ *Wooing Mr Wickham*, with foreword by Michele Roberts
- ✎ *Beguiling Miss Bennet*, with foreword by Gillian Dow

£25

Alternative Christmas Gifts

Looking for something a little different? Perhaps you know someone who would love to be a Friend of Chawton House Library? Or someone who would love to Sponsor a Shire Horse – both available to buy as Gifts. Please call us on 01420 541010 or see our website for further details.

To order your gifts, visit
www.chawtonhousethlibrary.org
or call us on 01420 541010.

Prices shown exclude post and packaging.

Please note that orders must be received by Friday 18 December 2015 if you are in the UK, or Tuesday 15 December 2015 if you are overseas, to be received in time for Christmas.

‘To enter into Eliza Smith’s world is like travelling to another universe...a place where the indulgence in cholesterol-ridden foodstuffs is the order of the day...a place where you can preserve your teeth with honey – or, if you chose, brandy...’

Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace in her introduction to *The Compleat Housewife*



Austen's Literary Playfulness

Jane Austen wove references to other texts throughout her *Juvenilia* and her later published novels. Here Octavia Cox, a Chawton House Library Visiting Fellow in 2014 now completing postgraduate study at Oxford University, argues that the humour and complexity of these references offer us glimpses of Austen's genius.

Jane Austen's lively engagement with and mockery of literary clichés is evident even from her *Juvenilia*. Laura's and Sophia's alternate faintings on a sofa in 'Love and Freindship' [sic], for example, is both an admiring reference to Richard Sheridan's marvellously funny farce *The Critic*, in which he satirises theatrical conventions, and a condemnation of typically fey heroines such as Samuel Richardson's Pamela. In this short essay, I will outline a couple of ways that Austen pokes fun at contemporary poetical taste in her poem 'Ode to Pity', and suggest a few instances of literary engagement in her adult fiction.

Written on 3 June 1793 at age seventeen, 'Ode to Pity' is dedicated to Cassandra and 'her pitiful Nature'. In this dedication, Austen is punning on the vogue for poetry containing descriptions of Nature designed to evoke feelings of pity, but also how pitiful she finds some of these descriptions of 'Nature'. The title itself was not uncommon in the eighteenth century; David Selwyn has noted that both William Collins and Joseph Warton wrote identically titled poems. Austen would have been familiar with both these authors partly through her edition of Robert Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*. In her short poem Austen twice repeats the phrase 'Myrtle Grove', lampooning the repetitiveness and lack of invention within much poetic imagery. Collins, for example, had used 'Myrtles shed' in his own 'Ode to Pity', and in Dodsley's *Poems* imagery of myrtle appears at least 26 times, including George Lyttelton's image in 'To My Lord —' of 'fragrant groves of myrtle'. Austen ironically refers to the 'Lovely Scenes' of 'The hut, the Cot, the Grot'. She shortens cottage to 'Cot' and grotto to 'Grot' in order to create half-

rhyme monosyllables with the blunt alliteration of six repeated 'T' sounds, which amusingly suggests aurally they are too squashed and overcrowded. The drum-like rhythm creates an impression of monotonous recurrence. In this Austen is joshing such writers as Warton who had piled images of ruins precariously on top of one another; of 'charnels and the house of woe, | To Gothic churches, vaults, and tombs'. Warton had written of 'some Abby's mould'ring tow'rs', which Austen undercuts by rendering as 'the Abbey too a mouldering heap'; 'heap' being humourously bathetic compared to 'tow'rs'. Elsewhere, Austen ironically highlights the preposterousness of some poetry. In 'Sweetly noisy falls the Silent Stream' she mocks the absurdity of nonsensical imagery. How can a stream be both 'noisy' and 'Silent'? She uses a similarly paradoxical image in juxtaposing 'Gently brawling'.

'Ode to Pity' is an affectionate pastiche of gothic literature. Austen's early interest in other literature is also apparent in her later novels; not only overtly in Catherine's adventures in *Northanger Abbey*, but in other more subtle scenes. In *Mansfield Park*, when the Bertrams visit Sotherton's chapel, for example, Fanny had been prepared for something fantastically gothic. Instead she is 'disappointed', whispering to Edmund, 'This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be "blown by the night wind of heaven". No signs that a "Scottish monarch sleeps below"'. Fanny quotes Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*:

Full many a scutcheon and banner, riven,
Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven,
Around the screened altar's pale ...
They sate them down on a marble stone
(A Scottish monarch slept below)

In having Fanny quote another text, Austen is directly linking literature with power over the imagination, whilst simultaneously suggesting that literature has a presence even in moments of lived experience. We see this again in the next chapter when Maria, with 'a feeling of restraint and hardship', remarks 'I cannot get out, as the starling said', referring to Laurence Sterne's caged starling. Within the novel these scenes are poignant and sad for the characters, but Austen is playing with readers' knowledge of literature in both instances. In the preface, Scott describes the 'inhabitants' of his poem as 'living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike', which might also describe the relationships within Austen's novel. Maria's reference to Sterne foreshadows the disaster that follows. The reader should remember that Sterne's narrator encountering the starling pledges 'I'll let thee out, cost what it will', which perfectly encapsulates Henry Crawford's 'releasing' of Maria.

From her earlier compositions to her later masterpieces, we can see that Austen engages with other texts to form part of her own texts' meanings. It is through appreciating the metatextual networks of meaning which Austen creates that we experience just a small part of her genius.



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i See Jane Austen, 'Love and Freindship' Letter 8th, *Catharine and Other Writings*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray (1993), p.84. Sheridan's *The Critic: or, a Tragedy Rehearsed*, which was first performed in 1779, has a stage direction in Act 3 scene 1 in which a mother, son, and the figure of justice 'faint alternately in each other's arms' (*The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. Cecil Price, 2 vols. (1973), vol.2, p.541). In Richardson's novel, first published in 1740, Pamela can hardly move for fainting; in Letter 15, for example, she 'fainted away again' (Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded, ed. Peter Sabor (1980), p.64).

ii 'Ode to Pity', *Catharine and Other Writings*, pp.70-71, p.70.

iii David Selwyn, *The Poetry of Jane Austen and the Austen Family* (1997), p.78.

iv Robert Dodsley, *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By Several Hands* (1758). We know Austen had this book as she had to sell her copy of 'Dodsley's Poems' in 1801 (see Letter 37 to Cassandra, 21-22 May 1801, in Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deidre Le Faye, 3rd ed. (1995), p.88). We know too that Austen was a particular fan of Warton's from her nephew's poem written in memory of his recently deceased aunt, which includes the line 'The Warton whom she loved' and occurs in connection with other notable persons, besides Austen, buried in Winchester Cathedral. The poem is inscribed 'Edward Austen on the death of his aunt Miss Austen the author' dated 'Sunday September 28th 1817' (see George Holbert Tucker, *Jane Austen the Woman: Some Biographical Insights* (1994), p.140; and James Edward Austen-Leigh, *Fugitive Pieces: Trifles Light as Air*, ed. David Selwyn (2006), p.58). Austen may well have encountered Warton personally, he was a prominent personage in the Hampshire of Austen's youth and was a clergyman in the same diocese as Austen's father. Incidentally, in the 1740s Warton had been curate of Chawton, the village to which Austen would relocate in 1809.

v Lines 2 and 11.

vi William Collins, 'Ode to Pity', line 19, in *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects* (1747), pp.1-4, p.3. George Lyttelton, 'To My Lord —', line 14, in Dodsley, *Poems*, vol.2, pp.49-52, p.50.

vii Lines 12 and 13.

viii Warton, 'Ode to Fancy', lines 66-67, which was printed in Dodsley's *Poems*, vol.3, pp.126-132, p.129.

ix 'Ode to Fancy', line 71; 'Ode to Pity', line 14.

x Line 9.

xi Line 8.

xii Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* [vol.1, ch.9], ed. June Sturrock (2003), p.110.

xiii Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* [canto 2, stanza 10 and 12] (1805), pp.41-43.

xiv *Mansfield Park* [vol.1, ch.10], p.123. Maria is alluding to: 'I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage.—"I can't get out—I can't get out", said the starling' (Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, 2 vols. (1768), vol.2, p.24).

xv *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, [p.i].

xvi *Sentimental Journey*, vol.2, p.25.

Women Writers Remembered

HERE AT CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY, we of course take a keen interest in the variety of ways that early women writers are celebrated and memorialised. Earlier this year, we were delighted to hear that one of the writers in our collection, Mary Wollstonecraft, is to have a street named after her in London. This is as a result of a competition launched back in 2013 which asked members of the public to come up with names for 10 new streets being created at King's Cross. The response was overwhelming, with over 10,000 entries pouring in from the local area, and from all over the world. The selection process took two years and considered not just

the popularity of entries, but their relevance, local resonance, and reflection of the area's rich history. Wollstonecraft Street was the first of these names to be chosen.

Many early women writers have links to London; one of the bestselling items in our shop is a map showing where a number of women writers lived or visited during their lifetimes. Aphra Behn is buried at Westminster Abbey, marked by a memorial slab, where Virginia Woolf, another London-based writer, urged that 'all women ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn'. Virginia Woolf herself is commemorated with plaques at a number of

locations in London where she lived, including her birthplace.

The London blue plaque scheme is the oldest such scheme in the world, dating back to 1866. Reading its original aims, it is not hard to see why women writers were for many years so neglected by the history books, as women's achievements and contributions generally were simply ignored, the Society of Arts (later Royal Society of Arts) declaring the aim of the blue plaques being 'to increase the public estimation for places which have been the abodes of men who have made England what it is'. Ten years later, the Society put up its first plaque to a



Award-winning writer and activist, Gloria Steinem, poses with a replica Mary Wollstonecraft plaque made especially for her by Chawton House Library Founder Dr Sandy Lerner OBE.

woman, the actress Sarah Siddons (1783?-1850), although the house has since been demolished. Hearteningly, the oldest surviving plaque to a woman is for one of the writers in our collection, Frances Burney (1752-1840), erected in 1885, although it is telling that its inscription gives much greater prominence to her married name, Madame D'Arblay, and thus her status as a wife, than it does to the name by which the public had first known her as a writer.

In the years since the blue plaque scheme started there have been a number of initiatives to redress the glaring gender imbalance among the plaques, including as far back as 1907 when Laurence Gomme (1853-1916), the Clerk of the Council, having noted the inequity, wrote a paper on 'Notable Women' and presented it to the Council's Historical Records and Library Sub-Committee in 1907. As a result, plaques were put up for Jenny Lind, Madame Goldschmidt (1820-1887), the singer known as 'The Swedish Nightingale', the writer Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) and Mary Somerville (1780-1872) a writer on science and mathematics (the latter was sadly lost through demolition in 1968).

Other women writers recognised by the blue plaque scheme include George Eliot, Mary Wollstonecraft, and her daughter Mary Shelley. It is perhaps no surprise that Jane Austen, soon to be commemorated on the £10 note, has numerous plaques commemorating her in different locations around the country, including not only places where she lived but also places where she briefly stayed! Under the Greater London Council, which ran the scheme from 1965-1986, a number of campaigners for women's rights and education were recognised, including Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960), Emily Davies (1830-1921) and Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929), and also a leading male campaigner for women's suffrage, Henry Noel Brailsford (1873-1958).

Even today, women's representation in such schemes is not without controversy. The introduction of Jane Austen on the £10 note came only after a challenge of discrimination made by Caroline Criado Perez OBE to the Bank of England, for removing the one woman (Elizabeth Fry) previously featured on banknotes, and in 2014, two members of the blue plaque panel (one male and one female) resigned following Heritage England appointing a slew of new members who were all male and all white, arguing that the new appointees were neither expert nor representative. There is an ongoing campaign to have Mary Wollstonecraft recognised with a memorial statue at Newington Green, where she lived and set up a school for girls. In the 'Mary on the Green campaign' video, it is noted that although London has thousands of memorials to the great and the good, more than 90% of them are male.

The late Tony Benn, a member of parliament for 47 years, once complained about the House of Commons 'if one walks around this place, one sees statues of people, not one of whom believed in democracy, votes for women or anything else', and in response, he secretly erected a plaque within a broom cupboard to commemorate Emily Wilding Davison hiding there on the night of the 1911 census so that she could give her address as 'the House of Commons' and thus make her claim to the same political rights as men. This subversive plaque, which remains there today, is testament to the women who throughout history have refused to be silenced and the women – and men – who continue to celebrate them and follow their example. Chawton House Library, in its commitment to promoting early women writers and their work, is proud to be part of this legacy.

Thank you to our dear Friends

WE'RE ALL THRILLED THAT our new Friends scheme has been so well received – especially our new and wonderful quill pins. It has undoubtedly helped encourage more people to become Friends of Chawton House Library and has also encouraged some of our existing, loyal Friends to kindly increase their level of support.

All our Friends are, of course, vitally important to us – both in terms of individual donations to our cause and in becoming champions of Chawton House Library and so helping to introduce new supporters to us. All our Friends help ensure that the work of women writers, neglected for far too long, continues to be discovered and treasured long into the future as a lasting legacy of Chawton House Library.

We would like to record our special thanks here in *The Female Spectator* to those lifetime friends who are supporting us by becoming members of our *Bluestocking Circle*.

The Bluestocking Circle

(£3,000 / \$5,000 minimum donation)

Susan Carlile
Sue Forgeue
Gina King
Laurie Kaplan
Norbert Schürer
Lady Stringer

One of our October Visiting Fellows, Thomas Tyrrell, a graduate student at the University of Cardiff, wrote this beautiful 'country house' poem inspired by his time here at Chawton House Library, which we would like to share:

Of Chawton's splendour who could tell
But old Ben Jonson or Marvell?
But since I've yet a little wit
I'll write a line in praise of it.
Can all these volumes not diffuse
The inspiration of the muse
Into my weak late coming pen?
Alas, if it must be so, then
I'll call on Austen! She whose *Emma*
Delights with every false dilemma;
No novel gives the reader bliss
Quite like her *Pride and Prejudice*!
Yet - all must own it - he who sifts
Her works, and pays to all her gifts
Their just and rightful honours, knows
Those gifts far less in verse than prose.
Yet who could call them useless, while
They pleased her friends, or raised a smile
On her beloved Cassandra's face?
To raise a titter or to trace
A smile, no better and no worse
Is all I hope for from this verse.

Fruitful October's been and gone
And drear November's drawing on
At Chawton House, so much renowned
For wholesome air and fertile ground
As every fruit tree here evinces,
Weighed down with apples, pears and quinces.
Though roses droop and leaves may fall
Before the threat of frost and squall,
From every pamphlet, every tome
A harvest has been gathered home,
From every essay, poem and story:
And still the grounds are in their glory
Of gold and brown and yellow green
And mixtures hardly sung or seen.

To stroll amid the wilderness
And see the woods in autumn dress
Adds a fresh pleasure to the store:
Then back unto the house once more!
For there are concerts to applaud
Upon the polished harpsichord,
And morning light that gilds and graces
The panelled rooms and fireplaces,
And portraits splendid in their frames
Of gay coquettes and haughty dames,
And Knights of centuries gone by
Who gaze with an approving eye.

Plush window seats, where I am certain
To hide behind th'embroidered curtain
And read for hours like Jane Eyre
Or even - dare I? - take the chair
Where Austen used to sit and write.
There is no end to my delight,
For there are shelves and stacks and hoards
Of Books en dishabille in boards,
Or paperbacks - pert springy nippers,
Or grave octavos in their slippers,
Or volumes - 3 or 4 together
All bound in fine Morocco leather,
Where hardbacked critics - bold young turks -
Vie with august collected works
To entertain me with their art:
How sad that they and I must part!

Did You Know?

THIS 1805 EDITION OF *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog* is the first time the rhyme appeared in print, although it is thought to have existed previously as a simpler children's rhyme. Written and illustrated by Sarah Catherine Martin (1768-1826) the book was an immediate best seller. Little is known about the author but, intriguingly, records show that Prince William Henry (later to be King William IV) fell in love with her when she was 17. The 'unequal' match not considered possible, the lovers were separated, the Prince describing her in a letter to her father as 'the best of womankind'.



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