The Female Spectator.

VOL.3 No.2, 2017

New and improved series

Reimagining Jane's 'Great House'

See us through to the next chapter…

Chawton House Library is currently at a pivotal moment in its 25-year history. Following the announcement by our Founding Patron, Dr. Sandy Lerner OBE, that she was stepping down from the Board of Trustees last year, the Charity is currently undertaking a strategic review, with a clear focus on reshaping the organisation and creating resilience. Through the Bosack Kruger Foundation, Dr. Lerner supported Chawton House Library with approximately 65% of its operating costs but, now that this relationship is coming to an end in four months, we face both significant challenges, and exciting possibilities.

The overarching ambition is to create a cultural literary destination within the wider grounds of Chawton House – known to Jane Austen and her family as the 'Great House'. This will offer larger and more extensive visitor facilities and improved interpretation. It will provide an enhanced experience of the Chawton estate that was Jane Austen's home throughout the final, productive years of her life, and continue to promote the women writers who inspired her. In turn, the revenue from these increased commercial activities will continue to support the education and research programmes, with the aim of inspiring future generations of readers and writers.

To achieve our ambitions, Chawton House Library is asking supporters to help keep our house and library going during a development phase, whilst progress is made on the planning and launch of a major capital project, *Reimagining Jane Austen's 'Great House'*. We will be launching a number of fundraising and awareness-raising activities as part of this campaign, the first of which has already begun: #TheDarcyLook.

To take part or to donate, please visit our website at www.chawtonhouselibrary.org, call 01420 541010, or text JANE03 £3 to 70070. For more information about the campaign, please visit www.janesgreathouse.org, or you can keep informed via our social media sites on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Fickle Fortunes: Jane Austen and Germaine de Staël

On 12 June, our new exhibition opened at Chawton House Library, celebrating the life and works of two remarkable women, and reflecting on their shifting reputations in the 200 years since they died.

Four days before Jane Austen's death, the renowned writer, essayist and salonnière Germaine de Staël passed away in Paris on 14 July 1817. She was mourned by Europe. Just a week later, news of her death reached Winchester, the city where Austen spent her final months, when it was reported in *The Hampshire Chronicle* that 'The celebrated Madame de Stael [*sic*]died at Paris.'

It was the relatively unknown Austen, however, not Staël, who went on to become globally celebrated. This summer, Austen will join Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare as the only writers to have featured on English banknotes, when she appears on the ten pound note. The bicentenary of her death has seen a wealth of events and activities across England to mark the continuing fascination with Britain's best-loved woman writer, from talks and television shows, to art installations and immersive re-enactments.

These two very different writers were aware of one another in their own lifetimes. Austen recommended Staël's novel *Corinne, ou L'Italie* to one of her acquaintance, whilst Staël was less complimentary about Austen, dismissing *Pride and Prejudice* as 'vulgaire'. However, the two share more than just an unequal appreciation of one another. The exhibition at Chawton House Library, curated by Dr. Gillian Dow, examines Jane Austen and Germaine de Staël side by side, exploring what connects these two women as well as what distinguishes them from one another. Using rare first editions, alongside paintings, manuscripts, letters, modern editions and merchandise, the exhibition and its objects map out the strange reversals in the reputations of these two writers, which saw Staël fade from view whilst Austen grew in fame.

Accompanying the exhibition cases are sculptures and engravings that form part of 'Inspired by the Word', a multi-venue visual arts exhibition by contemporary artists, to celebrate the literature of Hampshire writers, including Austen.

'Fickle Fortunes: Jane Austen and Germaine de Staël' will run from 12 June to 24 September 2017. ●

This exhibition would not have been possible without the financial support of the University of Southampton and the Friends of the National Libraries. Thanks also go to the University of Oxford, the National Library of Scotland, Catriona Seth, Janine Barchas, Sandra Clark, Huw Prall, Anna Hilditch, David Giles, Deborah Barnum, the University of Aberystwyth, the Jane Austen House Museum and Deborah Barnum for donating or loaning items for this exhibition.

Who was Germaine de Staël?

'Bonaparte had persecuted her in such a way that it was said there were three powers in Europe: England, Russia and Madame de Staël.'
Victorine de Chastenay, *Memoirs 1771-1815* (1896)

'Exile made me lose the roots which tied me to Paris and I have become European.'
Germaine de Staël, letter to Mme de Berg (May 1814)

Germaine de Staël (1766-1817) was born into a Swiss family who lived in France. Her mother, Suzanne Necker (née Curchod) held salons that certainly taught her much about the art of hosting from an early age. But she also had literary aspirations. She wrote her first play at just 12 years old. Her father, a French statesman, disapproved of women writing, and so she was forced to hide her 'masculine' aspirations from him.

Staël went on to become a European celebrity, known for her famous salons in Paris and Coppet (Switzerland), and for her diverse writings on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the trial of Marie-Antoinette, revolutionary politics, and suicide. She wrote two highly influential novels – *Delphine* (1802), and *Corinne, or Italy* (1807). Translations of both novels made their way to England quickly, and were read, enjoyed or critiqued by writers including Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, and Maria Edgeworth.

Corinne incorporates political commentary, descriptions of Italy and its arts, and reflections on national identity, but is also a love story - the tale of a doomed love affair between Scottish nobleman Oswald, Lord Nelvil, and talented Italian artist and performer Corinne. Staël's heroine captured the imagination of many subsequent women writers. Felicia Hemans, for example, opens her 1827 poem 'Corinne at the Capitol' with the following lines about the heroine's genius:

'DAUGHTER of th' Italian heaven!
Thou, to whom its fires are given…'

Despite the praise of Corinne, the poem ultimately extols the virtues of domestic femininity in contrast to the sort of public life that Corinne led. Staël herself was painted as Corinne by the famed portrait artist Vigée le Brun in 1807 [above left]. Unfortunately, neither were happy with the result. Although le Brun had done her best to capture a look of inspiration on her subject's face, Staël was obviously displeased. She refused to display it at her Salon, and had it repainted by Swiss painter Firmin Massot shortly after, in a manner more in accordance with contemporary fashions and beauty standards.

The French Revolution, a notorious rivalry with Napoleon Bonaparte, and a lifelong interest in politics and travel meant that Staël existed in a state of exile, frequently moving from place to place. During the French revolution, Staël came to stay in Surrey in England, where she met Frances Burney but she returned to France after the Terror. She was banished by Napoleon in 1803, and came to settle at the Château de Coppet in Switzerland. At Coppet, she entertained frequent visitors, but she also traveled widely, visiting Weimar, Berlin, Milan, Rome, Naples, Florence, Bologna, Padua, Pisa, Venice, Vienna, Brno, Moscow and Stockholm.

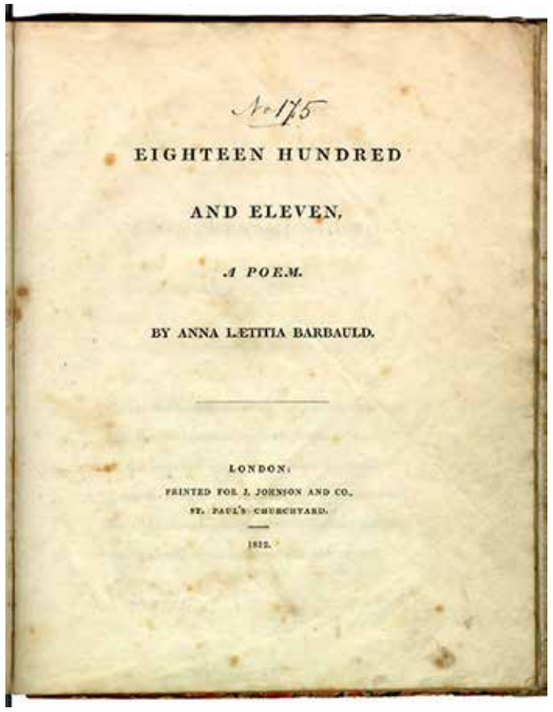
Austen moved four times in her life, within an 80-mile radius, whereas Staël travelled widely in Europe.

The struggle with Napoleon continued, however. In 1810, in the middle of printing, Staël's comparison of northern and southern literary traditions, *L'Allemagne*, was pulped by the French Emperor, who suppressed it because of its sympathy to Germany. John Murray, who published Jane Austen and Lord Byron, went on to publish *L'Allemagne* three years later, using a set of proofs that Staël had hidden. He reissued the French original and an English translation in 1813, and paid Staël 1,500 guineas for the book.

Staël's home in Coppet became the site of many pilgrimages for other writers, although her increasing fame and her love affairs meant that she was not seen as altogether proper company for ladies. Staël had been married to diplomat Baron Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, but it was a marriage of convenience and they had separated by 1797. Burney was reluctant to renew her acquaintance with Staël when she had the chance in 1802 and Jane Austen's brother reported in 1833 that Jane had also refused to meet Staël.. In her own words, Staël was 'condemned to celebrity without being known.' ●

Ghostly Conversations in the Upper Reading Room:

Researching *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest and Economic Crisis*



E. J. Clery is a Professor of English at the University of Southampton, and a former Visiting Fellow at Chawton House Library. In this article, she writes about her new book on Anna Letitia Barbauld's poem *Eighteenth Hundred and Eleven*.

It began on a dark day in November with a conversation between three women in the upper reading room at Chawton House Library. The book open on my desk was an 1826 edition of *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, with a Memoir written by Lucy Aikin, published in New York soon after the appearance of the first British edition. Lucy Aikin had quickly published the two-volume work in the year of her aunt's death on 9 March 1825. It got a good deal of attention at the time, for Barbauld was a famous author, a household name. She achieved celebrity as a poet in the 1770s, going on to become an innovative writer for children and a campaigner for the abolition of slavery, political rights for religious Non-Conformists, and (my particular interest) an end to the war with France. Barbauld argued, along with other peace protesters, that the British government's war policy was bringing about the economic ruin of the country. This is what Lucy Aikin had to say about Barbauld's anti-war poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, which aroused a storm of vilification in the Tory press when it came out in the Spring of 1812:

'This was the last of Mrs. Barbauld's separate publications. Who indeed, that knew and loved her, could have wished her to expose again that honoured head to the scorns of the unmanly, the malignant and the base? Her fancy was still in all its brightness; her spirits might have been cheered and her energy revived, by the cordial and respectful greetings, the thanks and plaudits, with which it was once the generous and graceful practice of contemporary criticism to welcome the re-appearance of a well-deserving veteran of the field of letters. As it was, though still visited by
….the thoughts that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers,
She for the most part confined to a few friends all participating in the strains which they inspired. She even laid aside the intention which she had entertained of preparing a new edition of her Poems, long out of print and often enquired for in vain; – well knowing that a day must come when the sting of Envy would be blunted, and her memory would have its fame.'
No incident worthy of mention henceforth occurred to break the uniformity of her existence…'

Until very recently this account of the end of Barbauld's career was accepted as objective truth. But critics such as Devoney Looser, Michelle Levy, and Barbauld's biographer and editor William McCarthy (all of them visitors to Chawton House Library) have subsequently shown that she did in fact continue to publish works in the aftermath. Nevertheless, evidence of the state of mind in which she published and her response to the attacks has remained elusive.

In the summer of 2009, the year following the global financial crash, I'd delivered a paper 'Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and the Regency Credit Crunch' at the biennial conference of the British Association of Romantic Studies. It was an uncanny experience. My session was held in the Portrait Room in Grove House, built in the late eighteenth century and now part of Roehampton University. Works belonging to the original owner lining the wood-panelled walls. Among them was a portrait of Benjamin Goldsmid – the name arrested me. Abraham Goldsmid was one of the leading British financiers in the period of the Napoleonic wars, whose suicide in 1810, following the threat of bankruptcy, had shaken the Stock Exchange. Editors of Barbauld's poem identified this Goldsmid as the inspiration for the lines:

'…that sad death, whence most affection bleeds,
Which sickness, only of the soul, precedes.'

The name 'Goldsmid' was uncommon. Could this be a relation of Abraham, positioned as if he were a member of the audience to hear my first speculative efforts to expand on the economic context of the poem? So it transpired. Benjamin Goldsmid was in fact the brother and business partner of Abraham, and had built the mansion at Roehampton on profits from government loans.

In the autumn of 2011 I was due for a sabbatical. Chawton House Library had granted me a residential fellowship. I was planning to write up the paper on Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as an article. This aim had been enshrined in my 'Research Excellence Framework' planning document. I had three months to pull it together in the compact form of an 8000-word essay, along with one or two other 'objectives'. Yet there was something about the mood of Chawton House Library in late autumn that dispelled ideas of corporate efficiency. Melancholy, reflective, and at the same time expansive: the long rows of books on open shelving held out infinite possibilities. The stories, the flights of imagination, of so many women writers long deceased and almost forgotten, waiting to be rediscovered and reappraised; the fragmentary traces of their lives asking to be pieced together. The most remarkable part of working in the reading room at Chawton House Library is the power of serendipity, the accidental findings, the chance conversations of interlocutors living, and dead.

I got up and browsed a shelf of critical and biographical works in a corner of the room. Outside the window looking southwards over the open fields of the Chawton estate, night was drawing in. I opened a curious little volume, *Letters of Maria Edgeworth and Anna Letitia Barbauld Selected from the Lushington Papers*, published in 1953. Back at my desk, I eavesdropped delightedly on the literary chitchat of two centuries past. In particular I was gripped by an exchange of letters in 1810, the year before Barbauld began composing her most political poem. Barbauld was in the course of preparing Edgeworth's novel Belinda for inclusion in a new edited collection, *The British Novelists*. They discussed revisions, including some Edgeworth was making in response to criticism of her inclusion of an inter-racial marriage. Barbauld remarks rather pointedly of her niece Lucy Aikin's recently published Epistles on Women:

'Have you read my Niece's Poem? … She begins to feel a little of the trepidation about the Reviews, very natural in a young author, but you, my dear Miss Edgeworth, I hope, feel yourself quite above them. You cannot be judged by them, they may be judged by their strictures upon you.'

This was fascinating: not only did it suggest that Barbauld was relatively immune to criticism in the press, but it also indicates that Lucy Aikin was prone to sensitivity regarding hostile reviews. I began to see Aikin's comments on the reception of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as part of ongoing discussions in the Barbauld circle about what was in effect the trolling of women writers. Lucy Aikin's words about the devastating effect on her aunt might have more to do with her personal feelings than with Barbauld's attitude.

In the same letter Barbauld referred to a negative review of one of *Edgeworth's new Tales of Fashionable Life*. The Quarterly Review, a new conservative periodical set up to counter the influence of the liberal *Edinburgh Review*, accused Edgeworth of failing to uphold religious morality. Barbauld says that when she saw this critique she couldn't 'help venting a little of it, as much as I thought would do good, in a paper, which perhaps you saw in the Gentleman's Magazine.' This shone a new light on Barbauld's own case, and her likely reaction to the notoriously savage review of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in the *Quarterly Review*. It revealed that she had already targeted the *Quarterly* previously as an ideological adversary. Above all, I was electrified by her final words to Edgeworth on the subject: *Write on, shine out, and defy them.*' Here, surely was the starting-point for a complete re-evaluation of the spirit in which Barbauld had written the poem. What if stirring up controversy had been her deliberate intention? At that moment, the planned 8000-word article became a book project and a mission.

I owe thanks to my departmental head at University of Southampton for encouragement to take the gamble of writing a monograph on a single poem by a woman writer little-known today, to the Leverhulme Trust for providing the research leave to complete it, and to the readers and series editors of Cambridge University Press 'Studies in Romanticism' for agreeing to publish it. I give special thanks to the director and staff at Chawton House Library, for creating the space and the stimulus for an enterprise of this kind. Many other book projects have been launched or developed in the same setting. Since the Library opened in 2003, it has become a unique forum of thinking and talking about the early history of women's writing, and restoring female authors to their rightful place in the records. ●

E.J. Clery's publications include *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800*(1995), *Women's Gothic from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (2000), and *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England* (2004). She has also recently published *Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister* (Biteback), and will be giving a talk on this book at Chawton House Library on 28 September. She broadcasts and lectures on Gothic, Jane Austen and her contemporaries, book history and the cultural history of economics, and lives in Winchester.

[1] Lucy Aikin, 'Memoir', *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld. With a Memoir*, 2 vols. (London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), I, i-li.
[2] Anna Letitia Le Breton, *Memoir* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1874), 144.

Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809). Portrait by John Opie (c. 1782)

Notes on a Manuscript Melodrama

Former Visiting Fellow Grace Harvey is a PhD student at the University of Lincoln, working on Charlotte Smith. Here, she writes about an exciting discovery made in the reading rooms at Chawton.

'She was called down by one of the servants on the arrival of a party of strangers – she rushed into the room breathless and with a pen in her hand. "Ah! my God!" said she – "have the kindness to excuse me I have left my heroine in my hero's arms and I must fly to relieve them" […] She was found missing one morning – sought for and pursued – She has run away with a gentleman and all the account she could give of him was that he wore a green coat.'

The eccentric 'she' that Mary Shelley's step-sister Claire Clairmont refers to here is Fanny Holcroft, a nineteenth-century poet, playwright and novelist who, despite her relatively obscure status, was part of a rich network of writers throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though her work remains on the margins of the canon, it shouldn't surprise any reader of *The Female Spectator* to learn that Holcroft has found her home at Chawton House Library; one of her manuscripts found in the archives has proven to be of consequence to the recovery of her life and her works.

Any attempt to think about Fanny Holcroft's life and work is immediately stifled by the sheer lack of definitive biography; Clairmont's journal is one of only a handful of documents that tell us about her, and only a few of Holcroft's own letters that survive. Clairmont reveals Holcroft to be eccentric, headstrong, and committed to her writing, while others refer to her as 'stoic' and 'docile', but with an 'irrational disposition'. Though only a few scholars have attempted to piece together Holcroft's life, all accounts reiterate and celebrate her eccentricities and independence. What we lack in 'concrete evidence' about her life is made up for by the growing efforts to reconstruct her position in the canon.

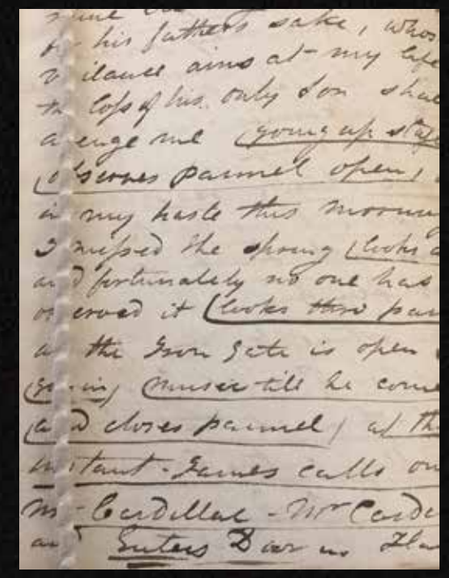
In short biographies of Holcroft, Andrew Ashfield and Gary Kelly note that she was most likely born in 1780 and died in 1844, and that she was the daughter of Thomas Holcroft, a radical writer who was indicted in the 1794 Treason Trials. Indeed, most of what we do know about Holcroft can be traced back to her father. By the end of the 1790s she was acting as Thomas's amanuensis (i.e. scribe), and she utilised this role to integrate herself in his radical and literary networks. While she copied letters for her father, Holcroft added postscripts to his letters, most notably to William Godwin. These short notes allowed Fanny to foster her own friendships and broaden her networks - she was as known for her links to the writer Charles Lamb and the actress Frances Kelly as she was to her father's friends.

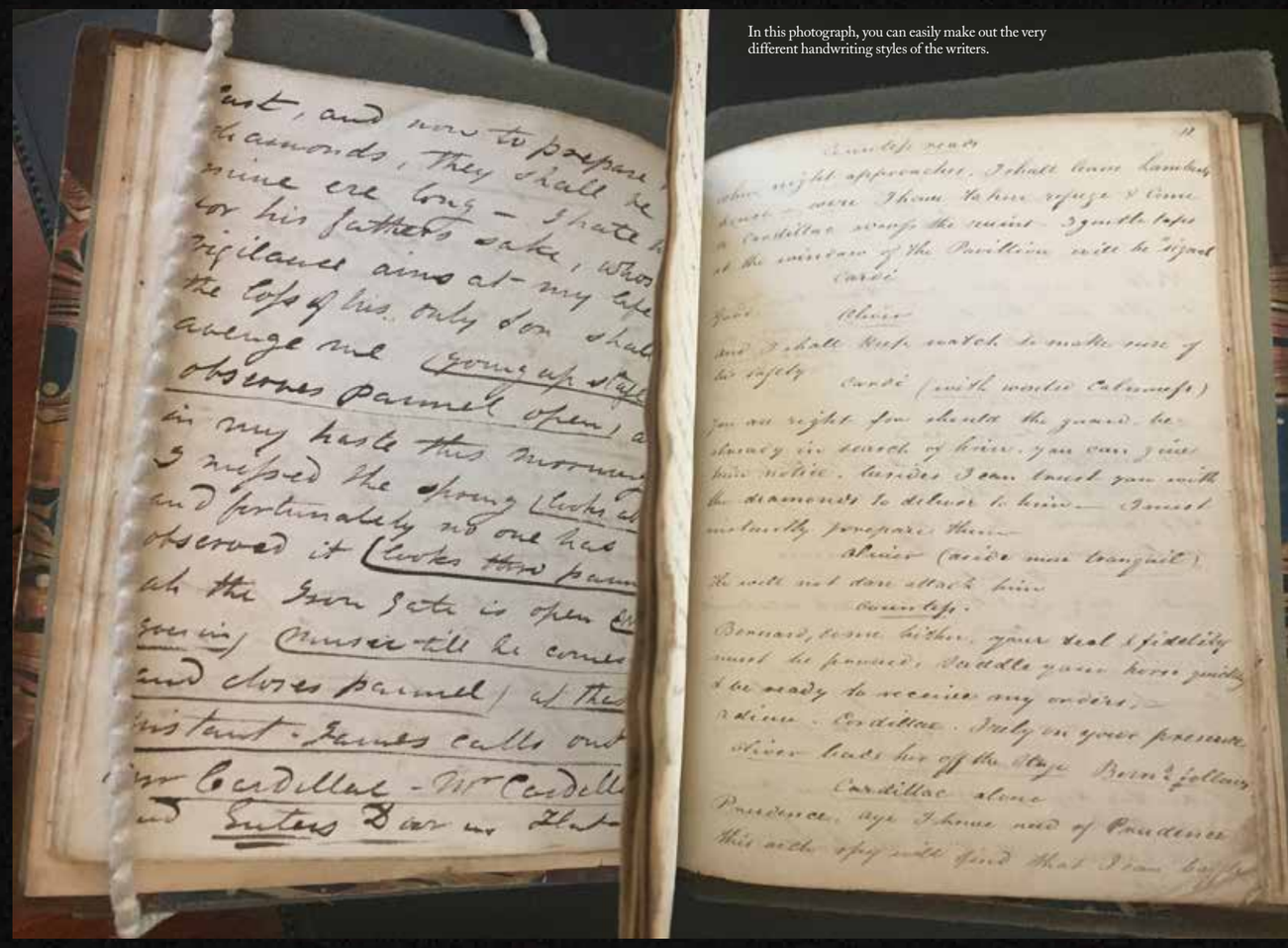
Yet, though she invariably benefited from a series of introductions made by her father, as well as the rich education he ensured she received, Holcroft was a talented writer and her achievements were the product of merit, not merely networks. Gary Kelly lists her extensive talents: much like her father, she was a translator, poet, novelist, playwright, and was also rumoured to be an excellent musician too. She published a series of poems, most notably 'The Negro', in the *Monthly Magazine* between 1797 and 1803, although these were never reproduced as a collection. Holcroft went on to publish two novels, *The Wife and the Lover: a Novel* (1813), and *Fortitude and Frailty* (1817). She dedicated the latter to her father, who had died in 1809. She also wrote a melodrama, *Goldsmith*, which was first performed in 1827.

In addition to her short postscripts to Godwin, Clairmont's musings, and other snippets from Charles Lamb and Thomas's Holcroft, the Pforzheimer Collection at the New York Public Library features an undated letter written by Fanny Holcroft to an unknown recipient. On the face of it, the letter seems to be a dead end; we don't know who it is to, or when it was written. It does not seem to be saying much at all either. Holcroft writes to tell the recipient of one Mr Kelly's recent publication. This possibly refers to Michael Kelly, the uncle of Holcroft's friend Frances Kelly. Beyond these fragments, however, there is little to further corroborate or develop our picture of Holcroft.

My work at Chawton last autumn was principally interested in Charlotte Smith's radical and pedagogical writings, and it was only through a misdirected search of the Chawton catalogue that I stumbled upon the *Goldsmith* manuscript. The manuscript is, as far as my research can tell, the only surviving manuscript potentially penned by Holcroft. Owing to Holcroft's obscurity, there are only a handful of details relating to its journey to Chawton, but there is plenty we can learn about both *Goldsmith* and Holcroft.

Goldsmith was first performed in the summer of 1827 at Haymarket, and there is some evidence to suggest it was performed elsewhere. It is a relatively short melodrama, comprised of only two acts, but the manuscript itself provides certain clues as to the writing process. It is written in two hands, but the lack of other examples makes it difficult to ascertain which, or even if, either of these hands is Holcroft's. Indeed, if one is Holcroft's, then we need to ask who the other belongs to, and what processes of collaboration were at play in the writing of *Goldsmith*. Whilst these questions are necessarily difficult to answer, the manuscript serves as a reminder of the necessity of a more urgent consideration of Holcroft's life and writing. ●





In this photograph, you can easily make out the very different handwriting styles of the writers.

Engraving of 'The Indian Emperor' (1792) by Robert Dodd, from a painting by William Hogarth

Drama in the Drawing Room; or, Frances Burney is Huncamunca!

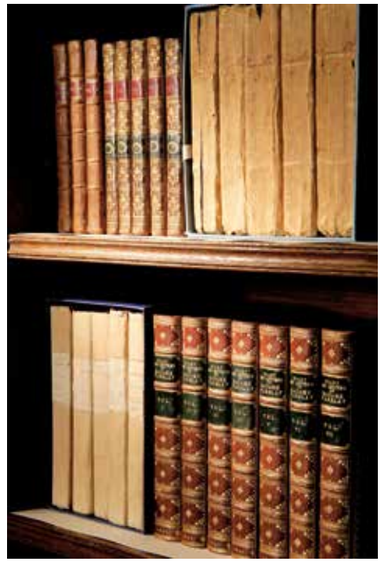
In Austen's *Mansfield Park*, the Bertram family rehearse, but ultimately do not perform Elizabeth Inchbald's translation of Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows*. This is just one contemporary depiction of a pan-European vogue for play-acting and the theatre. Karin Kukkonen, an Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Oslo, tells us about another famous woman writer's amateur theatricals.

'The tender princess easily yields to the eloquence of her little Hero, & they are just coming to terms, when the appearance of Glumdalca interrupts them.'

On 7 April 1777, Frances Burney writes to her sister Susan about a theatrical performance in the household of the Burney family. In their version of Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1730), Burney herself acts the part of the 'tender princess' Huncamunca, while her niece Anna Maria Burney, excels in the role of the 'little Hero' Tom Thumb. Anna Maria Burney, then six years old, writes that Burney spoke her lines 'with a pathos that was astonishing'.

When you read through Frances Burney's diaries and journal letters, running over more than twenty volumes in the Oxford edition, it is striking how often Burney and her family take to the stage. You come across Burney, her half-sister Maria Allen and their friend Jane Barsanti (who would go on to become a professional actress) raiding their brother's closet for the costume of a male protagonist and producing play bills in their neatest handwriting. A nervous Burney enters the stage in the play *The Way to Keep Him* (1760), where she is supposed to deliver the first lines, fumbles and has to start over again. On another occasion a young man referred to as 'Tarquin', after the role he enacts in a play, enquires delicately after an adolescent Burney. Burney and her family visited the theatre regularly and cultivated friends such as the actor David Garrick and the playwright Arthur Murphy, but they also produced and performed so-called amateur theatricals for their own enjoyment.

The characters in Burney's novels also have a liking for the dramatical, which they pursue in their frequent visits to the theatre from *Evelina* (1778) onwards. In addition, in *Camilla* (1796), the characters discuss the possibility of amateur theatricals, and the characters in *The Wanderer* (1814) actually put on John Vanbrugh's and Colley Cibber's *The Provoked Husband* (1728). Burney gives these amateur theatricals a lively presentation in her novels, drawing on the excitement and embarrassment we can already sense in the letters on her own performances. Indeed, Ellis, the main protagonist in *The Wanderer*, comes into her own during the performance of *The Provoked Husband*.



In the letters, it becomes rather clear that Burney and her family carefully controlled these performances, rewriting and editing scenes themselves and leaving only slight potential for harmless embarrassment, such as forgetting your lines. Nowhere in the letters do we find the kinds of amateur theatricals that would lead Sir Bertram to forbid the crew at Mansfield Park from performing the play *Lovers' Vows* in Jane Austen's novel. The diaries and journal letters that Burney wrote over the almost eighty years of her life have been heavily edited by Burney and her niece Charlotte Barnett, who would go on to publish them after Burney's death in 1842. Burney and her niece wielded scissors and cut out substantial passages, so that many family secrets are irretrievably lost. These family secrets could have potentially included amateur theatricals that were more than a little embarrassing, but we have no reason to suspect that.

From the diaries and journal letters that we have emerges a lively image of the amateur theatricals in the family circle. Performances in the Burney household were much anticipated, fondly prepared and produced, and they were a place where the younger members of the household, such as Frances and Anna Maria Burney during the performance in 1777, could shine. The choice of play – Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb* – is hence surprising for this occasion. Fielding's *Tom Thumb* is a rather risqué political satire. It was one of the plays that are thought to have contributed to the introduction of the Licencing Act in 1737, which introduced pre-censorship for plays and limited theatrical performances in London to the patent theatres of Covent Garden and Haymarket. Fielding's thumb-sized hero runs through a good number of sexually suggestive dialogues with Huncamunca and her mother Glumdalca, until in a mock-tragic ending about half a dozen characters are killed off within a few lines. If Frances Burney played Huncamunca in the original version of Fielding's play, this would be truly newsworthy, given Burney's customary concern for her reputation, but plays in the eighteenth century were habitually modified to suit the needs of performances, both professional and amateur, and certainly *Tom Thumb* was no exception.

It is perhaps the relentless mockery of dramatic conventions that made *Tom Thumb*, once relieved of its more risqué notes, an attractive choice for the Burney household performance. Fielding's play spoofs the heroic and the tragic, while yet, it seems, maintaining enough pathos for Anna Maria Burney to touch the heart of her aunt. Indeed, when Frances Burney's son Alexander d'Arblay was presented at court in 1800, his repertoire, as Burney recalls it in a letter, included passages from *Tom Thumb*.

'Ha! Dogs! Arrest my Friend before my Face!
Thinkst thou Tom Thumb will swallow this Disgrace?
But let vain Cowards threaten by the Words
Tom Thumb shall show his Anger by his Sword'
(II, 2, 30-34).

One may imagine little Alexander outfitted in a uniform, with a toy-sword in his hand, declaiming these lines, and Frances Burney evokes exactly that image in letters in the early 1800s and as late as 1824. Sweet and comical as Alexander the little hero may seem to today's readers, this was also a way for Burney to remind the court that her husband, and Alexander's father, the General d'Arblay, was a military man with valuable skills in need of a new commission.

Amateur theatricals are more than simple entertainments. As recorded in diaries and letters, and represented in memoirs and novels, they offer a window into the ways in which families like the Burney's enjoyed themselves, brought drama and excitement to the living room and tailored cultural capital to their needs. ●

Edward Francisco Burney, portrait of his sister, Frances Burney (c. 1784-85)

Summer at Chawton House Library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1 As part of Regency Week, Royal School of Needlework graduate Charlotte Bailey hosted embroidery workshops.

2 At the beginning of June, Chawton House Library hosted a conference by the Independent Libraries Association. Under the banner 'Bricks, Shelves, Books and People: Building for the Future', there were talks on treasures kept in various institutions including Gladstone's Library (Gladstone's crenelated bookcases), The London Library (the *Per Nozze* collection) and the Gerald Coke Handel collection at the Foundling Museum.

3 **5** Students from the University of Southampton sample a selection of Chawton House Library's Gothic material and enjoy the gardens.

4 Chawton Village Open Gardens weekend saw our Garden Manager Andrew win third prize in the scarecrow contest for his six wives of Henry VIII, who were positioned around the wilderness.

6 Betty Schellenberg (Simon Fraser University) gave a fascinating evening lecture on literary coteries, friendship groups which circulated manuscripts in the eighteenth century.

Lost Text/Found Space: Elizabeth Inchbald

Despite the inclusion of her play *Lovers' Vows* in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Elizabeth Inchbald's theatrical repertoire has been neglected, slipping out of performance after her death and not achieving regular revivals, unlike the work of some of her male peers. This state of affairs is soon to be corrected, thanks to the work of Lost Text/Found Space. Founder and director Rebecca McCutcheon writes about reviving Inchbald.

Elizabeth Inchbald was an extraordinarily successful playwright, actor and editor in her lifetime, writing successful Drury Lane comedies and adaptations as well as novels. Her work is characterised to a degree by her underlying politics – as a close friend of William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft, Inchbald was sympathetic to humanist, radical views. It is perhaps this quality which gives a distinctly modern flavour to her writing when re-examined today. Her chosen subjects are treated with great empathy, which extends most to those characters she depicts at the margins of acceptable social life. The central characters in *Lovers' Vows* deal with illegitimate pregnancy and the shame and stigma that it bore in eighteenth-century society. Inchbald is at pains to humanise the figures that, by another author, might easily have been depicted negatively.

Within Inchbald's oeuvre there is only one tragedy, a play called *The Massacre*. I discovered it while researching Christopher Marlowe's play on the same subject at the British Library. Inchbald depicts a family, trapped in their home, attempting to escape the massacres of Huguenots by Catholics in France in 1572. Writing at the time of the Terror, during the French Revolution, there is a strong sense in the writing that Inchbald is seeking to shine a theatrical light on the atrocities which she condemned, despite her own radical politics. The play was never performed, Inchbald herself determining that it would 'never please'.

Yet working with the play as a director, I have often felt that there has never been a more appropriate moment for it. The play helps us to understand the experiences of persecuted people, the desperation it must take to pack up a bag of possessions and seek sanctuary on another shore. It depicts a vision of an England which is a noble, neighbourly refuge to people who are in need. In the figure of the mob leader, Dugas, it shows us the peril of mobs, of dog-whistle politics, and of scapegoating. And, pleasingly, in the redemptive figure of the 'judge', Glandeve, we find a resolve and an appeal to a core set of humanist beliefs which are as valuable in today's troubled times as they were in Inchbald's.

My directing process uses unusual sites and locations as a creative stimulus to offer new insights and powerful atmospheres to lost texts. In November I'll be directing *The Massacre* at Safehouse in Peckham in a new version, titled *Til We Meet in England*. ●

Lost Text/Found Space is a new London-based company founded by director and researcher Dr Rebecca McCutcheon with designer Tallulah Mason and performer Talullah Wellesley-Wesley, which engages with lost texts by women authors, relocating these texts to sites which offer new perspectives upon them, and creating engaging and moving immersive performances. For more information please visit www.RebeccaMcCutcheon.com or follow the company on Twitter @LostTFSpace

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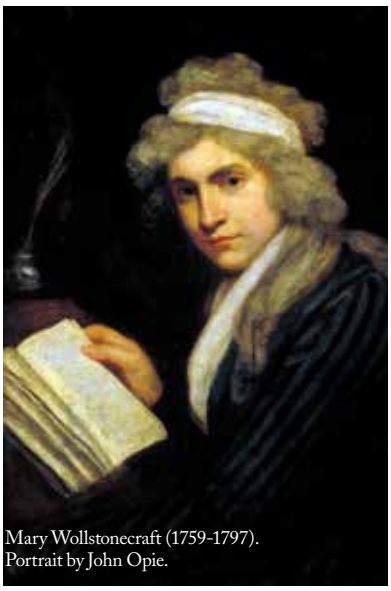
Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). Portrait by John Opie.

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A Note to Readers

Starting in 2018, *The Female Spectator* will become a yearly rather than quarterly publication. We are in the process of reconceptualising the magazine, but will of course ensure that our friends and followers are regularly kept up to date in electronic newsletters, and via our website. If you are not on our mailing list, please subscribe at www.chawtonhouselibrary.org


The original *Female Spectator* made a bold statement in its day. © *Chawton House Library*

Paying tribute to pioneering women

The Female Spectator is named after Eliza Haywood's publication of the same name, which was published from April 1744 to May 1746. Haywood's journal – which was a direct play on the existing *Spectator* founded in 1711 by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele – was widely read. Haywood was familiar with the challenges of life for women within a patriarchal system, and she wrote pragmatic advice on what kind of education women should seek, and on common difficulties such as how to avoid disastrous marriages and deal with wandering husbands.

The journal featured romantic and satiric fiction, moral essays and social and political commentary, covering everything from the craze for tea drinking and the problem of gambling, to politics, war and diplomacy, and the importance of science and natural history. ●

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