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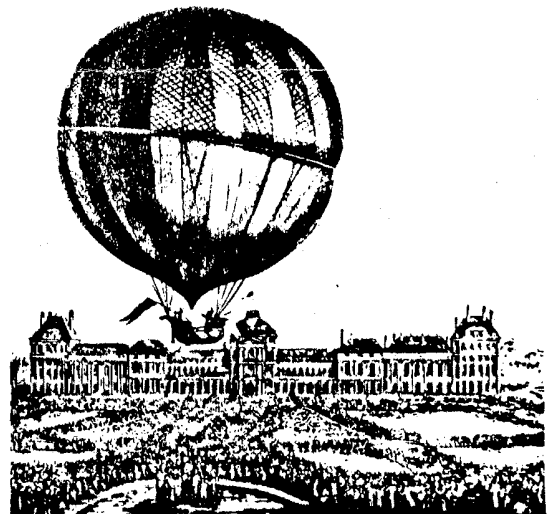
BALLOONS - Eileen Sutherland

On March 21st, two exhausted but jubilant airmen landed their craft in Egypt, after the first successful non-stop (unrefuelled) journey around the world in a balloon. The Swiss pilot, Bertrand Piccard, a grandson of an early balloonist, Auguste Piccard, and Brian Jones from Britain, spent almost three weeks in a pressurized gondola hung beneath the hot-air and helium balloon. This was the culmination of a number of attempts to make a round-the world record flight in the past few years. Bad weather, unfriendly land forces, and technical problems had troubled all other attempts in the 1980s and 1990s. By this flight, Piccard and Jones have conquered "the last, great challenge of the air," floating more than 42,000 kilometres around the earth.

Such a feat would have seemed like a miracle to the first intrepid balloonists over 200 years ago. Since the earliest civilizations, men have dreamed of flying, but any attempts with a wing-like apparatus were failures. By the 18th century, however, some inventors had the right idea - use some sort of lighter-than-air principle.

The first actual balloon that worked was made by the Montgolfier brothers in France. They realized that if they could produce a light container and fill it with a gas lighter than air, the container would rise. They first used paper globes - they were the sons of a wealthy paper manufacturer - filled with smoke (not realizing at first that it was the heat that was important, not the aroma of the smoke). But the paper globe was not airtight and they soon switched to models made of fine-woven fabric. In June 1783, they were ready to launch a balloon in public. It was held over an open fire until the air inside was heated; the cords anchoring it were cut, and the balloon rose into the air and floated for ten minutes, until the air inside cooled and it came to the ground. There was great excitement among the spectators. This type of hot air balloon was known as a Montgolfière.

The Academy of Sciences in Paris commissioned a well-known physicist, Jacques Charles, to study the subject. With Jean and Nicolas Robert, he built a model balloon (later known as a Charlière) so nearly perfect that the type is still used today.



A few years earlier, a British chemist had isolated hydrogen, and Charles decided to try using this gas. Sulphuric acid was added to iron shavings in a barrel of water and the resulting gas was fed through a tube into the balloon. The operation was expensive and difficult, but Charles eventually launched his own model balloon during a celebration in Paris. The crowd was wildly excited as the balloon rose and slowly disappeared from sight in the sky.

The fabric cover, however, was not entirely tight, and as the hydrogen escaped the balloon sank to earth near a small village. The local farmers were terrified by the "monster" which lay writhing and hissing on the ground. They attacked it with pitchforks and efficiently "killed" it. (A bottle of champagne later was taken along on manned flights, to prove to skeptical peasants that the balloonists were good Frenchmen. The custom has continued ever since.)

The rivalry between the scientists led to more and more experiments and improvements. In September 1783, the Montgolfier brothers launched a bigger and better balloon and added passengers: a rooster, a duck and a sheep were sent aloft. A grate with embers hung below the canopy to keep the air heated, but as soon as the fire went out the balloon came down to earth. The rooster suffered a broken wing, injured by the frightened sheep, but all survived.

The next step was to send aloft a human passenger. Later in 1783, Pilâtre de Rozier and a companion made the first manned flight from Paris, which lasted for 25 minutes. The balloon caught fire in a few spots, and when the passengers doused the flames with a large wet sponge they also extinguished the fire, and the balloon made a forced landing. Pilâtre de Rozier was to become another "first" - in attempting to cross the English channel in 1785, his balloon caught fire and he crashed to his death near Boulogne.

Charles determined to prove that his type of balloon also could carry passengers. Charles and Robert went aloft for the longest flight yet, over an hour, and came down amid enthusiastic cheers from the crowd. What happened next may or may not have been planned: Robert stepped out of the balloon, and without his weight it soared up again with Charles on the first solo flight. He was completely overwhelmed, and wrote of his feelings: "Nothing will ever equal that moment of joyous excitement which filled my whole being when I felt myself flying away from the earth. It was not mere pleasure; it was perfect bliss."

In the next few years, balloon ascents became more common, and inventors turned their attention to the problem of controlling the direction of the flight. Many imaginative and ingenious suggestions were made - using sails, oars, rudders, large birds - none practical or possible, but it was a splendid opportunity for caricaturists.

Balloon ascensions were staged in other countries. Blanchard introduced ballooning in Germany in 1785 and in the U.S. in 1793. In Scotland James Tytler suffered various failed attempts (a local newspaper reported that "the balloon's affection for the earth cannot be overcome") but in 1784 he was airborne for 10 minutes, becoming the first Briton to fly. Lunardi made the first flight in London in 1784. A Belgian made ascensions in Russia, Austria, Spain, Sweden and Denmark between 1803-6. Cross-channel flights became a source of rivalry between England and France.

Only-to-be-expected accidents were common: a boy was caught by the leg by a drag-rope and fell to his death; balloons came down at sea, caught fire and plunged to earth, or made hard forced landings that killed occupants. Madame Blanchard, one of the first women balloonists, crashed on to the roof of a house and was killed when she fell to the street. Farm animals were terrified; horses bolted dragging and wrecking carts and carriages.

Balloon ascensions, however, remained popular public entertainments for many years - "everybody" came to see the spectacles. When Blanchard made a flight from Paris in 1784, Jane Austen's cousin Eliza was there, among "the most prodigious concourse assembled to see it."

Balloonmania was everywhere. New words came into the language: balloons were "aerostats", pilots were "aeronauts". At the Opera in Lyons one evening, seven aeronauts attended and were recognized entering their box. The performance was halted mid-note and the audience gave them a standing ovation. A nursery rhyme of the time was strangely prophetic: "What's the news of the day/ Good neighbour, I pray?/ They say the balloon/ Is gone to the moon." There was even a duel fought in balloons.

Women's fashions reflected the popular craze. Circular skirts which looked as if they covered an inflated balloon came into vogue, along with puffed, balloon-like sleeves. Women's hair styles, called "poufs", provided fertile grounds for the imagination of modistes, inspired by the rage for ballooning. There were balloon designs on buttons, fans, snuff boxes, jewellery and on pub signs everywhere. Toy balloons were immensely popular.

In the meantime, Napoleon's generals were considering the military possibilities of balloons. In 1794 "captive" balloons tethered by strong ropes which could be let out or hauled in became observation posts, used for the first time at the battle of Fleurus, and reports of enemy movements were weighted and dropped to the ground. One official was so impressed that he likened an army without a balloon to a blinded duelist. Elaborate balloon equipment was taken on the campaign against Egypt in 1798, but before it could be unloaded, Nelson had attacked and partly destroyed the fleet, and the balloons were rendered useless. A more complex plan was devised to invade England, with balloons loaded with men and equipment. Napoleon, however, was as suspicious of balloons as he later was of submarines, and the balloon's military career was short-lived.

President Washington commented that his French friends might soon come flying through the air to America rather than "ploughing" the ocean. Benjamin Franklin argued that balloons would outlaw war because of the threat of invasion by air. Horace Walpole took the opposite view, presuming that the four corners of the earth would be "more expeditiously...ravaged and butchered, than they have been by the old-fashioned and clumsy method of navigation."

Balloons had been largely a source of entertainment, but these years saw the beginning of a series of scientific experiments, considering balloons as mobile laboratories for the investigation of the unknown upper atmosphere and outer space. Early experiments investigated air temperatures, the boiling point of water, barometric pressure and humidity at various altitudes. Scientific balloonists also studied themselves: pulse and breathing rates were "considerably increased" at high elevations. It was hoped that the use of these marvellous flying machines could better ascertain the shape of seas and lands, and facilitate earth-based map making.

Most people were jubilant and enthusiastic over the possibilities of balloon flights, but some, like the poet Cowper, had doubts. He wrote: "But now we float; at random, indeed, pretty much, and as the wind drives us; for want of nothing, however, but the steerage which invention, the conqueror of many equal, if not superior difficulties, may be expected to supply.-- Should the point be carried, and man at last become as familiar with the air as he has long been with the ocean, will it in its consequences prove a mercy, or a judgement?"

Coleridge described the feelings of the next generation. He wrote to a friend about making a model paper balloon for his four-year-old son, Hartley: "The idea of carrying up a bit of lighted candle into the clouds makes him almost insane with Pleasure."

<p>Further reading about Balloons in the time of Jane Austen: <u>The Book of Balloons</u>: Erik Norgaard. <u>Man With Wings. A Pictorial History of Aviation</u>: Edward Jablonski (1980). <u>The Aeronauts</u>: Donald Dale Jackson (1980). <u>Voyage Into Substance. Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Account 1760-1840</u>: Barbara Maria Stafford (1984).</p>

BATH CHAIRS - ONCE MORE!

- By Keiko Parker -

I read with much interest both the original article on Bath chairs and Leila Vennewitz's letter on the subject. I, in turn, would like to draw your attention to *Dombey and Son*, a novel by Charles Dickens. Dombey and his "friend" Major Bagstock go to Leamington, a health resort. "[N]ext morning he [Dombey] would be happy to accompany the Major to the Pump-room." And so the following day they sally forth, and meet Mrs. Skewton and her daughter Edith, who eventually becomes the second Mrs. Dombey. Mrs. Skewton's appearance on the scene is described thus:

they beheld advancing towards them, a wheeled chair, in which a lady was seated, indolently steering her carriage by a kind of rudder in front, while it was propelled by some unseen power in the rear.

After the four characters are introduced to each other, the "unseen power" is then described in typical Dickensian exuberance thus:

And now, the chair having stopped, the motive power became visible in the shape of a flushed page pushing behind, who seemed to have in part outgrown and in part out-pushed his strength, for when he stood upright he was tall, and wan, and thin, and his plight appeared the more forlorn from his having injured the shape of his hat, by butting at the carriage with his head to urge it forward, as is sometimes done by elephants in Oriental countries.

The above description matches the Bath chair that Leila explains in her letter. For verification I am including the illustration of the scene by Phiz. You will note that Mrs. Skewton is steering the chair by means of a rudder attached to the small front wheel, but that the wheelchair itself has to be pushed from behind by brute force. If the two chairs are one and the same, it means that the chair in use in the time of Dickens was still in use earlier in this century (Dickens started the serialization of *Dombey and Son* in 1846, and published the novel in book form in 1848).

My question is: Did this sort of chair exist in Jane Austen's day in health resorts such as Bath? I wonder if anyone can shed light on this matter.



Major Bagstock is delighted to have that Opportunity

PEMBERLEY, AN EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER - February Meeting.

Jane: Will you tell me how long you have loved him?

Elizabeth: I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.

Elizabeth is joking, but it is not entirely a joke. A large estate was built to impress others, to display wealth, taste and character. An estate that has been in a family for generations moulds, influences and develops the character of the owner, even as he does that of his home. A visitor to Pemberley could learn much about the owner, and appreciate the sort of man he was.

Our February speaker, Fiona McLeod, consultant and teacher of interior design, couldn't take us to Pemberley, but she did the next best thing. Using Harewood House in Yorkshire as an example, she showed us what a great country house of the period would look like, describing 18th century architecture and interior design with slides of old paintings and recent photographs.

Harewood House was a little late to be a real model of Pemberley - it was built between 1759 and 1791 by the architect John Carr. Darcy said that the library of Pemberley was "the work of many generations" and presumably the house also had belonged to many generations, dating perhaps 100 years or more before the story opens. But the Great Houses in England were lived-in family homes, and would have been added to and altered through the years as fashion dictated: in the early, middle and late Georgian and Regency periods, each with its characteristic style.

Fiona "introduced" us to Harewood House in much the same way as Elizabeth became acquainted with Pemberley. The first slide showed a painting of a distant view of a "large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills." A closer view showed the imposing Palladian facade, colonnaded and with a dominant pediment. Then we "toured" through the main rooms open to visitors, as the housekeeper showed Elizabeth and the Gardiners through Pemberley - the hall, drawing room, music room, library and gallery, each with special features to be pointed out and admired.

The interior of Harewood House was almost entirely the work of Robert Adam, and was one of his greatest achievements. Darcy had the money and good taste to appreciate the best of interior design, and no doubt Pemberley was also one of Adam's masterpieces. Colours were usually pastels, pale green and white with gold, for example. Carpets were often woven especially to match the ornate symmetrical plastered ceiling designs; many rooms had silk damask fabric wallcoverings, elaborate friezes and Corinthian pilasters; roundels were painted by Angelica Kauffmann, and Chippendale was commissioned to make tables, chairs, bureaux and commodes. The wall were hung with paintings, many collected on a Grand Tour by one of the owners.

When they had seen all the house open to view, the Gardiners and Elizabeth walked the "accustomed circuit" of the grounds, agreeing that they had "never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste" - we could say the same about Harewood House as Fiona concluded our tour.

Fiona gave us an excellent idea of Elizabeth's feelings as she visited Darcy's estate and learned to appreciate his solid worth.

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"A new museum celebrating Jane Austen's association with Bath has been approved and is scheduled to open in March [1999] in that city. It will be located at 40 Gay Street, and 'will act as a three-dimensional Who's Who of Bath with several other famous names lined up to be included.' First editions and period costumes will be among the exhibits." - Bath Chronicle 1/30/99.

(Noted in The Austen Aspect, N.Calif. Winter/Spring 1999.)

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"To sit in idleness over a good fire in a well-proportioned room is a luxurious sensation".

-Jane Austen, at Ashe Park, November 1800 (Letter No. 25)

CIRCULATING LIBRARIES (March meeting)

To understand the importance of Circulating Libraries in the 18th century, we need to know the context of the time. Our member, Rachele Oriente, has a background in Art History and Library Science, and has worked for several years in various corporate libraries. Along with a love of Jane Austen's novels, this enabled her to give us an interesting and informative talk.

Rachele told us a little about four kinds of libraries: appurtenant (belonging to institutions such as businesses, societies, parochial units), academic, private, and subscription and circulating libraries. They were funded in different ways, and catered to various specialized groups of people. Only the subscription and circulating libraries were truly democratic - they were for anyone who could pay the fees charged.

The subscription library was much like a gentleman's reading club (theoretically, women could belong, but none did: one had to be nominated, approved and elected, and affluent). The circulating libraries were for men and women. They were carried on as a business - patrons paid a fee, often equal to the value of the book, which would be partially refunded when the book was returned; there were fines for overdue books. Sometimes several friends, or servants living together, would share the cost and each would be able to read the book in the time allowed.

Generally the operators of circulating libraries were women: in one survey, over half the owners were women. There was not enough profit to entice men, or to support a family, but for a single woman or widow, it was a means to earn a little money. It was an accepted position for a middle class woman, educated, pleasant, not too high or too low in status. Some capital was necessary to buy the original stock, and from then on, money kept coming in. Sometimes there was an annual sale or auction of books before a new supply was purchased. Almost all circulating libraries had an ancillary business - a barbershop, perfumery, millinery - to make it possible to earn a decent living.

Libraries had their beginning in the early 18th century as subsidiaries to the book-selling trade. Surplus stock could be rented out until it was sold. But by the end of the century, libraries had collections of books solely for the purpose of being rented out. All cities and large towns, and the holiday resorts, had lending libraries by 1800.

Not everyone was in favour of making books so easily available. For some critics, novels were responsible for all the ills of the day. The "Evergreen Tree of Diabolical Knowledge" was one phrase applied to circulating libraries. Others considered that books could convey instruction along with delight, improve the morals of the age, and open up imaginary worlds for the reader.

Such libraries would have been very familiar to Jane Austen. Several of her letters mention getting books or passing them on to others. Almost all of the novels have a reference or two to a library, but only in Sanditon does the local circulating library become part of the plot, albeit a small part. Mrs. Whitby operates the circulating library in the small resort town. She is a minor flat character, but with Jane Austen's deft handling, and Rachele's careful reading, we can see what it meant to be such a woman.

An essential feature of the circulating library in such a resort was the Subscription Book which gave the names of all the visitors. This formed an index to the social scene, making the library the social centre of the town. The owner, Mrs. Whitby, is seen as the person who will give visitors all the information they need.

Rachele mentioned a survey pointing out that a small library would have about 1500 books, no multiple copies, and that over 1000 would be novels. Mrs. Whitby's seems to follow this pattern. Sir Edward Denham and his sister borrow novels, Charlotte looks over others on the shelves, and then turns to the "many pretty temptations" for sale, mainly jewellery, but also including "parasols" to protect from the sun.

Mrs. Whitby herself is found reading one of her novels in "her Literary recess" in the inner room, and her daughter, called to help attend to the customers, came "down" from her Toilette. Mrs. Whitby lives "over the shop", keeping expenses to a minimum. She has at least one son and one daughter who are mentioned helping out in the library. She is obviously respected and has her own self-respect, a busy and efficient mother and working woman.

Jane Austen seldom portrays a member of the working class (Mrs. Ford at the shop in Emma is another) but, as Rachele suggested, perhaps she could identify with a woman making her own way in the world.

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Jane Austen Day Success.

The 12th annual Jane Austen Day on April 24th was an unqualified success. Keiko Parker had prepared the programme with her usual meticulous attention to detail, common sense and good taste, and all went according to plan. Sandy Lundy, taking the place of our regular treasurer, kept the accounts balanced, and coped with the U.S. currency exchange for the contingent from Puget Sound. Dianne Kerr had devoted many hours to sending publicity releases to various local newspapers, but word-of-mouth comments had given us a sold-out crowd even before the newspaper accounts were published. We sympathize with the would-be attendees who had to miss this special event.

The Importance of Doing Nothing in "Mansfield Park" - John Hulcoop, Professor Emeritus, UBC.

Dr. Hulcoop gave us the fruits of his careful, detailed, almost-word-for-word reading of Mansfield Park with respect to the word "nothing" and the idea of "nothingness". Jane Austen used the word many times, spoken by various characters, and in a variety of situations, with a subtle difference of meanings. Mary Crawford: "A clergyman is nothing." William Price: "One might as well be nothing as a midshipman." Tom Bertram: "It is a nothing part" - for a nothing person, he means. Mrs. Norris, no support in real trouble ("Nothing but ill humour was to be expected from Aunt Norris"), is also a nothing person.

Fanny describes the chapel at Sotherton with negatives: "nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand," emphasizing that here there is a spiritual nothing. Mary Crawford, playing Speculation, asserts: "I was not born to sit still and be nothing," but at the end she is ethically, morally, and spiritually nothing. Mary thinks Henry's elopement can be hushed up: "Hear nothing, surmise nothing, whisper nothing, till I write again." Her emphasis expresses what she feels of the moral importance of the event. Jane Austen teaches us to acknowledge all the gradations of "nothing."

With a wealth of quotations, from Jane Austen and other writers, Dr. Hulcoop effectively proved his point: "Fanny, by doing nothing, by sitting still and saying nothing, precipitates everything."

Energy Versus Sympathy: From the Juvenilia to the Six Novels - Juliet McMaster, University of Alberta

Dr. McMaster discussed Jane Austen's Juvenilia in relation to the mature novels. Jane Austen is noted as a novelist of restraint, with an almost perfect mastery of means to her ends. It is interesting to see what she could do before she "grew up and was tamed." In the Juvenilia there is no control and restraint - rather, they are stories of exuberance and excess. Instead of one perfect word or phrase, here Jane Austen uses a dozen, with joyous over-statement; the writing is Rabelaisian, "a carnival of satire," gleefully overdone.

The young Jane Austen was relatively free of "gendered entity" - her young women are as adventurous and as naughty as any man. A good rollicking adventure is more fun than a moral tale. The heroines are addicted to the bottle and to dice. The gusty, earthy comedy drives out any idea of ethereal femininity. Men are relegated to an inferior position.

By the time of the mature novels, Jane Austen has changed from an 18th century writer to a Regency writer. But there are continuities - the Juvenilia may be considered as preparation for the later novels. In a courtship situation, even in the later novels Jane Austen challenges the position of male dominance. Heroines like Elizabeth Bennet take necessary initiatives, but her characters are now well-developed, not one-sided. The reader is called upon to identify with these realistic heroines. The adolescent Lydia Bennet enjoys boisterous larks with the gusto and irreverence of her predecessor heroines, but characters like John Thorpe are morally tainted if they take liberties with time and space.

Jane Austen's delight in language, which showed itself in a tumult of words earlier, now becomes a "wickedly well-placed adjective": Charlotte Lucas sets out to meet Mr. Collins "by accident.;" Mrs. Price spent her days "in a kind of slow bustle."

With ebullience and gusto herself, Dr. McMaster showed us the delights of the Juvenilia, as the young Jane Austen worked as "an apprentice" for the mature writer.

The Mysteries of Udolpho (Ann Radcliffe) - Adapted and Arranged by Irene Howard.

"Imagination is everything," Jane Austen wrote, and we used our imagination, building the gloomy, forbidding castle of Udolpho, seeing the horrid drops of blood on the tower stairs, and experiencing scenes of romantic love or dreadful violence - "powerful images, that resonate even today, of fear and terror of the unknown, generating the idea of the sublime."

Udolpho was the most popular Gothic novel of the period. Vivianne McClelland read a Prologue explaining the Gothic context of art, architecture and literature, putting Mrs. Radcliffe's novel in focus. Irene Howard had adapted the novel to a script suitable to our constricted space and time, and gathered a cast who performed their roles with gusto or melancholy, as required. Irene's "continuity" was read by Margaret Howell, to summarize and explain, and show us the essential drama of the long involved story.

Elizabeth Green professionally handled her role as the heroine, Emily St. Aubert - reacting with regret at the loss of her lover, distress at the imprisonment and death of her aunt, fear at the threats of Montoni, and terror at what lies behind the dreaded Black Veil. René Goldman gave an emotional depiction of Emily's rejected, scorned, and finally accepted lover. The versatile Diana Bodnar, with discreet and swift changes of costume and personality, effectively played Emily's servant, her aunt, and old Dorothy, another servant.

Betty Stephen was a reluctant conscript actress, (she moaned earlier, "It is most unfortunate to live next door to someone who enthusiastically volunteers for anything going on, and volunteers me, too!") but Betty made a sympathetic Mrs. Radcliffe, concerned about her work, and reading parts of her manuscript to help set the scene. Swathed in black and almost unrecognizable, Joan Mann gave a vivid depiction of Sister Agnes' physical and mental decrepitude.

Juliet McMaster discarded her academic aura and, as Count Morano, in suitable makeup and costume, with staring crazed eyes and caressing Italian accent, stalked his prospective victim and engaged the fiendish Montoni (John F. Parker, another talented visitor) in fierce duels, swords clashing and flashing as they battled right before our eyes.

If the sophisticated audience found it a little difficult to "suspend disbelief", and sometimes broke into laughter which Mrs. Radcliffe did not intend, we were also subject to moments of horror and suspense as the story unfolded.

At last the mysteries were explained, and young love was triumphant. Darlene Foster was the official photographer, and we expect to see some great shots of the highlights.

Udolpho was a fitting ending to a memorable and stimulating Day.

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SHAKESPEARE

"Shakespeare was taken to represent qualities that were distinctively British. His plays may not have been as formally correct as Racine's and Corneille's, yet his minor imperfections were as nothing when compared to his free creativity. His imaginative powers and original genius allowed him, the critics thought, to transcend the strict rules of classical and neo-classical drama and to rise above the carping criticism of foreigners...."

Shakespeare's freedom, like the liberty of the British political system, was contrasted with the rigid etiquette of French absolutism and the formalities of his great French rivals. When the French Revolution replaced royal despotism with radical republicanism, the argument was subtly adjusted. Now Shakespeare's work was viewed as natural and as developing organically, like the British constitution as described in Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790); by contrast the Jacobin regime, like the dramas of Corneille and Racine, was governed by rigid and formal rules. As Jane Austen commented in Mansfield Park, 'Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is a part of an Englishman's constitution.'

The Pleasures of the Imagination: John Brewer (1997)

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Highways and Byways in Jane Austen's Life - No. 6 - by Keiko Parker

This month's topic is Canterbury, the ancient town famous for the Cathedral and its pilgrims. The town existed on its present site even before the Roman occupation, situated on the Roman highway which ran from Dover to London.

There is insufficient space to dwell on the history of this cathedral town, its medieval architecture, its narrow, tortuous, streets, and its old lanes with their ancient names. Canterbury is not only where the murder in the Cathedral took place, but where Christopher Marlowe was born, and where Izaak Walton was married. It was at Canterbury that the fictional David Copperfield and his aunt Betsy Trotwood were welcomed to the "humble abode" of Uriah Heep, and where Mr. Micawber came to seek employment worthy of his talents.

Jane Austen visited Canterbury many times during her extended stay at Godmersham. Some of these Canterbury visits were made accompanying her brother Edward, who, as a wealthy landowner of Godmersham, was a magistrate of the area (one is reminded of Mr. Knightley in *Emma* in this context), and also because Lady Bridges, the mother of Edward's wife Elizabeth lived there. And last, but not least, Edward's aging adoptive mother Mrs. Knight retired to Canterbury after she ceded Chawton and Godmersham to Edward.

Jane wrote numerous newsy letters of comings and goings of her immediate and extended family members to and from Canterbury. All her letters written from or about Canterbury are cheerful. She states the reason succinctly: "[M]y Canterbury visit . . . was a very agreeable visit. There was everything to make it so; Kindness, conversation, & variety, without care or cost" (Letter 53, Chapman; Letter 54, Le Faye). She once wrote to Cassandra: "Of your visit there [to Canterbury] I must now speak 'incessantly'; it surprises, but pleases me more, and I consider it as a very just and honourable distinction of you, and not less to the credit of Mrs. Knight. I have no doubt of your spending your time with her most pleasantly in quiet and rational conversation, and am so far from thinking her expectations of you will be deceived, that my only fear is of your being so agreeable, so much to her taste, as to make her wish to keep you with her for ever" (Letter 48, Chapman; Letter 49, Le Faye). Here we see Jane Austen prizing "rational conversation" in real life as she did in her novels.

In another letter to Cassandra Jane writes: "I will first talk of my visit to Canterbury . . . I had a most affectionate welcome from Harriot [Elizabeth Knight's youngest sister] . . . She walked with me to call on Mrs. Brydges . . . Mrs. B. was dressing & cd not see us, & we proceeded to the White Friars, where Mrs. K. was alone in her Drawing room, as gentle & kind & friendly as usual.—She enquired after every body, especially my Mother & yourself.—We were with her a quarter of an hour . . . (Letter 52, Chapman; Letter 53, Le Faye).

The illustration by Hugh Thomson of the street leading to the West Gate was published in 1907 in *Highways and Byways in Kent* by Walter Jerrold (London: MacMillan). The house at the corner still stands much as it did at the beginning of this century. I have a photo I took of the house on my 1990 trip to England. Old buildings stay. Nothing changes. That is part of the charm of England. Jane Austen must have passed by this house many times during her visits to Canterbury.



The West Gate from Within.

A Governess in the Age of Jane Austen. The Journals and Letters of Agnes Porter:
Joanna Martin, ed. (London, 1998). Reviewed by Eileen Sutherland.

As the title suggests, the book is made up of journal entries and letters written to family and friends by Agnes Porter, who was governess to the children of several families of the gentry and minor nobility during the years 1788 to 1814, a period which almost exactly corresponds with Jane Austen's adult life.

Agnes Porter was the daughter of an English clergyman without much money, and when he died, she and her sister had to become governesses to support themselves and their mother. Agnes moved in the same sort of society as Jane Austen did, and was keenly interested in reading and intelligent conversation. Luckily, she became a governess in a family who appreciated her abilities, and she was as much companion to the mother as teacher to the children. She was interested in the theories and practices of education - reading Rousseau, the Edgeworths, Elizabeth Hamilton, Dr. Gisborne and Hannah More, among others, and enjoyed putting their ideas into her own teaching methods.

Joanna Martin, the editor, knows her Jane Austen. Although the novels don't stress the position of governess much, Martin points out where Agnes Porter's experiences reinforce what Jane Austen wrote: Jane Fairfax's fear of her future life as a governess, Miss Taylor's good fortune in marrying and giving up her position, the Bertram girls' education by rote (long lists of memorized facts and dates), the ambiguity of the social status of a governess: chosen because she was a "lady", with a position as a servant, but not a servant.

Martin gives a generous and excellent introduction describing the context of life of the time - the single woman in Georgian Britain, women and education in the period, leisure activities, politics and patronage, and the fears of a French invasion. These seventy-five pages are the most worthwhile part of the book. When we come to the letters and journal entries, they seem tedious and repetitious. One becomes easily tired of the sameness of each day, the solicitous enquiries as to the health and beauty of her "dear" pupils, their charming behaviour, their superior attractions. When she is with them, she reports in minute detail how they pass each day; when she is away from them on a visit or journey, she writes to ask particulars of everything they do. She almost never complains, or even mentions anything not quite what she would like. She dotes on her pupils, but maintains a moral and educational discipline, and even well into her later life, her pupils still seem to remember her with love and respect.

Agnes Porter was well educated and had a strong, enquiring mind. She was interested in meeting people and reading books. But all too often she merely mentions the books she reads, not what she learned from them nor what she thought of them. She seldom discusses ideas, except some brief points about educational theories. She evidently had strong opinions of her own, but she didn't write about them.

Agnes Porter decries people who use foreign phrases in letters or conversations, but she herself often slips into French or Italian exclamations - even *caro sposo*. One evening before bed, she "supt on water gruel *par preference*." She quotes Pope a lot oftener than Jane Austen would approve.

When Jane Austen's father died, she and Cassandra and their mother were fortunate to have the brothers able and willing to contribute money to support them. Otherwise both girls would have ended up living lives very much like Agnes Porter's. This book gives us a great insight into what such a life was like: the tedium, the dependence, the (perhaps necessary) servility to an employer. [This book is in our JASNA Vancouver library].

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