Příloha – text originálu

The Accomplished Woman

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FORMED an essential part of an upper or middle class woman's education. Their purpose was not to bring pleasure and improvement to herself, though of course that was sometimes the case. Rather they were embellishments to increase her attractiveness to potential marriage partners and to make her an asset in social gatherings.

In *Pride and Prejudice* there is a lively debate about what constitutes the truly accomplished woman. Charles Bingley thinks all the young ladies of his acquaintance are accomplished; but he is easily satisfied, since his idea of accomplishment is nothing more than painting tables, covering screens and netting purses. His sister is more rigorous:

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and the modern languages to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.

Doubtless Miss Bingley imagines she is describing herself. But Darcy also demands of the accomplished woman "something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading".

PAINTING BY CASSANDRA OF A LADY WITH A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. BOTH MUSIC AND ART WERE PRIZED FEMALE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

A choice of accomplishments

Darcy is exceptional in having such high standards. As Miss Bingley's definition suggests, the usual accomplishments were playing a musical instrument, singing and drawing.

We have seen how the Bennet girls were provided with visiting masters in some or all of these arts. Catherine Morland, too, is taught the piano for a year between the ages of eight and nine by a visiting master. But she dislikes it and her kindly, pragmatic mother does not insist on her daughters being accomplished against their will. "The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life."

The parents of girls who were educated at school would have to pay extra for these lessons, again almost certainly from visiting masters. The number of accomplishments therefore reflected the financial standing of the family, and how much sacrifice they were prepared to make to improve their daughters' chances of marrying well.

Sometimes sisters divided the standard accomplishments between them, according to aptitude. Jane Austen played the piano, her sister drew. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne plays and Elinor draws. Among the Bennet girls, Elizabeth plays and sings though not particularly well because she will not practise; Mary practises assiduously, but with her it is to compensate for being the only plain one in the family.

Emma Woodhouse is another young lady who will not practise as much as she ought, but she has the rudiments of both drawing and playing the piano. Anne Elliot can play well and, uniquely among the heroines, she has some knowledge of Italian. Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove have been taught the harp at school. The harp seems to have been more fashionable than the piano. Mary Crawford plays it exquisitely, and if Jane Fairfax could only teach the harp as well as the piano, according to Mrs Elton, she could, as governess, name her own terms. No accomplishments have been paid for as part of Harriet Smith's education. She cannot play the piano – but she can dance, as can all the young ladies in the novels.

Dancing lessons were essential for everybody who had any pretensions at all to social life. To take an example from real life, the only accomplishment thought necessary for Martha Lloyd and her two sisters – friends and contemporaries of Jane Austen, and like her daughters of a clergyman – was dancing. All the rest of their rather meagre education was imparted by their mother, but dancing and deportment Mrs Lloyd did consider "essential to the condition of a gentlewoman". So, for several years, "They were sent early in the day once a week to Mrs Hutchin's school, where the dancing master Mr Dore gave his attendance. It was a whole day of dancing. They began in the morning, stayed and dined with the schoolgirls, had another dancing lesson in the evening, and after tea the carriage fetched them home." This took place in the 1780s.

The use and abuse of accomplishments

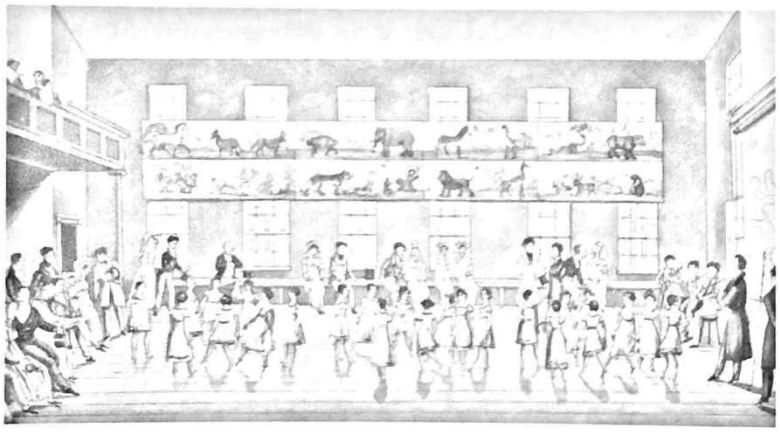
When accomplishments were used to flaunt the wealth and status of the family, or to elevate the daughters above the condition of the parents, Jane Austen is severe upon them, as she is when they are too obviously designed as husband-baits. Miss Bingley stands arraigned on both counts. So does Augusta Hawkins, who becomes Mrs Elton. That her boasted love of music is no more than a display to catch a husband is evident from her determination to neglect her music once she has secured him. All her married friends have done the same. This is not, of course, to suggest that Jane Austen despises accomplishments themselves, when they give girls and women the personal satisfaction of becoming proficient at an art. Elinor and Marianne are praised for the way they "employ themselves" with their chosen art forms. Anne Elliot is the very picture of a cultivated woman whose acquirements are ignored by others but give pleasure to herself. Nor does Jane Austen cavil at the pleasure derived by men from being in company with young lady performers. "You and Miss Fairfax gave us some very good music," says Mr Knightley to Emma; "I do not know a more luxurious state than sitting at one's ease to be entertained a whole evening by two such young women; sometimes with music and sometimes with conversation." We can always trust Mr Knightley's judgement; contributing to the sum of happiness of those about them was the most worthy of motivations for women to acquire accomplishments.

GEORGIANA DARCY AND ELIZABETH BENNET AT THE PIANO.

Dancing

JANE AUSTEN LOVED DANCING. There are frequent references to it in her letters, for example this written when she was twenty: "We had an exceedingly good ball last night ... There were twenty dances, and I danced them all, without any fatigue."

Considering that it was one of the few forms of physical exercise which could be indulged in by women, that it gave an excuse for wearing one's best clothes and ornaments and showing off how gracefully one could move, as well as opportunity for meeting new people, for flirting and even serious courtship, the popularity of dancing among women of Jane Austen's class is hardly surprising.



CHILDREN LEARNING TO DANCE THE QUADRILLE.

Balls and dances

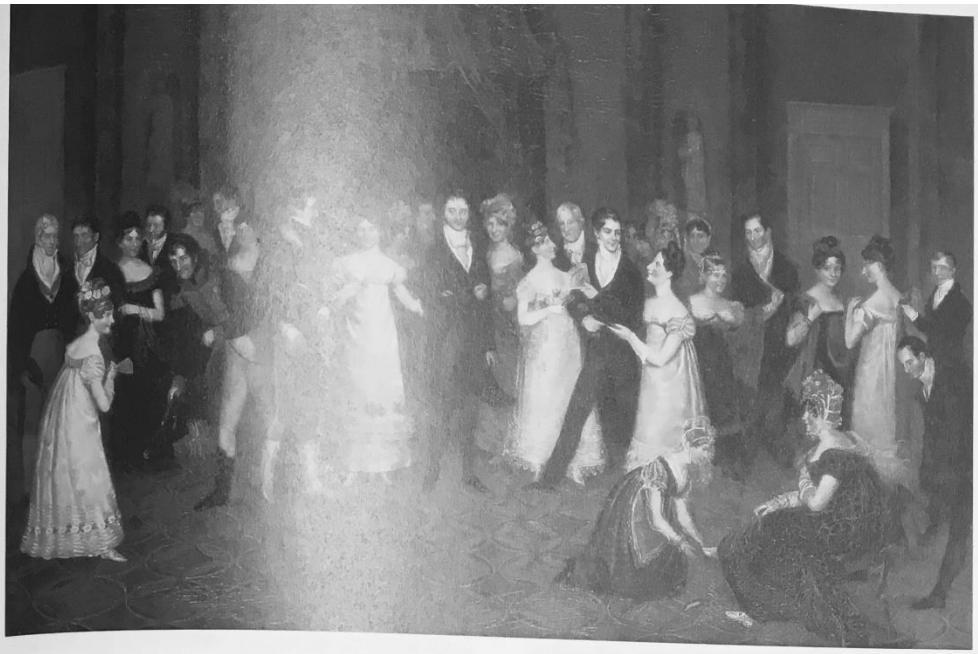
The most prestigious kind of ball was that which took place at a great country house. It would be planned some time in advance, invitations sent out to all the neighbouring gentry, professional musicians engaged, and an elaborate supper laid on. In the novels, such balls are given by Sir Thomas Bertram at Mansfield Park and Charles Bingley at Netherfield. From Steventon, the Austens attended even grander balls held by the aristocrats Lord Portsmouth and Lord Bolton. As local leaders of society, they would dispense this kind of hospitality perhaps once every year or two years in a spirit of benevolent condescension. Their neighbours were expected to return to their respective stations in life when the fun was over.

At the other end of the scale was the impromptu dance held after dinner in an ordinary house, with family and a few friends. At the suggestion probably of the young people, the furniture would be pushed back, one of the older women pressed into service to play the piano, and two or three couples would "stand up". It is this kind of dance, with Anne Elliot at the piano, which often closes the evening at Uppercross.

Public assemblies

Most of Jane Austen's opportunities for dancing occurred at the Basingstoke Assemblies. Between 1792, when she was old enough for dancing, and 1801, when the Austens left Hampshire, more than fifty such balls were held, through the winter months, at Basingstoke Town Hall. Here the older people of the neighbourhood could meet their acquaintance to talk and play cards, the young to dance, flirt and look for marriage partners. Despite the slightly uncontrolled social mix – for anyone who could afford the right clothes and transport could attend, the Basingstoke Assembly was occasionally honoured even by the Portsmouths and Boltons. In the same way, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Bingley's party honours the Meryton Assembley, at the "country town" tone of which Darcy turns up his nose.

Every town with pretensions to fashion and a sizeable middle-class population, either resident or



DANCING AT THE CLIFTON ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BRISTOL. THE ROOMS OPENED IN 1806, THE YEAR JANE AUSTEN STAYED IN CLIFTON.

visiting, had built itself an Assembly Room by this time. In Bath, to cater for the large number of visitors, there were two sets of rooms, in the Upper and Lower parts of the city. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland finds the Upper Rooms so crowded that she can hardly move. This is in contrast to a ball attended there by Jane Austen herself toward the end of the season in 1801, when there were only twenty couples. "Rather thin for Bath," she reported to Cassandra, "though it would have made two or three pretty Basingstoke Assemblies".

In the Lower Rooms Catherine is introduced to Henry Tilney by the Master of Ceremonies. This job had once been graced by the famous "Beau" Nash, who had done so much to regulate polite behaviour earlier in the century. A nation of country bumpkins, coming together for pleasure at Bath, had been transformed into one of the most sophisticated societies ever known. It was this society which Jane Austen and her generation inherited.

The English country dance

In contrast to the ballroom dancing of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which couples twirl around more or less oblivious to what everyone else is doing, dancing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a highly communal affair. All the dancers faced one another, their movements making stylized patterns in which observers could take aesthetic pleasure.

This style of dancing had originated in the French court, where a set number of dancers stood in a square or circle. When imported into the English country house, or Assembly Rooms, dances were adapted to suit the oblong shape of most ballrooms. "Longways for as many as will" became the instruction for what became known as the English Country Dance.

The rationale of this kind of dancing was to demonstrate the polish, elegance and decorum of eighteenth century manners. Sir William Lucas harks back to this sense of self-congratulation when he remarks to Darcy, "There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies," to which Darcy's reply is, "Every savage can dance". As an example of Darcy's arrogance this is excellent, but for once Sir William has right on his side. To learn and execute perfectly the steps of an English country dance, to be still when required and to move when required, to make polite conversation while remaining alert to the demands of the dance, required real skill. It was a skill worth acquiring. As screen dramatizations of the novels have shown, the mechanics of English Country dancing – taking a few steps, exchanging a few words, perhaps spoken over the shoulder or under an uplifted arm, was highly conducive to engaging the interest of the opposite sex.

The Royal Family

GEORGE III WHO WAS ON THE THRONE FOR THE WHOLE OF JANE AUSTEN'S LIFETIME.

FOLLOWING THE RELIGIOUS and constitutional upheavals of the seventeenth century, the Protestant Hanoverians had been firmly established on the throne of Great Britain for over sixty years when Jane Austen was born. They had easily seen off the final challenge to their power, by the Young Pretender Charles Edward Stuart, in 1745, thirty years before her birth.

Jane's whole life was encompassed by the long reign of George III, who succeeded his grandfather in 1760 and died in 1821, four years after her own death. From 1811, however, the King's insanity resulted in his eldest son becoming Prince Regent. The last years of Jane's life, and the publication of all her novels, consequently belong to the short but distinctive period known as the Regency.

The madness of King George

Known to his subjects as "Farmer George", King George III of Great Britain was never happier than when allowed to behave like an ordinary middle-class person. Fond of country pursuits and domestic life, frugal and chaste in habit, he was devoted to his rather dull German wife, Queen Charlotte, who had borne him fifteen children. Disliking London, the royal couple lived as much as possible at Windsor or Kew, which their daughters referred to as "The Nunnery".

The court of George III was irreproachably respectable, stiff and formal. The novelist Fanny Burney, who was Keeper of the Queen's Wardrobe for several years in the 1780s, has left a vivid picture in her diaries of the tedium and protocol that surrounded every aspect of life at court, though she became fond of both their majesties, who were personally very kind to her.

While the children were small, the royal household presented a model of family life; but the seven princes who reached adulthood rebelled against their father's morality. They turned out dissolute and

spendthrift, running up great debts, acquiring mistresses and illegitimate children, eating and drinking to excess and plotting with politicians against their father. The worst offender was the one of whom most was expected, the eldest son, George, Prince of Wales, known in the family as "Prinny".

Another kind of trouble made its first appearance in 1788 when the King became mentally deranged. It is now believed that he was suffering from an hereditary metabolic disorder, porphyria, the symptoms of which include paralysis, pain and delirium, all experienced by the poor King. The treatments of the day were barbaric, including the use of the strait-jacket. Over the next twenty years the malady made several reappearances, frequently threatening to precipitate a political crisis, until in 1811 the Regency Act was finally passed and Prinny became Prince Regent. For the last ten years of his life George III lived in virtual isolation, his only remaining comfort playing the harpsichord, until he became deaf as well as blind.

The Prince Regent

George IV, as he was eventually to become, was a man of contrasts. He was totally self-indulgent, as incapable of curbing his spending as of governing his passions. Sexually, he was most comfortable with older, voluptuous women, preferably intelligent ones. He had a butterfly mind, always influenced by the last person he had spoken to. Yet no English monarch has been so cultivated and interested in the arts. His request that the next Jane Austen novel be dedicated to him is proof that despite the grossness of his habits and appearance, he was capable of discerning the moral beauty in literature that one might have supposed too delicate for his jaded palate. Nor was his request just a passing whim: he kept a set of the novels in each of his residences.

He was a great patron of the visual arts and of architecture. The Regent's Park area of London was created under his patronage, while his own favourite residence, the onion-domed Royal Pavilion in Brighton, remains a lasting memorial to this paradoxical prince.

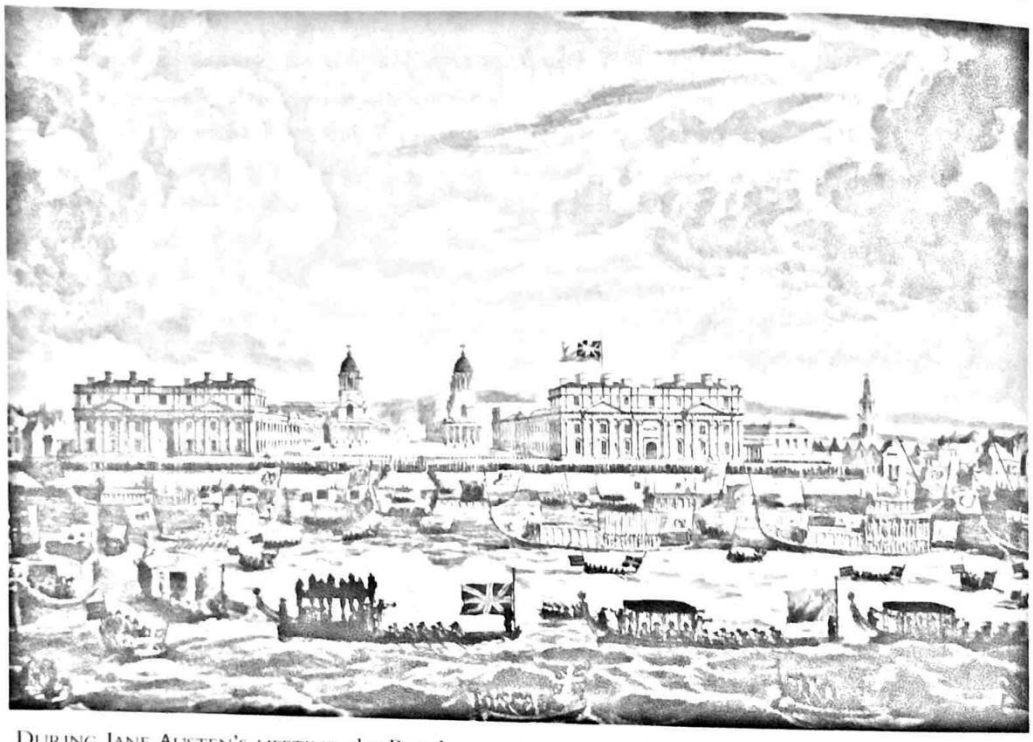
In 1785 he went through a kind of marriage ceremony with the twice-widowed Catholic Mrs Maria Fitzherbert, but the marriage was invalid since it violated both the Royal Marriages Act and the Act of Settlement. Ten years later his debts had amounted to £630,000, a quite staggering sum when one thinks of the Austens living on £600 p.a., or of Mr Darcy being a wealthy landowner on £10,000 p.a. The Prince struck a bargain with his father. He would marry a German princess of his father's choosing if his debts were settled and his income was doubled.

THE PRINCE OF WALES, LATER GEORGE IV, IN A GILLRAY CARTOON OF 1792. HIS GROSS HABITS MADE HIM HATEFUL TO JANE AUSTEN.

The result was disastrous. The Prince and his bride, his hoydenish cousin Princess Caroline of Brunswick, who had never met before the wedding day, loathed each other on sight. They managed to conceive Princess Charlotte on their wedding night, but long before her birth in January 1796 they had separated acrimoniously. Princess Charlotte herself was to die in childbirth in 1817, leaving George III, despite his fifteen children, with no legitimate grandchild.

We know what Jane Austen thought of the Prince Regent. In February 1813 a letter written by Caroline to her estranged husband, listing her grievances, was published in the newspapers. "I suppose all the World is sitting in Judgement on the Princess of Wales's Letter," wrote Jane Austen. "Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she is a Woman, & because I hate her Husband." How it must have galled her, two years later, to be obliged to dedicate her lovely *Emma* to him.

The Royal Navy



LORD NELSON'S FUNERAL PROCESSION ON THE THAMES FROM GREENWICH TO WHITEHALL IN 1806.

DURING JANE AUSTEN'S LIFETIME, the Royal navy was held in increasingly high regard by the country, as its crucial role in frustrating French attempts at world domination was appreciated. The Battle of Trafalgar of 1805, which Francis Austen narrowly missed, to his very great chagrin, was perhaps the first sea battle whose name inspired the same patriotic pride in the public consciousness as the land battles of Agincourt, Blenheim and so forth had traditionally done.

The cult of Admiral Nelson, whose death at Trafalgar was followed by a spate of biographies – "I am sick of Lives of Nelson," Jane Austen once wrote – and the lasting memorial of Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column, were evidence of public triumphalism in the naval supremacy that Britain was to enjoy without dispute for a century from 1805. Jane Austen, with two beloved brothers in the navy, certainly shared this naval fervour, losing no opportunity to honour the profession in her last completed novel, *Persuasion*.

Conditions in the navy

"I do assure you," says Mrs Croft, who has accompanied her husband to sea in five different ships, "that nothing can exceed the accommodations of a man of war." Her brother Captain Wentworth also ridicules the company for "supposing sailors to be living on board without anything to eat, or any cook to dress it if there were, or any servant to wait, or any knife and fork to use".

Despite these eulogies life at sea was harsh, dreadfully so for the ordinary seaman. Flogging was commonplace. Diet consisted of salt beef or pork, hard cheese, unleavened bread or biscuit and a gallon of beer per day. Not only was this fatally lacking in Vitamin C, it was hard and indigestible. The efficacy of fresh fruit, especially citrus fruit, and green vegetables in helping men to recover from scurvy had been noticed as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1795 that naval personnel were issued with daily juice of lemons or limes.

Particularly susceptible to scurvy were the pressed men captured for royal naval service on their way into home ports from a long voyage on a merchantman. Although the notorious press gangs did operate on land, rounding up men in ports, the majority of men were obtained afloat, the best source of experienced seamen. During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the ratio of volunteers to pressed men varied from 50:50 at the beginning of the period to 25:75 toward the end. And many of those recorded as volunteers were really pressed men, who chose to take the bounty (between £1 and £3) when they realized they stood no chance of escape.

During the same war, of the approximately 100,000 naval personnel who lost their lives, only 7 per cent was by enemy action, while 13 per cent was by shipwreck, 20 per cent by accident and 60 per cent by disease. In addition to scurvy, typhus, which was spread by lice among men living at close quarters, was a major killer on board.

Ships and men

Warships were divided into ships of the line, carrying from 60 to 100 guns, and cruisers – frigates, sloops and brigs with fewer guns. In 1810 British naval strength was 152 ships of the line and 390 cruisers. There were 800 captains, 600 commanders and 3,270 lieutenants on active service, in command of 142,000 seamen, of whom 30,000 were marines.

The marines were a special category of fighting men, trained in small arms to fight in naval battles and beach assaults, but not expected to be proficient in seamanship. Mr Price is an officer in the marines, and in marrying him Miss Frances Ward thoroughly "disobliges" her family.

The careers of Jane Austen's two sailor brothers illustrate the difficulties and rewards of being an officer in the navy. They both began their careers at the Royal Naval Academy, Portsmouth at the age of twelve, and first went to sea at fifteen. It was thought desirable for boys to start at sea young, to accustom them to the hard life they could expect.

Boys would attach themselves to a captain – a relation or family friend – and hope, by gaining his good opinion, to secure his help in looking for promotion. In return he gained the loyalty and effort of his junior officers. Unlike in the army, naval commissions could not be bought. Patronage was essential in the early stages of a young man's career, when knowing someone influential hastened promotion, as Jane's anxious letters about her brothers, and the episode concerning William Price and Admiral Crawford in *Mansfield Park* make clear.

Prize money was the way that naval officers could hope to get rich, in war time at least. The captain would receive one quarter the value of a captured ship, the other ranks taking smaller proportions, and the ordinary seamen dividing the final quarter between them all. The arrangement did give even pressed men some incentive to practise good seamanship and fight well. Young Charles Austen spent his first £30 prize money on topaz crosses for his sisters; the prize money gained by Francis Austen for his part in the battle of Santo Domingo enabled him to marry; in *Persuasion*, Captain Wentworth has realized £20,000 in eight years' warfare. Unlike today, he and his brother officers actually looked forward to another war, as did Jane Austen's brothers, both of whom eventually rose to the rank of Admiral, displaying diligence, good judgement and fearless leadership at every stage of their careers.

CHARLES AUSTEN, JANE AUSTEN'S YOUNGER SAILOR BROTHER, AT THE TIME OF HIS WEDDING.

The Rights of Woman

OPPOSITE: MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT BY JOHN OPIE, 1797.

THE ENLIGHTENED and rational nature of eighteenth-century thought was conducive to the first wave of feminism. For in a society where morals and manners are being debated as important issues, it was natural that certain intellectual women should seek a part in the debate and should question, in particular, why women should not be considered as fully rational beings, with the same moral stature as men.

THE ACTRESS MRS JORDAN, WHO DEFIED THE CONVENTIONS THAT RESTRICTED WOMEN'S PLACE IN SOCIETY.

These early "female philosophers" as they were then called, or feminists as we would term them today, were non-militant and concerned only with rooting out male prejudice by rational argument. They made no demands for legal or constitutional change in the status of women. What blue-stocking authors like Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh and Catherine Macaulay discussed in their essays and pamphlets were questions of female education, marriage, moral autonomy and authority within the family. These are precisely the issues with which Jane Austen was to concern herself in her novels, which certainly, in their sympathetic portrayals of female lives, and claims for full moral stature in her female characters, bear a feminist reading. Meanwhile a more colourful and controversial figure had burst upon the feminist scene.

Mary Wollstonecraft

A teacher, novelist and outspoken polemical writer, who lived out her life in accordance with her unconventional principles, Mary Wollstonecraft did more for female emancipation in the long run than her more ladylike predecessors. Yet she was also, unwittingly, the cause of a serious setback in the movement, from which it took a very long time to recover.

Her most famous work is *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which was published in 1792, when Jane Austen was at the most impressionable age of sixteen, though we do not know whether a copy ever came her way. It seems unlikely that she could not have read it if she wished to, as she was a member of various book clubs and circulating libraries over the next few years.

A Vindication ... sums up the feminist ideas that had been developing over the century, and places them in the context of post-revolutionary Europe, in itself a dangerous ploy. By acknowledging her radical sympathies, the author risked alienating many, like Jane Austen herself, who would not otherwise fault her reasoning. The book emphasizes that reason and rational principle are the best guides to conduct in all human beings, male or female. It attacks male icons, particularly Milton and Rousseau, for advocating submission and weakness in women as a means of appealing to men. One of her main arguments is that the education girls receive equips them to attract husbands, but not to make good wives and mothers: "The civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect."

The 1798 controversy

Six years after the publication of *A Vindication* ... , Mary Wollstonecraft died in giving birth to her daughter Mary Godwin, who was to become the wife of the poet Shelley and author of *Frankenstein*.

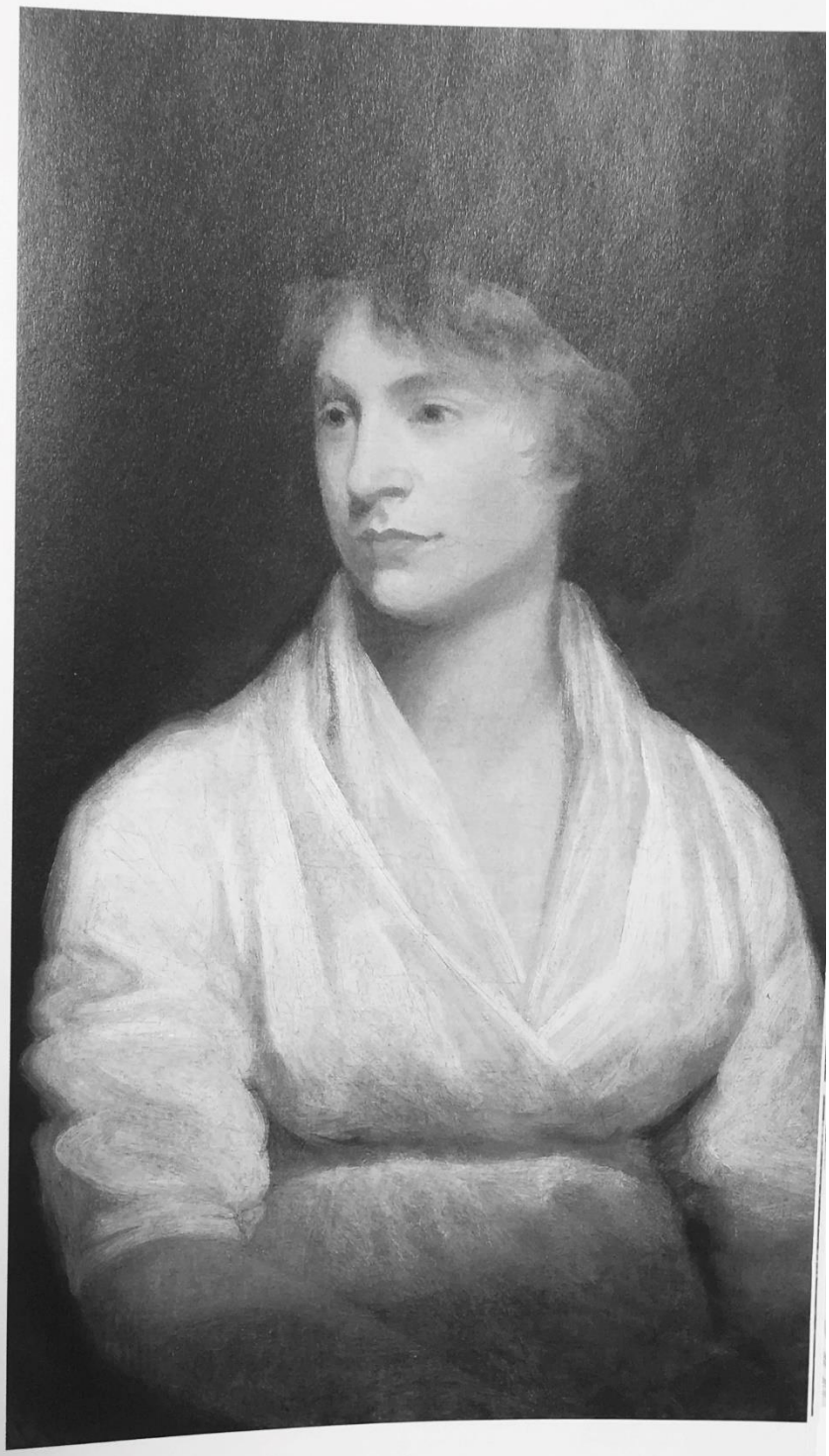
A few months after her death, Mary Wollstonecraft's husband, the radical writer William Godwin, published a *Memoir* of her. With genuine respect for the truth, but foolish disregard for how the truth would be received, he revealed the so-called "irregularities" in his wife's life story: a love affair that resulted in the birth of an illegitimate child, suicide attempts, and the conception of their own child before marriage.

As a result, Mary Wollstonecraft was branded a whore and an atheist – Godwin had exaggerated her rejection of Christianity to suit his own views – and not only her own arguments discredited, but those of any other woman who dared to write on the subject, for it was argued they all wanted to overthrow the institutions of marriage and religion. It would be half a century before the feminist movement found its voice again.

Meanwhile, to add to their difficulties in trying to gain respect for their work in a male-dominated sphere, women writers of any kind, even those not addressing feminist issues, had to be more careful than ever to stress their respectable private lives, domestic virtues and ladylike credentials.

As part of the angry male response to Godwin's revelations, within the year the Reverend Richard Polwhele had published an anti-feminist satirical poem entitled *The Unsex'd Females*. He put forward the view that it was a sign of the corruption of the age that women's work should be considered on its merits, like men's. He described "the sparkle of confident intelligence" as, in itself, a proof of immodesty in a female author.

1798 was the year that, had the publisher Cadell accepted Mr Austen's offer of his daughter's manuscript the previous November, *First Impressions*, that most "light and bright and sparkling" of all novels, would have first appeared. Was there an element of relief in Jane Austen's natural disappointment? It would be five years before she would even attempt to sell any of her finished manuscripts again.

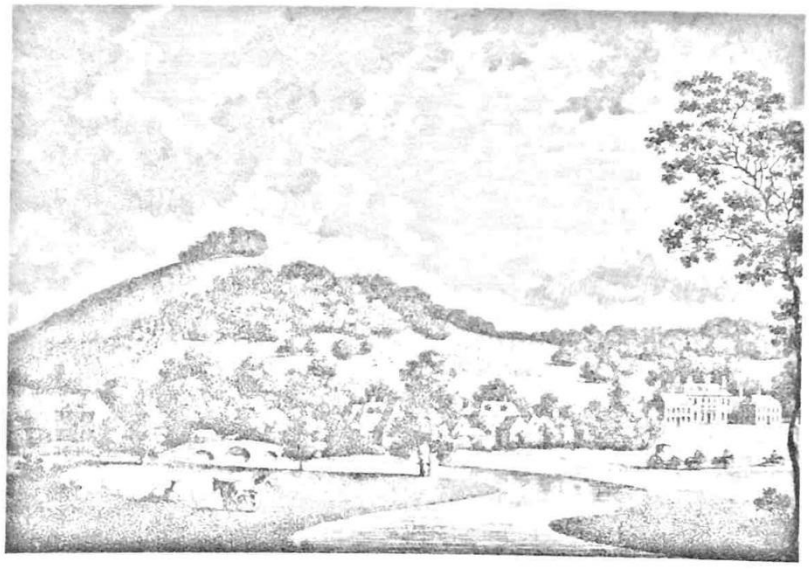


The Country House

OF ALL LOVELY THINGS created in the Georgian era, the country house was undoubtedly the loveliest. The Georgians had a genius for building. Money and taste were both in good supply. As a consequence their legacy to us includes countless number of Palladian houses, great and small, made of stone or brick, distinguished by their exquisite symmetry and proportion. It was a style equally well suited to the imposing mansion of a great landowner, set in its rolling parkland, as to a more modest dwelling like a country rectory. Such a building might be only five windows wide above, with a central front door and two windows on the ground floor either side, but on that scale it would possess all the charm of a doll's house.

Jane Austen's intimacy with such houses, of all sizes, was extensive, from Godmersham Park, the splendid 1730s-built home of her brother Edward, to Ibthorpe House in Hampshire, rented for a while by her friends the Lloyds, a delightful brick-built specimen of the medium-sized Georgian house.

GODMERSHAM PARK HOME OF JANE AUSTEN'S BROTHER EDWARD AND OFTEN VISITED BY HER.

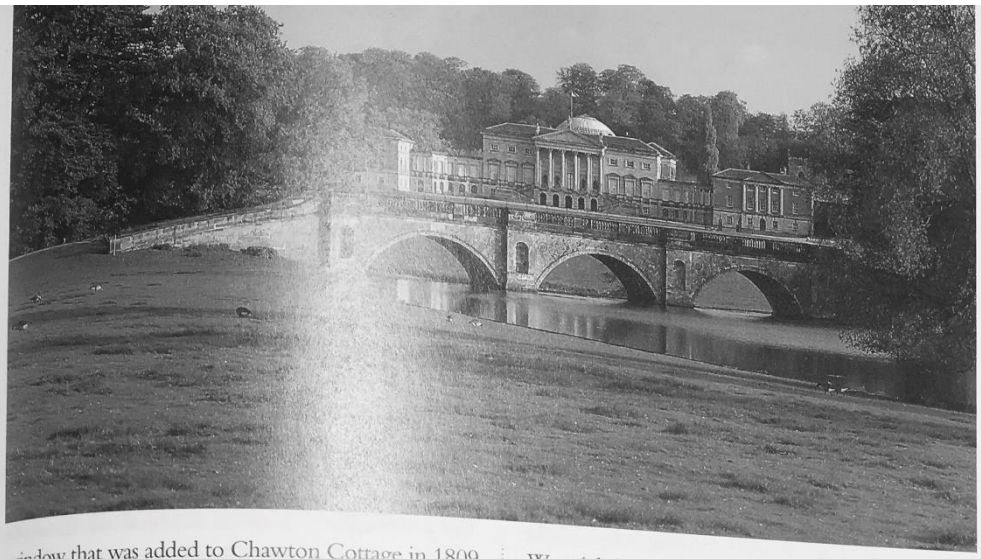


Calm and authoritative, the Palladian style perfectly expressed the spirit of a self-confident and ordered age. Almost all the houses in which Jane Austen places her characters would have been in this style. The only exceptions are when she tells us specifically that a house is older – Sotherton Court, for example, is Elizabethan – or exceptionally new, like Trafalgar House in *Sanditon*. Her fictional houses have no direct counterparts in real life. Rather they were products of her imagination, taking this and that feature from from the wealth of those known to her.

Regency Styles

When the restrained perfection of the classical style eventually began to seem exhausted, or insipid, later generations of Georgian and Regency builders sought variety by adding frolics and flourishes inspired by the Oriental, Greek Revival or Gothic influence. Where once there had been only one acceptable architecture, now there was a confusion of styles to choose from. The Royal Pavilion at Brighton, built as a classical villa 1780, was given its fantastic onion-domed dress by John Nash in 1815, and was only the most flamboyant of several early eighteenth century buildings in this style. The characteristic of the Greek Revival house was the Doric portico, but it was a rather grave style more often applied to public buildings than houses.

High Gothic was eventually to monopolize architecture whether for public, domestic or ecclesiastical buildings, but this was later in the nineteenth century. Regency Gothic was more playful and more superficial. Its pointed windows were applied to houses of otherwise classical symmetry. Even the



KEDLESTON HALL IN DERBYSHIRE AN ELEGANT EXAMPLE OF A NEO-CLASSICAL COUNTRY HOUSE, DESIGNED BY ROBERT ADAM.

window that was added to Chawton Cottage in 1809 was given Gothic glazing bars, though the house had been built a century before. Regency Gothic, which might also feature toy turrets and battlements, was especially favoured for houses by the sea.

Two favourite decorative building materials of the Regency period were stucco and wrought iron, both of which gave a light and cheerful look to the houses they adorned. Wrotham Rectory in Kent, where Jane Austen spent two nights in 1813 as the guest of some relations of her brother Edward, makes generous use of both. This charming small house might have been the model for Uppercross Cottage in *Persuasion*, with its iron "veranda and other prettinesses".

Abbeys, castles and follies

One kind of country house was quite different from any of these. There was a taste for antiquity throughout the period which made owners of genuine old abbeys and castles particularly envied. Many abbeys had survived the Reformation to be converted into homes for the aristocracy or gentry. Examples in the novels include Donwell Abbey and Northanger Abbey, both in their different ways made into comfortable homes. Catherine Morland, with her "passion for ancient edifices" caught from reading gothic novels, thrills at the idea of staying in a real abbey, only to find to her very great disappointment that it has been thoroughly modernized and extended with classical wings. Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, seat of Mrs Austen's family the Leighs, had undergone a similar treatment, a massive Baroque block having been added to the original medieval structure, with no attention paid to consistency of style. Donwell Abbey has been more sympathetically handled. Its rooms are "rambling and irregular" suggesting no modern additions.

When Georgian landowners longed for some relic of antiquity to call their own, they often set about building one themselves to add interest to their grounds. Thus Blaise Castle, which John Thorpe tells Catherine Morland is the oldest castle in the land, was actually built in 1766. Jane Austen would have expected her readers to know that it was merely a garden folly, designed to look good from the windows of Blaise Castle House, itself a very restrained Palladian mansion. Blaise is a fully finished but miniature castle; other follies were actually built as ruins.

About the building of ruins, William Gilpin wrote, "To give the stone its mouldering appearance ... to show how correspondent parts have once united, though now the chasm runs wide between them, and to scatter heaps of ruin around with negligence and ease, are great efforts of art." And then, he added, if weather and nature do not play their part, "Your ruin will be still incomplete - you may as well write over the gate, 'Built in the year 1772' ". His advice that a man should not attempt to build a ruin unless he had £30,000 to spend is an exaggeration. But the nation that could afford the money and ingenuity to build ruins, certainly must have enjoyed a superfluity of both.

Interiors

THE INTERIOR OF KENWOOD HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD, NORTH LONDON.

FROM ABOUT THE 1770S came a change in the interior layout of the large country house. Early eighteenth century mansions had been designed to impress visitors with a series of state rooms opening out of one another, forming, when all the intervening doors were open, a long vista. But increasingly the comfort, enjoyment and privacy of the family became paramount, and in modern houses rooms each with their separate purpose opened off a central hall – drawing room, dining room, library, billiard room and so forth.

Whereas once the principal rooms had occupied the *piano nobile* – a raised storey above the semi-basement kitchen and offices – in the more modern houses they were sited on the ground floor, so that family and guests could step easily into the garden. At about the turn of the century, French windows became popular, and conservatories and verandahs were later introduced to make the transition from house to garden even more tempting.

The spirit of the home

Within the rooms, the arrangement of the furniture was also changing. It was now scattered informally in pleasant groupings, instead of being ranged against the walls and brought forward by servants when required. This is what is happening to the old-fashioned square parlour at Uppercross, "to which the present daughters of the house were gradually giving the proper air of confusion by a grand piano forte and a harp, flower-stands and little tables placed in every direction". The lived-in look was fashionable. Needlework, books and letters could be left scattered about; without such evidence of feminine occupation, as the novelist Fanny Burney remarked in 1801, "a room always looks forlorn".

Indeed, Jane Austen's lifetime witnessed a feminization of the home in spirit as well as visual detail. From being a rather masculine area of pomp and display, in which women's concerns had little place, it became the setting for cosy domesticity where men might look to women for their soothing and civilising influence. Home became the woman's

acknowledged domain. It took the Victorians to invent the concept of the "Angel of the House" – the guardian of unsullied morality within the sacred home. But Regency families were certainly taking the first steps in that direction. Sir Thomas Bertram, in wishing to "shut out noisy pleasures" and spend every evening seated round the hearth with his womenfolk, is a straw in the wind.

AN ORMOLU-MOUNTED MAHOGANY WINDOW SEAT FROM THE REIGN OF GEORGE IV.

Furnishing Styles

Lightness, elegance and a diversity of influences characterized Regency interiors as well as exteriors. Gothic, Greek and Oriental details might be applied to furniture as much as to architecture, though not necessarily in the same house. There was a fourth very fashionable style, the Egyptian, which was inspired by Nelson's defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of the Nile in 1798.

A Regency room would contain more pieces of furniture, and objects generally, than a mid-Georgian one, but each piece would be more delicate, even spindly. Sheraton was the most famous cabinet-maker of the 1790s and early 1800s; he died in 1806. The six-legged sideboard (four in the front and two at the back) was his invention. Ovals, a favourite Sheraton motif, were much used in inlay. Characteristic designs of the period included the X-framed stool and the Grecian sofa, designed to be seen from the back as well as the front, since it might be placed in the middle of the room. Reclining on a sofa was itself a Regency idea, shocking to the older generation who had been trained to sit bolt upright on settees and chairs.

Fireplaces gave scope for elegant design. On the mantelpiece might be ornaments of "the prettiest English china" as there are at Northanger Abbey. A large mirror over the fireplace reflected the light from an increasing number of candelabra back into the room. Dark wooden floors were now more likely to be covered either in carpet, or the newly invented oilcloth, forerunner of linoleum. Wallpaper became cheaper towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the striped and floral designs in pastel colours also added to the impression of lightness in rooms. Windows were larger, glazing bars thinner, and drapes made of lightweight fabrics.

An acquisitive society

In any description of the trends of Regency furnishing, however, it must not be forgotten that many, if not most, of the houses Jane Austen visited and wrote about contained furniture from an earlier age, or a mixture of periods. We must not imagine all her interiors being pure Regency, a mistake modern film-makers do not always avoid. But it is true that the diffusion of prosperity, and awareness of fashion, certainly encouraged the replacement and renewal of furniture, furnishings and other objects for the home. Mary Crawford, when she is thinking of marrying Tom Bertram before Edmund takes his place in her affections, considers Mansfield Park "might do" if it were "completely new furnished". Yet Mansfield Park seems modern compared with Sotherton Court, so out of date as to warrant one of Jane Austen's rare descriptions of an interior: "amply furnished in the taste of fifty years back, with shining floors, solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding and carving".

At the time of Elizabeth Bennet's visit to Pemberley, Mr Darcy has newly furnished a pretty sitting room for his sister "with greater elegance and lightness" than the remainder of the house. Willoughby hints at buying "modern furniture" for Allenham, when it becomes his own, at a cost of about £200 per room. Old furniture was not valued, even sentimentalists like Marianne Dashwood desired to possess the latest styles.

WALLPAPER OF THE ERA.