

# A Commonplace Book

for

*Fanny Price*

Selected and Introduced by

Elaine Bander

Printed in Montreal for the 2014 JASNA AGM

**Mansfield Park** *in Montréal: Contexts, Conventions & Controversies*

by

Hartfield Editions

*With thanks to the JASNA International Visitor program for generous funding of part of the research for this project, and to JASNA (Canada) for assistance with the cost of publication.*

Introduction © Elaine Bander 2014  
All rights reserved.

Editor: Susan Allen Ford

Art Editor: Kristen Miller Zohn

The design of page 22 was modeled on typical title pages of Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*. The engraving there reproduced, *View of Windermere from Gill Head* (painted by Joseph Farington, engraved by T. Medland) is used with the kind permission of Jean and Martin Norgate: [www.geog.port.ac.uk/webmap/thelakes/html/maps/bmz10.htm](http://www.geog.port.ac.uk/webmap/thelakes/html/maps/bmz10.htm).

## **Hartfield Editions**

Montréal, Québec, Canada  
[hartfieldditions@gmail.com](mailto:hartfieldditions@gmail.com)

ISBN: 978-0-9809553-1-6  
Printed in Montréal, Québec, on recycled paper.

*This limited edition of 700 copies is published by the JASNA 2014 AGM (Québec: Montréal Region) to commemorate the 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America: **Mansfield Park in Montréal: Contexts, Conventions and Controversies.***

## Introduction

This project grew out of my research into possible sources for Fanny Price's formative (if fictional) reading experiences,<sup>1</sup> but, in another sense, it is the product of an adult lifetime spent reading and thinking about Jane Austen. I came relatively late to Austen's novels. When I was twelve, a friend who knew my fondness for nineteenth-century novels lent me a copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, but the dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet struck me as so unnaturally stilted that I was unable to read past the first chapter. (The Brontës were *much* more to my taste.) Only when obliged to read *Emma* for an undergraduate novel survey course did I belatedly recognize Austen's greatness. Within a year I had read all of her novels, juvenilia, fragments, and letters, and within a decade I was writing my dissertation on Austen.

The explosion of critical interest in Jane Austen triggered by her bicentenary in 1975 coincided with my own season of researching and writing that dissertation. Most critics at the time viewed *Mansfield Park* as an anomaly, Austen's "problem" novel. Like Fanny Price herself, *Mansfield Park* was, with few exceptions, overlooked and underappreciated.<sup>2</sup> From my first reading of it, however, this rich, complex, compelling novel seemed to me not at all peripheral, but rather, central to any understanding of Austen's writing. I did not believe that one could simply dismiss the inconvenient, sterner parts of Austen's oeuvre as mistaken, ironic, or a cowardly nod to conventional morality. Sunnier novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, or gentler tales like *Persuasion*, had to be read in the context of the calculated challenges of *Mansfield Park*. Moreover, the vehemence of critical hostility to the character of Fanny Price—Lionel Trilling famously declared, ignoring the evidence of Austen's own "Opinions of *Mansfield Park*," "Nobody, I believe, has ever found it possible to like the heroine of *Mansfield Park*" (128)—forced me to think about how Austen consciously shaped each novel to provoke a range of possible readings, some more subtle than others. And so I found my thesis.

I have been revisiting *Mansfield Park* ever since, revising my understanding of the novel with each re-reading, but I have never wavered in my admiration for Fanny Price—an admiration which I am convinced Jane Austen felt, and hoped that readers would feel.<sup>3</sup> Clearly many readers find Fanny's habits of quiet observation and moral steadfastness unattractive, her lack of wit and

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of the research for this project was funded by the Jane Austen Society of North America's International Visitor Program, which paid for a month's residence at the Chawton House Library in July 2011. I am very grateful to JASNA and the Greater New York Region for this wonderful program, to Chawton House Library for accommodating me, and to then-Librarian Jacqui Grainger for her assistance.

<sup>2</sup> The history of the critical reception of *Mansfield Park* is inextricably bound up with hostility to Fanny. Recently Mary Waldron wrote of that complex history, "[T]here are many shades in the assessment of the character of Fanny, but the great majority of critics finally see her as guiltless in a venal world" (260). In contrast, Amy J. Pawl claims, "*Mansfield Park* is a 'problem novel' largely because Fanny Price is a problem heroine" (288).

Some earlier critics have recognized the novel's greatness. Avrom Fleishman's *A Reading of Mansfield Park* was the first book-length study of a single Austen novel. In his influential 1971 book, *The Improvement of the Estate*, Alistair M. Duckworth, too, argued the centrality of *Mansfield Park* to an understanding of Austen, quoting Joyce Cary's *To Be a Pilgrim* as an epigraph to his *Mansfield Park* chapter:

"I used to think *Pride and Prejudice* the best," she said, "but now I think *Mansfield Park* better."  
 "You are quite right—it has a far deeper and truer experience of life—it is a book for the adult."

(qtd. in Duckworth 35)

<sup>3</sup> Austen, like her character Edmund, calls her "my Fanny" (533), an endearment she bestows upon no other heroine.

charm repellent, but I find her exemplary (perhaps because she looks forward to the courageous moral steadfastness of Jane Eyre, another poor, frail, oppressed, courageous orphan-heroine whom I *did* love in childhood).<sup>4</sup> Fanny is so clearly better equipped than her cousins to navigate the Wilderness of a complex modern world: “I was quiet,” she tells Miss Crawford, “but I was not blind” (419). Fanny not only sees more than any of the other characters, but alone of all the novel’s characters, and in common with other Austen heroines, she also reflects seriously upon what she observes, she examines her own motives with rigorous honesty, she struggles against her baser emotions, and she strives to honour the duty, gratitude, and love that she owes to others.

As Mary Waldron points out, moreover, the stakes are so much higher for Fanny than for her sister heroines: “In the first three novels the heroines make silly but ultimately harmless mistakes; authority figures such as parents are shown to be in error, but good sense finally comes to the rescue. Fanny, on the contrary, is caught up in a dangerous and damaging ethical system from which there is no real escape at all” (262).<sup>5</sup> Fanny does change and grow, as every Austen heroine must, but her necessary revisions of opinion are modest ones: at Portsmouth, for example, she learns that Mansfield Park has truly become “home” and that she is happiest in the countryside. In essentials, she never alters.

Moreover, Fanny clearly differs from Austen’s livelier heroines such as Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, for while she is clever, she is not witty. (Mary Crawford has wit in abundance, and much good it does her, which presumably is Austen’s point.) Fanny even differs from Austen’s other “good girls,” Elinor Dashwood and Anne Elliot, for she is diffident rather than confident in asserting her moral authority; she does so only when necessary, and despite her own timid, compliant nature.<sup>6</sup> In fact, unlike Catherine Morland, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, who are each “humbled to the dust,” as Catherine feels in *Northanger Abbey* (177), Fanny must learn to trust her own authority, eventually assuming the role of mentor to her sister Susan. She does not, therefore, fit easily into existing categories of Austen heroines. Over decades, certainly, the critical conversation about *Mansfield Park* has taken a very serpentine course, but Fanny, I am convinced, has kept to that first great path through the Wilderness, and there I choose to join her.

This project began as my attempt to identify some of the writers who might be presumed to have formed Fanny’s principles and taste, initially under Edmund’s tutelage, of course, but later through her self-directed reading. I was also looking for works that might have provided this gentle, anxious, affectionate young woman with role models for “all the heroism of principle” that she so courageously embraces (307). My original project was to construct an imagined version of Fanny’s own commonplace book—that is, a reading journal into which Fanny would have copied significant passages from books and periodicals, adding her own thoughts and reflections.

“Commonplacing,” as this pedagogical activity of compiling a personal anthology was called, began in antiquity, continued through the Early Modern period (largely in Latin), and was

---

<sup>4</sup> But see Pawl’s essay, which argues persuasively that the character of Fanny Price also looks back to eighteenth-century sentimental heroines.

<sup>5</sup> Waldron, however, argues that Fanny, and to a lesser extent Edmund and Sir Thomas, are failed exemplars of their Evangelical beliefs, impotent to effect change in other characters, and that Fanny’s failings are at least partly responsible for the disasters to come.

<sup>6</sup> Pawl shrewdly observes that many critics preoccupied with Fanny’s alleged “passivity” fail to acknowledge her heroism because “[h]er actions are morally significant but negatively constructed . . .” (289).

still flourishing in Austen's time, by then mostly in English.<sup>7</sup> As late as 1796, John Locke published an English translation of a treatise he had originally written in French: *A New Method of a Common-Place-Book* explains his system for organizing and indexing one's extracts in a commonplace book so that they are easily retrievable. His method requires the commonplacer to analyse the content of each extract, then to enter it under an appropriate subject head, much like a cataloguer today. These "heads" would be tailor-made by each commonplacer: Latin preferred, English tolerated. Locke's method also requires a full, cross-referenced bibliographic description for each source text, including "the name of the treatise, the size of the volume, the time and place of its edition, and (what ought never to be omitted) the number of pages that the whole book contains" (450). (Those of us who conducted major research projects before the days of word processing and electronic searches, using subject-headed file cards or slips of paper with cross-referenced bibliographies, will recognize the principle.) Moreover, as Locke explains, by noting the total number of pages in a work plus the specific pages of the extract, then "by the rule of three" he can locate the same passage even in another edition (450-51).

Commonplacing as practiced by Locke clearly involved more than merely copying out passages from works read. Because one had to analyse the content of the extract in order to determine an appropriate heading under which to enter it, commonplacing required a reader to think critically about the selected passage. At its best, therefore, commonplacing provided a rigorous, interactive strategy by which a reader could analyse individual texts, synthesize various sources, and integrate extracts into a personal anthology.

By Jane Austen's time, ready-made books of commonplaces, or rather, anthologies arranged like commonplace books under subject headings, were popular schoolroom furnishings. Probably the best known such work was Vicesimus Knox's *Extracts, Elegant, Instructive, & Entertaining*, better known as *Elegant Extracts*, available in three volumes: prose, epistles (letters), and poetry. Knox claims in his Preface,

The utility of Compilations like the present is sufficiently obvious. At an easy expense they supply, to young persons in the course of a school education, the place of a great variety of English Books; introduce them to an acquaintance with our best and most approved Writers; and lay the foundation for improvement and entertainment in advanced life. . . . [I]t forms a valuable little Library for Scholars. (n.p.)

Susan Allen Ford recounts how this popular work was well-entrenched in the Austen family:

The massive anthologies assembled by Vicesimus Knox were extremely popular, going through many editions from the early 1780s through the 1820s. That popularity is reflected in the Austen family libraries. . . . Jane Austen herself owned a copy of the volume of prose (now at Jane Austen's House, Chawton), which she gave to her eight-year-old niece Anna in 1801 . . . when the family's library was sold preparatory to the move to Bath. And Alice Marie Villaseñor has pointed to a copy of *Elegant Extracts in Poetry* signed "Edward Austen 1808," part of the Knight Collection at Chawton House Library. ("Reading *Elegant Extracts*," n.p.)

No doubt so ubiquitous a work would have found its way to the Mansfield Park schoolroom as well.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Allan, Colclough, Dacome, and Jackson on the history and practice of commonplacing.

Another commonplace anthology, *The Female Reader* (1789), was compiled specifically for young women by Mary Wollstonecraft, writing pseudonymously (as “Mr. Cresswick”) and still conventionally, albeit with a strong Lockean belief in education and reason. In her later *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as Moira Ferguson points out, Wollstonecraft attacked works of prescriptive morality like Dr. Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) and Dr. Fordyce’s *Sermons* (1765), arguing that women must first be taught to *think* before being told how to *act*. Ferguson adds, “*The Female Reader* likewise offers a more intellectual base than contemporary manuals, both in its form, which demands a special kind of attention, and in its substance” (Ferguson viii). Rejecting Shaftesbury’s theory of moral sense—or, as Austen calls it in *Mansfield Park*, when referring to Henry’s love for Fanny, “moral taste” (274)—Wollstonecraft “began to see reason as the essential prerequisite to moral consciousness, and hence an imperative in female education” (Ferguson xiv). In fact, Ferguson reads Wollstonecraft’s anthology as Wollstonecraft’s own commonplace book: “This volume is more than a textbook for females; it is an autobiographical album which helps to explain her polemics the following year” (xxviii). Significantly, Wollstonecraft’s selections—primarily from contemporary sources and, most unusually, about a third by women—were intended to be read aloud by young women in order to hone their elocution skills. These young women would thus learn to read for sound as well as sense: Wollstonecraft was literally giving women their voices. Remembering Sir Thomas’s wish to have his sons, at least, speak well, we may presume that Miss Lee might have used *The Female Reader* in the Mansfield schoolroom, and that Fanny might have practiced reading aloud from its pages. If so, then some of Wollstonecraft’s selections might have also influenced Fanny’s critical thinking and inspired her to give voice to her judgments when necessary. Certainly she would have appreciated Wollstonecraft’s invocation of Proverbs IV: “Get wisdom, get understanding” (Wollstonecraft 81-82).

Or so I assumed in my search for sources that Fanny might have read and copied. Guided by references in *Mansfield Park* and in Austen’s letters, and by the holdings listed in the *Catalogue* of the Godmersham Park Library, to which Austen would have access when visiting her brother Edward Knight, I selected some significant extracts from works that I believed Fanny Price might have read and, just possibly, have copied into a commonplace book—that is, had she in fact maintained one.

The snag in this project, however, quickly became apparent: Jane Austen disdained the practice of commonplacing. Wollstonecraft’s political opposite, Jane West, had condemned the practice in her 1806 conduct book, *Letters to a Young Lady*:

There is a species of composition which is very popular, but should, in my opinion, only be sought for by those who have little leisure; and even then, since it is more useful to know a few things well, than to imbibe a confused jumble of every thing, even such readers might employ their time more advantageously; I speak of those works which go by the name of Extracts, Anecdotes, Beauties, and Anas.<sup>8</sup> (2:505)

West believed that the practice of reading such anthologies yielded neither instruction nor delight, for “A beauty, torn from its native soil, often becomes a deformity” (2:505).

---

<sup>8</sup> “Ana” is an eighteenth-century term for a collection of literary anecdotes, such as Hester Thrale’s *Thraliana*.

Significantly, the only Austen character known to keep a commonplace book is dull, pedantic Mary Bennet.<sup>9</sup> Early in *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mr. Bennet teases his family about meeting Mr. Bingley, he first pretends to misunderstand his wife, then turns his sarcasm on his daughter Mary:

“Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you *there*. What say you, Mary? for you are a young lady of deep reflection I know, and read great books, and make extracts.”

Mary wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how. (7)

To Mr. Bennet, at least, Mary’s practice of commonplaceing is a symptom of her silliness, a source of ridicule.<sup>10</sup> Pat Rogers offers the following gloss to this passage:

Despite the ironic tone of Mr. Bennet’s reference to Mary’s habits, the preceding decades had seen an expanding culture of literary awareness among women. Young girls in particular were encouraged to make their own anthologies by copying out passages, usually of an improving kind, from the books they read. Blank manuscript volumes were widely sold, which the owner could then use as a “commonplace book” to record these elegant extracts. (465 n. 5)<sup>11</sup>

In Mary’s case, the practice permits her to recite stale, sententious sentiments from those “improving” books:

“Pride,” observed Mary, who piqued herself upon the solidity of her reflections, “is a very common failing I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed, that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary.” (21)

Mary’s “reflections” owe nothing to critical thought: she simply repeats “all that [she has] ever read.” Her speech continues: “Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have other think of us” (21). Rather than sharing genuine critical reflections upon the ideas of others, or seriously considering definitions of these terms, Mary merely parrots extracts from the writings of established moralists like Hugh Blair and Hester Chapone.

In contrast, Fanny *does* interact critically with the sources that she reads, and she does so not by copying extracts but by thinking about and discussing what she reads, primarily with Edmund, who significantly “made reading useful by talking to her of what she read” (25). Yet while Austen constructs Fanny as a serious, thoughtful, reflective reader (unlike Mary Bennet, she truly *is* “a young lady of deep reflection” who reads “great books”), *Mansfield Park* offers no suggestion that Fanny systematically “makes extracts.” We *do* know that Fanny spends her

---

<sup>9</sup> If Austen herself kept a commonplace book, we have no trace or mention of it. Many of her music manuscripts, in contrast, have survived, carefully copied for her own use. Instead of commonplaceing, young Austen wrote burlesques. Indeed, the Austens seemed to prefer the book club approach. Austen’s letters are full of references to books that the Austen women are reading of an evening and discussing among themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Harriet Smith, another silly girl, compiles a collection of charades, but that hardly qualifies as a commonplace book.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Allen Ford has suggested that the blank notebooks young Austen received from her father might have been intended by him for commonplace books. Characteristically, Austen filled them with burlesques.

precious leisure time reading and reflecting in the East Room: “She could go there after any thing unpleasant below, and find immediate consolation in some pursuit, or some train of thought at hand.—Her plants, her books—of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling . . .” (178). Moreover, we hear her on several occasions speaking her thoughts upon different topics, from the role of the clergy to the remarkable nature of the evergreen, indulging her “wondering strain” (244). Fanny, I concluded, processes ideas through reflection and conversation, not through writing. The narrator does not absolutely declare that Fanny abjured the practice of commonplacing, but no commonplace book figures in the narrative, and the performative aspect of commonplacing would have been alien to her nature.

I decided, therefore, to abandon my attempt to create a hypothetical commonplace book *of* Fanny Price but, rather, to assemble a commonplace book *for* Fanny Price: a collection of formative extracts from works that Jane Austen might have read, and which in turn she might have assumed that her heroine had also read. These works had to be accessible, at least in theory, to both Austen and Fanny, and they had to provide insight into Fanny’s character, values, or sense of self. Furthermore, following Locke’s recommendations, I wanted to organize those extracts under English “heads” that I hoped Fanny might have chosen or, at least, would have found pertinent. The resulting collection of extracts would thus be *my* commonplace book, offered in *honour* of Fanny Price, in hope that these contextual extracts would help other readers to understand and to sympathise with Austen’s least-beloved heroine.

Unloved or not, Fanny Price, remarkably, is Jane Austen’s only intellectual heroine. As Kathryn Libin has observed, she boasts none of the usual female accomplishments with which novel heroines in Austen’s time, including most of Austen’s own, were so liberally gifted: Fanny neither paints, nor draws, nor sings, nor does she play the piano-forté or the harp.<sup>12</sup> While she assists one aunt in meaningless needlework and the other in cutting roses (presumably to make *pot pourri*), neither needlework nor gardening crafts *per se* are her passions. Nor will she agree to perform in a play.<sup>13</sup> She does not even seem eager to learn French or Italian. Fanny, in fact, eschews all of the showy displays of accomplishment expected of young ladies.

Rather than perform, Fanny reads. Furthermore, she thinks about what she has read. She yearns to see things she has read about; and, when possible, she discusses books and ideas with other sympathetic readers, preeminently Edmund, as we learn early in the novel, and early in Fanny’s stay at Mansfield:

He knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading, which, properly directed, must be an education in itself. Miss Lee taught her French, and heard her read the daily portion of History; but he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; *he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read*, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise. (24-25, my emphasis)

---

<sup>12</sup> “Alone among Jane Austen’s heroines, Fanny Price remains innocent of accomplishment” (127), Libin points out, noting that from her first days at Mansfield, Fanny rejects the opportunity to learn music and drawing: “Instead she is permitted without intervention to cultivate her own tastes, particularly her taste for reading” (138). Furthermore, Libin argues, Fanny resists the decorative, decorous art forms of her time and class in favour of the sublime beauty of nature (137).

<sup>13</sup> Libin observes that the novel abounds with activities involving inauthentic rhetorical performance: “both musical and theatrical performance also belong to what Kant called the ‘arts of eloquence’: they cultivate the formal gestures and devices of rhetoric, as does sermon-making. . . . Any such activity would involve instability and a loss of authenticity in a nature as straight-forward and artless as Fanny’s” (146).

With Edmund away at school and university, however, such discussions were bound to be rare. Fanny learns her French lessons with Miss Lee and dutifully memorizes passages of history, but neither of these “educational” activities develops her critical mind. For that she must read and think. Fanny’s intellectual curiosity and judgment would have, of necessity, developed largely in solitary reflection.

When Fanny graduates from the schoolroom, she has few opportunities to share her thoughts with sympathetic minds. Her livelier older cousins are interested in fashionable pursuits and showy accomplishments. Mary Crawford, her only companion when her cousins are all from home, has no interest in Fanny’s musings. While the two young women sit together in the Parsonage shrubbery, Fanny speculates at length about the faculty of memory, but “Miss Crawford, untouched and inattentive, had nothing to say; and Fanny, perceiving it, brought back her own mind to what she thought must interest,” choosing tactfully to praise Mrs. Grant’s taste rather than to rhapsodize about ““our powers of recollecting and of forgetting”” (243). Alas for Fanny, her thoughts quickly carry her on again to contemplation: ““The evergreen! . . . When one thinks of it, how astonishing a variety of nature!”” (244). Miss Crawford, however, does *not* think of it. Clearly, Fanny enjoys her reflections in isolation not by choice but by necessity.

Fanny is bookish and contemplative by nature as well as nurture, as we learn when she is back in Portsmouth observing her sister Susan’s struggles to achieve something like Fanny’s own polish. As Susan’s mentor, Fanny recreates her chilly East Room comforts in their shared bedroom, furnishing it with books and playing Edmund to Susan’s Fanny: “to be a renter, a chuser of books! . . . Susan had read nothing, and Fanny longed to give her a share in her own first pleasures, and inspire a taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself” (461). Susan, however, is “without any of the early delight in books, which had been so strong in Fanny, with a disposition much less inclined to sedentary pursuits, or to information for information’s sake. . . . The early habit of reading was wanting” (485). Fanny’s taste for reading, then, derives in part from her education but probably more from her inclination for “sedentary pursuits” and her thirst for “information for information’s sake.” Clearly, Fanny has the tastes, temperament, and values of an intellectual.

From Fanny’s private reflections, from her conversations with others, and from the novel’s few explicit references to actual books, I have tried to infer what works Fanny might have read and found worth noting. In the schoolroom at Mansfield Park, as we have seen, Fanny learned her “daily portion of History,” probably Goldsmith’s *History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son*, as John Wiltshire notes in the Cambridge edition of *Mansfield Park* (646 n.18). During the excursion to Sotherton, Fanny shows her familiarity with Walter Scott’s poetry (100).<sup>14</sup> When Edmund visits Fanny in the East Room, we learn of her interest in travel narratives, Crabbe’s poetry, and Johnson’s prose: ““You . . . will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on?—(opening a volume on the table and then taking up some others.) And here are Crabbe’s Tales, and the Idler, at hand to relieve you, if you tire of your great book”” (183). Fanny’s commonplace book should therefore contain excerpts from travel accounts and works about Empire such as Lord Macartney’s account of his Embassy to China as well as Crabbe’s *Tales* and Johnson’s *The Idler*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> She quotes Scott’s description of gothic Melrose Abbey in his 1805 poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, a tale of rude Border chivalry. See Sarah Emsley’s essay on this passage.

<sup>15</sup> The significance of various accounts of Lord Macartney’s Embassy to China, along with other works on travel and empire that Austen was reading while composing *Mansfield Park*, has received extensive critical

Despite her timidity and diffidence, Fanny questions her uncle, newly returned from Antigua, about the slave trade. I have therefore assumed that Fanny would have read, as Austen did, Thomas Clarkson's influential history of the successful struggle to abolish the slave trade, the great moral issue of the day. His *History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of The Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (1808), an account of relentless depravity, cruelty, avarice, oppression, and moral indifference, is also a deeply moving personal testimony to the moral courage, Christian charity, intellectual honesty, and selfless commitment of the men and women who wrote in condemnation of slavery and the slave trade, who petitioned against it, who organized law suits and committees to outlaw it, who gathered evidence to support their case, who brought repeated motions to the floor of the House of Commons, and who finally, in 1807, triumphed with a successful vote in Parliament for Abolition—repeated debates and votes in which Sir Thomas Bertram, as a baronet with a seat in the House of Commons, would certainly have participated. Fanny's question to Sir Thomas indicates her awareness of his personal involvement in this great national debate both as a legislator and as a (probable) slave-owner reaping the economic consequences of the legislation. Fanny would surely have admired Clarkson as much as Austen did, and certain passages in his *History* describing his personal struggle over committing himself to the great cause at the cost of personal ambition would, I believe, have helped inspire Fanny's own principled resistance to wrong.<sup>16</sup>

And of course, Fanny turns to biography as well as poetry for recreational reading. Austen wrote to Cassandra early in October 1813: "Southey's *Life of Nelson*;—I am tired of Lives of Nelson, being that I never read any. I will read this however, if Frank [her brother Francis Austen] is mentioned in it" (*Letters* 235). Frank, who had served under Nelson, was not in fact mentioned. I suspect, however, that Austen *did* read Southey's *Life* that autumn, because it features some surprising similarities to *Mansfield Park*.<sup>17</sup> Surely, as a Portsmouth lass with a beloved brother in the King's Service, Fanny too would have read Southey's *Life of Nelson*, and perhaps she would have recognised parallels between the National Hero's exemplary history and her own. Southey frames his account of the early life of Nelson as that of an unlikely, frail young lad who, against all odds, rises to heroism through sheer force of will and an unshakeable faith in an ideal of honour and service. Fanny's story, I believe, has a similar trajectory.<sup>18</sup>

---

commentary. See, for example, Ferguson, Perry, Knox-Shaw, Perkins, and Ford ("Fanny's 'great book'"). In contrast, the allusion to *The Idler* has received little comment; presumably Fanny's taste for Johnson is not controversial. Crabbe's *Tales*, however--a work by one of Jane Austen's favourite poets--does present a conundrum (or perhaps, an infinite regression), since Crabbe's poem "The Parish Register," which appears in his earlier *Poems* (1807), concerns a young woman named "Fanny Price" who bears some strong parallels to Austen's Fanny, as many critics have observed. See, for example, Harding (107-09); Harris (154); Nokes (427). See also Winborn (7-8) for a detailed discussion of critical reaction to this possible allusion.

<sup>16</sup> In January 1813, while she was at work on *Mansfield Park*, Austen alluded to Thomas Clarkson in a letter to Cassandra in which she compares her admiration for Charles William Pasley, author of the dashing *Essay on the Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire*, to her earlier feelings for Clarkson: "I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson . . ." (*Letters* 198).

<sup>17</sup> See John Wiltshire's *The Hidden Jane Austen* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014, Chapter 5).

<sup>18</sup> Although Southey's *Life* appears several years after the generally agreed time in which the events of *Mansfield Park* occur, Austen (if not Fanny) might have seen the work before completing the manuscript of *Mansfield Park*. John Wiltshire suggests in his Introduction that while *Mansfield Park* was with Egerton by November 1813, Austen had probably retained the manuscript, continuing to work on it throughout late 1813 and early 1814. According to Austen's letters to Cassandra written in early March 1814, her brother Henry was reading the fair copy of *Mansfield Park* for the first time as they journeyed up to London

In addition to reading, Fanny has one other deeply felt passion: her close observations of, reflections upon, and intense delight in nature, a taste that her female cousins and Mary Crawford pointedly do not share. On several occasions in the novel, the normally silent Fanny “rhapsodizes” (her own word) upon nature. On the outing to Sotherton, for example,

Their road was through a pleasant country; and Fanny, whose rides had never been extensive, was soon beyond her knowledge, and was very happy in observing all that was new, and admiring all that was pretty. She was not often invited to join in the conversation of the others, nor did she desire it. Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions; and in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment that could only have been heightened by having Edmund to speak to of what she felt. (94)

Mary Crawford, in contrast, “had none of Fanny’s delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talent for the light and lively” (94). Fanny’s observations and reflections on this occasion, in Edmund’s absence, must remain unspoken.

A few days later, after dinner at Mansfield, Fanny and Edmund enjoy a view through an open window of “the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods,” while behind them the other young people prepare to sing glees around the piano.

Fanny spoke her feelings. “Here’s harmony!” said she, “Here’s repose! Here’s what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe. Here’s what may tranquilize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene.” (132)

Fanny finds beauty, harmony, and repose not through painting or music-making but through the contemplation of nature.<sup>19</sup> Even the sublimities of the late summer evening sky, however, do not prevent Edmund from drifting away to join Mary at the piano for a different kind of harmony.<sup>20</sup>

Two months later, Fanny’s cousins have departed, Mary Crawford is bored, and a “sort of intimacy” develops between the two women based more on “Miss Crawford’s desire of something new” than on Fanny’s pleasure in her company (242). As they sit and walk together in Mrs. Grant’s shrubbery, Fanny comments on the pretty scene:

“Every time I come into this shrubbery I am more struck with its growth and beauty. Three years ago, this was nothing but a rough hedgerow . . . and now it is converted

together (*Letters* 255, 258), possibly, Wiltshire speculates, to deliver that fair copy to Egerton (Introduction xxix). And even if Austen had not read Southey’s *Life* before submitting *Mansfield Park*, she would surely have been familiar with Horatio Nelson’s life story, or might even have seen the earlier “official” biography by James Stanier Clarke (yes, *that* Clarke) and James MacArthur, *The Life of Admiral Lord Nelson, K. B., from his Lordship’s Manuscripts*. 2 vols. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809. In *The Hidden Jane Austen*, Wiltshire makes a strong case for Southey’s influence on Fanny’s story.

<sup>19</sup> See Libin’s discussion of Fanny’s taste for nature and the sublime in contrast to Mary Crawford’s more social, strategic tastes and attitudes (146-48). Jane West advises young ladies, “A temperate pursuit of these sciences will also be of great service in quickening our observation, or rather in diverting it from frivolous objects, and in forming habits of close attention and argumentative deduction” (2.425).

<sup>20</sup> See Wiltshire’s gloss on this passage (674 n.11).

into a walk . . . ; and perhaps in another three years we may be forgetting—almost forgetting what it as before. How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind!” (243)

From contemplating the beauties of the shrubbery, Fanny’s active mind moves on to contemplate the faculty of memory:

“If any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient—at others, so bewildered and so weak—and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond controul!—We are to be sure a miracle every way—but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out.” (243)

Mary Crawford, “untouched and inattentive,” has nothing to say in response to these Johnsonian musings,<sup>21</sup> so Fanny “brought back her own mind to what she thought must interest” Mary, tactfully praising Mrs. Grant’s taste in landscape design: “How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen!” (244). Her remarks stimulate her to further reflection upon nature:

“You will think me rhapsodizing; but when I am out of doors, especially when I am sitting out of doors, I am very apt to get into this sort of wondering strain. One cannot fix one’s eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy.” (244)

Mary, however, quickly turns the conversation away from nature back to people. Fanny, like eighteenth-century aristocratic female naturalists such as Mary Delany and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, is a close observer of the natural world. Her reflection, moreover, carries her thoughts easily from natural to moral philosophy, where Mary cannot follow her.

During her exile in Portsmouth, Fanny learns painfully how important to her were her close observations of the countryside at Mansfield:

It was sad to Fanny to lose all the pleasures of spring. She had not known before what pleasures she *had* to lose in passing March and April in a town. She had not known before, how much the beginnings and progress of vegetation had delighted her.—What animation both of body and mind, she had derived from watching the advance of that season which cannot, in spite of its capriciousness, be unlovely, and seeing its increasing beauties, from the earliest flowers, in the warmest divisions of her aunt’s garden, to the opening of leaves of her uncle’s plantations, and the glory of his woods. (500)

Ironically, the one person at Portsmouth who shares Fanny’s appreciation for natural beauty turns out to be the visiting Mr. Crawford. As he accompanies the Misses Price on a Sunday stroll on the ramparts, the lovely day “produced altogether such a combination of charms for Fanny, as made her gradually almost careless of the circumstances under which she felt them” (474). Indeed,

The loveliness of the day, and of the view, *he felt like herself*. They often stopt with the same sentiment and taste, leaning against the wall, some minutes, to look and

---

<sup>21</sup> Wiltshire identifies the exact sources (243 n. 4). See also Libin, who argues that Fanny sees true harmony, beauty, and transcendence only in the natural world: “Fanny thus stands revealed as a seeker after beauty, truth, and moral worth, sharing a more Kantian philosophy than most of her counterparts in the Austen canon” (145).

admire; and considering he was not Edmund, Fanny could not but allow that he was sufficiently open to the charms of nature, and very well able to express his admiration. (475, my emphasis)

Of course, that slippery phrase “he felt like herself” is ambiguous: is it the narrator’s voice giving us access to Henry’s complex feelings, or the free indirect expression of Fanny’s assumption about Henry? Chameleon-like Henry might well be reading Fanny’s tastes in order to reflect them back to her, just as Willoughby did with Marianne Dashwood’s. Nevertheless, Fanny’s observations of nature clearly animate both her body and mind, even permitting her to share a pleasurable conversation with Mr. Crawford.

In addition to selections from poetry, history, biography, moral treatises, and travel narratives, therefore, I believe that Fanny’s commonplace book would have excerpts from some schoolroom science texts on natural history and astronomy. Some of those texts might even suggest to Fanny hints about her place in the natural world. Charlotte Smith’s poem “A Walk in the Shrubbery,” for example, praises “A moralizing Botanist,” which surely describes Fanny in the Parsonage shrubbery. And in the East Room, Fanny’s geraniums are as significant as her books. She retreats to her “nest of comforts . . . to see if . . . by giving air to her geraniums she might inhale a breeze of mental strength herself” (179). I have therefore included excerpts from botanical works about domestic plants, specifically discussions of the distinctions between native and cultivated flowers that Fanny might find peculiarly applicable to herself.<sup>22</sup> Could Fanny be a shrubby geranium?

Austen’s other heroines are also enthusiastic, even in some cases systematic, readers, familiar with serious literature and the arts, and more than able to hold their own in lively debates of ideas. None of the other heroines, however—not even Anne Elliot, who, while similarly isolated and repressed, also has music as a consolation and estate duties as a social distraction—lives her inner life so completely through reading and reflection as does Fanny Price. Catherine Morland is often dismissed as a silly girl because she finds history tedious, but she is a reader of solid good taste: unlike the Thorpe clan and their friends, she enjoys reading and re-reading Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison*, and clearly she is willing to expand her reading tastes and to discuss her reading under the tutelage of, first, Isabella Thorpe and, later, the Tilneys. Catherine, however, is no intellectual. Marianne Dashwood’s taste in music and poetry is self-indulgent and emotionally driven; in contrast, Elinor praises Edward’s more systematic, reflective reading: “. . . have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure” (23). In *Pride and Prejudice*, as we have seen, it is foolish Mary, not witty Elizabeth, who keeps a commonplace book. At Netherfield, when Elizabeth prefers reading a book to participating in a game of loo, Miss Bingley calls her “a great reader” who “has no pleasure in any thing else,” but Elizabeth protests, “I am *not* a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things” (40-41). Emma, we know, is quick and clever and can compile impressive reading lists

---

<sup>22</sup> See Lynch for an analysis of how Austen handled the contemporary ideological distinction between naturalized versus hot-house plants. See also George for an account of the contemporary stereotype of the sexually-aroused female botanist: “botany becomes a discourse of female sexuality in eighteenth-century literature” (2). I thank David Sigler for pointing out Richard Polwhele’s note to his 1798 anti-feminist poem, “The Unsex’d Females”: “But how the study of the sexual system of plants can accord with female modesty, I am not able to comprehend.”

(37), but she lacks any kind of systematic application, and does not apparently keep a commonplace book, for which she would have had to read, at least partially, some of those serious books on her list. Despite Emma's plans "of improving her little friend's mind, by a great deal of useful reading and conversation" (73), Harriet, merely collects amusing riddles (74).

Anne Elliot, socially isolated and undervalued, possessing "an elegance of mind and sweetness of character" (6), is the Austen heroine most like Fanny Price. Although Sir Walter reads only the *Baronetage*, Anne's mind is furnished with poetical descriptions of autumn (90), and she is sufficiently well-read to recommend to Captain Benwick "such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, [and] such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering" as might fortify his grieved mind (109). She also knows enough Italian to sight-translate the lyrics of a song and, like her author, enjoys playing the piano-forte as well as reading books. While still at Kellynch, she has many other tasks to occupy her as well: visiting the parish, copying the catalogues of her father's books and pictures, and packing her own books and music (41). At Uppercross, where Anne is more socially engaged, no one reads books (43), and at Bath, she famously tells Captain Harville, "I will not allow books to prove any thing" (255). Finally, Austen's last heroine, Charlotte Heywood, while she can hold her own in a discussion with Sir Edward Denham about modern poetry and is reminded of Burney's *Camilla* while visiting the lending library, is not at all a bookish young lady, however carefully she observes the world of Sanditon. Clearly, Fanny Price is alone among Austen's heroines in being primarily defined by her reading tastes and by her quiet, usually solitary, reflections.

In the following pages, I offer a few possible sources for those readings and reflections. I long ago abandoned the possibility of compiling an exhaustive collection of works which might have influenced fictional Fanny Price, and it seemed unnecessary to include some of the most obvious (and easily accessible) authors such as Johnson, Cowper, Blair, and Scott. Instead, the following extracts have been chosen precisely because they might not be obvious influences upon Fanny's values and taste, or because they provide a context for some of her views that strike us today as uncongenial. They enlightened my understanding of how Fanny was formed. I hope they may do the same for you.

Elaine Bander  
Montréal, Québec

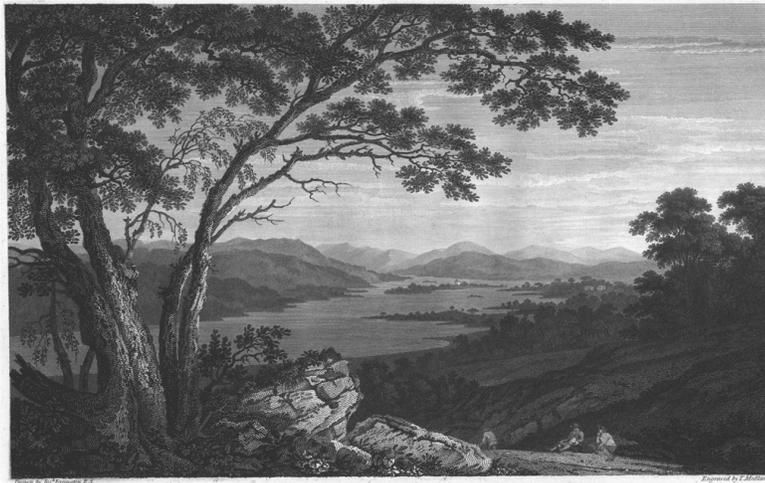
### Works Consulted

- Allan, David. *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*. Cambridge: CUP, 2011.
- Austen, Jane. *Jane Austen's Letters*. Ed. Deirdre Le Faye. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1995.
- Austen, Jane. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*. Gen. ed. Janet Todd. 8 vols. Cambridge: CUP, 2005-08.
- Clarkson, Thomas. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*. 2 vols. London, 1808.
- Colclough, Stephen. "Recovering the Reader: Commonplace Books and Diaries as Sources of Reading Experience." *Publishing History* 44 (1998): 5-37.
- Dacome, Lucia. "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64.4 (2004): 603-625.
- Duckworth, Alistair M. *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994.
- Emsley, Sarah. "My idea of a chapel' in Jane Austen's World." *Persuasions* 24 (2002): 133-42.
- Ferguson, Moira. *Colonialism and Gender Relations from Mary Wollstonecraft to Jamaica Kincaid: East Caribbean Connections*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction. *The Female Reader*. [By Mary Wollstonecraft.] London, 1789. Facsimile. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1980.
- Fleishman, Avrom. *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1967.
- Ford, Susan Allen. "Fanny's 'great book': Macartney's Embassy to China and *Mansfield Park*." *Persuasions On-Line* 28.2 (2008).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reading *Elegant Extracts* in *Emma*: Very Entertaining!" *Persuasions On-Line* 28.1 (2007).
- George, Sam. *Botany, Sexuality and Women's Writing, 1760-1830: From Modest Shoot to Forward Plant*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007.
- Harding, W. D. *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen*. Ed. Monica Lawlor. London: Athlone, 1998. 107-09.
- Harris, Jocelyn. *Jane Austen's Art of Memory*. Cambridge: CUP, 1989.
- Jackson, Ian. "Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *The Historical Journal* 47 (2004): 1041-54.
- Knox, Vicesimus. *Extracts, Elegant, Instructive, & Entertaining, in Prose, &c.* Books Third, Fourth, & Fifth. 3 vols. London, 1791.
- Knox-Shaw, Peter. "Fanny Price Refuses to Kowtow." *Review of English Studies* 47.186 (1996): 212-17.
- Libin, Kathryn L. "Lifting the Heart to Rapture: Harmony, Nature, and the Unmusical Fanny Price." *Persuasions* 28 (2006): 137-49.
- Lynch, Deidre Shauna. "'Young ladies are delicate plants': Jane Austen and Greenhouse Romanticism." *ELH* 77.3 (2010): 689-729.
- Nokes, David. *Jane Austen, A Life*. New York: FSG, 1997.
- Pasley, Charles William. *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire*. London, 1810.
- Pawl, Amy J. "Fanny Price and the Sentimental Genealogy of *Mansfield Park*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16 (2004): 287-316.
- Perkins, Moreland. "*Mansfield Park* and Austen's Reading on Slavery and Imperial Warfare." *Persuasions On-Line* 27.1 (2005).
- Perry, Ruth. "Austen and Empire: A Thinking Woman's Guide to British Imperialism." *Persuasions* 16 (1994): 95-106.
- Southey, Robert. *The Life of Nelson*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. London, 1814.
- Trilling, Lionel. "*Mansfield Park*." *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Ian Watt. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1963. 124-40. Rpt. from *The Opposing Self*. New York: Viking, 1955.
- Waldron, Mary. "The Frailties of Fanny: *Mansfield Park* and the Evangelical Movement." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 6 (1994): 259-81.
- West, Jane. *Letters to a Young Lady; in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered, Chiefly with a Reference to Prevailing Opinions*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 3 vols. London, 1811.
- Wiltshire, John. Introduction. *Mansfield Park*. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen. Cambridge: CUP, 2005.
- Winborn, Colin. *The Literary Economy of Jane Austen and George Crabbe*. London: Ashgate, 2004.

A COMMONPLACE BOOK FOR FANNY PRICE

OR

*Useful and Entertaining*  
P A S S A G E S



*...but an intimate acquaintance with the works of nature and genius in their most beautiful and amiable forms humanizes and sweetens the temper, opens and extends the imagination, and disposes to the most pleasing view of mankind and providence.*

*Dr. Gregory.*

ADVICE

I have often thought how ill-natur'd a Maxim it was, which, on many occasions, I have heard from People of good-understanding; "That, as to what related to private Conduct, No-one was ever the better for ADVICE." But upon further Examination, I have resolv'd with myself, that the Maxim might be admitted without any violent prejudice to Mankind. For in the manner Advice was generally given, there was no reason, I thought, to wonder it shou'd be so ill receiv'd. Something there was which strangely inverted the Case, and made the Giver to be the only Gainer. For by what I cou'd observe in many Occurences of our Lives, That which we call'd giving Advice, was properly, taking an occasion to shew our own Wisdom, at another's expence. On the other side, to be instructed, or to receive Advice on the terms usually prescrib'd to us, was little better than tamely to afford the Occasion of raising himself a Character from our Defects.

In reality, however able or willing a Man may be to advise, 'tis no easy matter to make ADVICE a free Gift. For to make a Gift free indeed, there must be nothing in it which takes from Another, to add to Our-self. In all other respects, to give, and to dispense, is Generosity, and Good-will: but to bestow Wisdom, is to gain a Mastery which can't so easily be allow'd us. Men willingly learn whatever else is taught 'em. They can bear a Master in Mathematicks, in Musick, or in any other Science; but not in Understanding and Good Sense.

—Shaftesbury, Soliloquy, Characteristicks I, pp. 105-06

## ASTRONOMY

Scarce 2000 stars can be seen by the naked eye; but ten, or, perhaps, twenty times more, may be discerned by telescopes. The discoveries of Dr. Herschel prove, that their number is considerably greater than former astronomers have supposed.

Thus, in the Pleiades, where only six stars are to be seen with the naked eye, Dr. Hook counted 78 with a twelve-foot telescope; and with longer telescopes he discovered a great many more. (See his *Micography*, p. 241.) And in the constellation Orion, where but 62 stars can be counted with the naked eye, 2000 have been numbered with the help of telescopes.

Can we think that God made these vast and numerous bodies only to twinkle to us in the night? or is it not a more reasonable conjecture that the fixed stars are all suns with planetary worlds moving around them, like our sun? which, perhaps, is no other than one of the fixed stars.

—Jennings, in *Elegant Extracts*

Let us for a moment leave the small part of the universe to which we belong, and extend our view within the confines of the ethereal expanse: where suns innumerable resplendant shine, animating other planetary worlds that circulate round them. This idea is too grand for our circumscribed comprehensions to appreciate; but the fact is established by the evidence of our senses, and confessedly manifest to us by our reason, which perceives and judges of one thing by another. God has created nothing in vain; and these beautiful luminaries appear like our sun: therefore we naturally infer, that they are suns like that which animates our system, and created for the same wise and beautiful purposes.

—Margaret Bryan, *Lectures on Natural Philosophy*, p.282

The stars appear of various sizes to us; but whether this arises from any real difference of size in them, or only from their being situated more or less remote from our earth, we cannot determine; for we have no means of ascertaining their distances from our globe, not being able to form an angle with any of them; yet we have the best reason to believe that they are placed at different distances from it. . . . Providence has so ordained, that these circulating worlds should be at different distances from the sun at different periods, by causing sometimes the centripetal force to be greater and sometimes less. . . .

*How fitly formed—how duly balanced, is this wonderous system! Each planet has its appointed station and direction, and implicitly obeys the laws prescribed by God Omnipotent! ... the grand survey of the universe, taken in its aggregate magnificence, certainly imparts the most elevating thoughts, displays the profoundest evidences, and affords the most sublimely glorious spectacle of creating Wisdom!!!*

*—Margaret Bryan, pp.282-83*

**BEAUTY**

*The beauty of the body has the advantage of being always before our eyes, while that of the mind and soul does not display itself but at particular times; but whenever these different objects are presented to us, and that passion does not obstruct a proper view of them, then the pleasure arising will be agreeable to that disposition and order which I have observed: and thus it is, that practice confirms what nature teaches us, that the beauty of a lively genius gives more right to happiness than that of the body; yet at the same time it is greatly inferior to that of the soul. It sometimes happens by our peculiar dispositions, that the beauty of the body makes a more forcible impression than that of the mind or soul. Then it is an attraction which invites us to procure a kind of immortality. The omnific Author of Nature looked upon the preservation of our species to be an object more worthy his care, than the singular superiority of any individual.*

*—Intellectual Sentiments, pp. 117-18*

**BIOGRAPHY***Women and Biography*

*Women, unsophisticated by the pedantry of the schools, read not for dry information, to load their memories with uninteresting facts, or to make a display of a vain erudition. A skeleton biography would afford to them but little gratification: they require pleasure to be mingled with instruction, lively images, the graces of sentiment, and the polish of language. Their understandings are principally accessible through their affections: the delight in minute delineation of character; nor must the truths which impress them be either cold or unadorned. I have at heart the happiness of my sex, and their advancement in the grand scale of rational and social existence. . . . A woman who, to the graces and gentleness of her own sex, adds the knowledge and fortitude of the other, exhibits the most perfect combination of human excellence.*

*—Female Biography, Preface*

*Biography is a branch of history, and in skillful and ingenious hands becomes a source of elegant and instructive entertainment.*

*— Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 425*

**BOTANY**Geraniums

*It were idle to attempt a general description of a plant so well known as any common species of Geranium; since there is scarcely a street, or even an alley in London, but is adorned with one or more of them. But there are many plants bearing this title which have no kind of resemblance to these in their general appearance, and which the most passionate lover or attentive observer of these beautiful plants, unskilled in the mysteries of botanical science, would never discover to belong to them. —Flora Domestica, p. 145*

Shrubby African geraniums

*The Shrubby African Geraniums are commonly increased by cuttings, which, planted in June or July, and placed in the shade, will take root in five or six weeks. In September, or in October, as the weather is more or less mild, they must be housed in winter; at which time they should be gently watered twice a week, if the weather is not frosty. In May they may be gradually accustomed to the open air, and about the end of that month, be placed abroad entirely in the day; but should still for the next two or three weeks be under cover at night, though fresh air must be admitted. —Flora Domestica, p. 146*

Hardy Geraniums

*The shrubby kinds are the most tender; the others should have free air admitted to them whenever the weather is not very severe: in mild weather, the shrubby kinds also may be permitted to enjoy the fresh air.*

*—Flora Domestica, p. 148*

Shrubbery"A Walk in the Shrubbery"

by Mrs. Smith

To the cistus or rock rose, a beautiful plant, whose flowers expand,  
and fall off twice in twenty-four hours

The Florists, who have fondly watch'd,  
Some curious bulb from hour to hour,  
And to ideal charms attach'd,  
Derive their glory from a flower;

Or, they, who lose in crouded rooms,  
Spring's tepid suns and balmy air,  
And value Flora's fairest blooms,  
But in proportion as they're rare;

Feel not the pensive pleasures known  
To him, who thro' the morning mist,  
Explores the bowery shrubs new blown,  
A moralizing Botanist. —

He marks, with colours how profuse  
Some are design'd to please the eye;  
While beauty some combine with use,  
In admirable harmony.

The fruit buds, shadow'd red and white,  
Amid young leaves of April hue;  
Convey sensations of delight,  
And promise fruits autumnal too:

And, while the Thrush his home and food,  
Hails, as the flowering thorns unfold,  
And from its trunk of ebon wood,  
Rears Cytisus its floating gold;

The Lilac, whose tall head discloses  
Groups of such bright empurpled shade,  
And snow-globes form'd of elfin roses,  
Seem for exclusive beauty made:

Such too art thou; when light anew  
 Above the eastern hill is seen,  
 Thy buds, as fearful of the dew,  
 Still wear their sheltering veil of green.

But in the next more genial hour  
 Thy tender rose-shaped cups unfold,  
 And soon appears the perfect flower,  
 With ruby spots and threads of gold.

That short and fleeting hour gone by,  
 And even the slightest breath of air,  
 Scarce heard among thy leaves to sigh,  
 Or little bird that flutters there;

Shakes off thy petals thin and frail,  
 And soon, like half-congealing snow,  
 The sport of every wandering gale,  
 They strew the humid turf below.

Yet tho' thy gauzy bells fall fast,  
 Long ere appears the evening crescent,  
 Another bloom succeeds the last,  
 As lovely and as evanescent.

Not so the poet's favourite Rose,  
 She blooms beyond a second day,  
 And even some later beauty shews—  
 Some charm still lingering in decay.

Thus those, who thro' life's path have pass'd,  
 A path how seldom strewn with flowers!  
May have met Friendships formed to last  
 Beyond the noonday's golden hours.

While quickly formed, dissolv'd as soon,  
 Some warm attachments I have known  
 Just flourish for an hour at noon,  
 But leave no trace when overblown.

Minds that form these, with ardent zeal  
 Their new connexions fondly cherish,  
 And for a moment keenly feel  
 Affection, doomed as soon to perish;

*Incapable of Friendship long,  
Awake to every new impression,  
Old friends, becoming ci-devant!  
Are still replaced by a Succession.*

*—Beachy Head, Fables, and Other Poems*

## CONVERSATION

*In the course of my observation I have remarked that persons who possess most sense and knowledge are the most cautious of discovering it in common company. . . .*

*There is more advantage gained in silence and reflection than little minds can comprehend. . . .* —Rack, in *The Female Reader*, p. 112

DUTY

*Thomas Clarkson chooses duty over his family's ambitions for him:*

*I could look therefore to no person but myself; and the question was, whether I was prepared to make the sacrifice. In favour of the undertaking I urged myself, that never was any cause, which had been taken up by man in any country or in any age, so great and important; that never was there one in which so much misery was heard to cry for redress; that never was there one, in which so much good could be done; never one, in which the duty of Christian charity could be so extensively exercised; never one, more worthy of the devotion of a whole life towards it; and that, if a man thought properly, he ought to rejoice to have been called into existence, if he were only permitted to be an instrument in forwarding it in any part of its progress. Against these sentiments on the other hand I had to urge, that I had been designed for the church; that I had already advanced as far as deacon's orders in it; that my prospects there on account of my connections were then brilliant: that by appearing to desert my profession, my family would be dissatisfied, if not unhappy. These thoughts pressed upon me, and rendered the conflict difficult. But the sacrifice of my prospects staggered me, I own, the most. When the other objections, which I have related, occurred to me, my enthusiasm instantly, like a flash of lightening, consumed them: but this stuck to me, and troubled me. I had ambition. I had a thirst after worldly interest and honours, and I could not extinguish it at once. I was more than two hours in solitude under this painful conflict. At length I yielded, not because I saw any reasonable prospect of success in my new undertaking (for all cool-headed and cool-hearted men would have pronounced against it), but in obedience, I believe, to a higher Power. And this I can say, that both on the moment of this resolution, and for some time afterwards I had more sublime and happy feelings than at any former period of my life.*

*—Hist. of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, vol. I, pp. 228-30*

The Duties Required of a Woman in Society

*In society be unassuming, obliging, charitable; let your benevolence be as conspicuous in judging of conduct as in bestowing the gifts of abundance. Cultivate a cheerful disposition, and impart its emanations; but let your gaiety be tempered by sedate thought and reflection. Be not anxious about the domestic affairs of others: curiosity is trifling and impertinent, unless excited by the laudable motive of contributing, by our counsel or assistance, to the comfort and happiness of our fellow creatures. Avoid gossiping or talking of other people's affairs; for this practice bespeaks a weak and vacant*

mind, and derogates from the modesty, delicacy and refinement of the female character.

Let humility, urbanity and magnanimity adorn your exterior. Suffer not the little infelicities of domestic arrangement to enfeeble your mind—be great in thought, word and deed. ... Avoid the vicious, however exalted by rank, or aggrandised by wealth; and respect and distinguish virtue wherever it may appear. Always prefer the society of well-informed and religious persons  
 . . . .

[Most of all, remember] the indispensable qualifications of both a friend and a husband—religious principles and practice: never make your choice of either of these till you have discovered that they not only profess to be religious, but are truly so, in thought, word and deed.

—Margaret Bryan, *Lectures*, p.291-93

A woman's duty to obedience tempered by principle

I am one of those who think, that a predilection for unresisting sweetness may be urged to an extreme that is unfavourable to the virtue and happiness of both sexes. The primeval design of God in the creation of women, that she should be the help-mate of man, certainly extended to his spiritual as well as temporal existence. If, from mixing less with the busy scenes of active life, she be less capable of deciding with propriety in points where acuteness, penetration, and what is termed policy, are necessary, her principles, it must be granted, are for this reason less likely to be contaminated by collision of interest, and all the crooked machinations of over-reaching ambition. This subject might best be considered, when we come to that most intimate connexion with men, of which obedience forms our distinctive obligation. But as, with few exceptions, subservience is claimed from us by our male relatives, it may not be proper to observe, that whenever they err, either in morals or principles, a mild yet marked disapprobation is not pertinacity, but fortitude. It is, perhaps, the most difficult instance which a really amiable woman can give of command of temper . . . .

—Mrs. West, vol. II, pp. 361-62

The right (I should speak more correctly in saying the duty) of resistance, upon really important occasions, being admitted, and the exercise of it limited with the most exact bounds of prudence and ingenuousness, I must now observe, that as our relative situation causes us many trials from the coercion of our wills, and from opposition to our interests, we should be careful of adding to the number, by introducing domestic traitors into our own bosoms ....

— Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 36

## EDUCATION

*Females are not educated to become public speakers or players; though many young ladies are now led by fashion to exhibit their persons on a stage, sacrificing to mere vanity that diffidence and reserve which characterizes youth, and is the most graceful ornament of the sex.*

*But if it be allowed to be a breach of modesty for a woman to obtrude her person or talents on the public when necessity does not justify and spur her on, yet to be able to read with propriety is certainly a very desirable attainment. . . .*

*—The Female Reader, Preface, p. v*

### Get Wisdom!

*Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth.*

*Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.*

*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*

*Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. . . .*

*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*

*—Proverbs IV*

**EXERCISE**

*Exercise, both mental and corporeal, when duly regulated, and discreetly taken, highly contributes not only to the restoration and establishment of general health, but to the prevention and expulsion of this particular disease [i.e., melancholy].*

—Dr. Solomon, p. 28

**FRIENDSHIP**

*Friendship, indeed, when it is rational and sober, as well as lively and pleasant, is of all other remedies the most powerful and efficacious in the cure of this disease. It gives new life and animation to the object it supports; forming the most pleasing remedy against not only melancholy, but every grievance and discontent—for discontents and grievances are the lot of man—misery is necessary to the attainment of true happiness. Whatever is necessary, as Cicero asserts, on the authority of an ancient poet, cannot be grievous. The evils that a man is born to endure, he ought to bear without repining; remembering that fickleness is the characteristic of fortune; that sorrows surmounted sweeten life; and that the highest human attainment is a contented mind.*

—Dr. Solomon, pp. 28-29

*There are souls, which engage each other with greater power than the loadstone does steel; and nothing can excel that facility, which those who love have in communicating their ideas to each other. Their brains seem to be tuned in unison.*

—Intellectual Sentiments, p. 90

*Are a sycophant and a slave really more valuable than a monitor and a friend?*

—Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 364

GOVERNMENTMrs. Plumptre on the French Revolution:

All reasoning persons had long seen that the system of government, established in ages of darkness and ignorance, was ill adapted to times when the true nature and end of government were so much better understood; and the occasion was only wanting for this spirit to break out. But it was never the idea of reasonable people, that, in reforming abuses which were felt to be grievous and galling, the wheat should be rooted up with the tares: nor did the multitude, in wishing for the removal of certain oppressions, ever think of a total subversion of all habits to which they were attached, or expect to be deprived of all that they considered as the boast and ornament of the country:—while reformation was the wish of all, a total transformation was that of but a very few. It was not against monarchy, it was not against their monarch, that the people rose; but against abuses and oppressions which they had too long severely felt. . . . —Plumptre, vol. 1, pp. 117-18

Capt. Pasley on commerce versus defence

. . . our superior advantages for rearing seamen would terminate with the termination of the war. The coast of Europe, from the Baltic to the Adriatic, would then be seen swarming with numerous vessels navigated by continental seamen, who, with the same experience, may be supposed capable of acquiring equal skill with our own. Having just stated my reasons for believing, that the commerce of Europe is likely to acquire a great and decided superiority over ours; it is difficult to suppose, even making every allowance in our favour, that we shall be able hereafter, in case of some years peace, to bring more than half the number of able seamen into competition with those of the continent. But even if we could flatter ourselves with the improbable hope, that our manufactures will always maintain their superiority over those of Europe, and that they may be allowed a free market every where; it by no means follows, that any indulgence will be extended to our navigation, the nursery and source of that naval power, which has been the main obstacle to Buonaparte's ambitious views of universal empire, and which must ever be beheld by him with a jaundiced eye, and with a heart full of envy and dread. It may be indifferent to him how many weavers and button makers are bred in Great Britain, or whether the eighteen kinds of ingenious artists, said to be employed in the manufacture of a pin for a woman's petticoat, diminish or increase in number in this country; they may even allow free vent to our wares in the French empire, on the liberal principle held by many eminent men, that the benefits of commerce are reciprocal; but the state of our navigation, and the number of our seamen, every one of whom they must dread as the

*warlike follower of some future Nelson, must ever be a serious object of jealousy and alarm; and, in peace as well as war, they will endeavour, by their internal regulations, to depress the one and to diminish the other.*

—Capt. Pasley, pp. 29-30

*Why we must pursue an offensive war*

*What can be more dull and stupid, than a war, in which a nation struggles for its existence, acting constantly and exclusively upon defensive principles? What can be more melancholy, or more dismal, than a war so managed, should it prove unsuccessful? Human life affords no calamities, the prospect of which can appear half so dreadful to the man who loves his country. On the other hand, can any thing be more cheerful, or more animating, to the subject of a free, an independent, and a warlike state, than the prospect of an increasing power and glory, resulting from a war undertaken, not from a wanton lust of conquest, but into which his country has been forced by the injustice of some sanguinary despot, who regards no laws human or divine. Such are the prospects which we have before us, if we choose to embrace a vigorous offensive system, and it appears to me, that the practicality of realizing them depends solely upon ourselves.*

—Capt. Pasley, p. 447

**HAPPINESS**

*Then let us not place our principal happiness in wealth and magnificence. There is no rank of life wherein it is not in our power to form a chain of agreeable sensations, by procuring to ourselves a sequence of virtuous exercises, and keep our faculties in motion without fatiguing them. Those are only happy, who, possessing the goods of fortune, can make themselves content in the privation of them.*

*—Intellectual Sentiments, pp. 154-55*

*There are many other grievances which happen to mortals in this life, from friends, wives, children, servants, masters, companions, neighbours, and ourselves, to the cure of which the following rules will greatly contribute—*

*“Recompence evil with good; do nothing through contention or vain glory; but every thing with meekness of mind and love for one another.”*

*—Dr. Solomon, p. 30*

## HEALTH

### Exercise

*Riding on horseback is an excellent exercise, and essentially beneficial in obstructed and nervous habits, and in all affections of the lungs; but when the nerves or bowels are very weak, the best substitute is riding in an open carriage. Moderate dancing occasionally is a valuable kind of exercise.*

—Dr. Solomon, p. 43

### Melancholy

*Change of air, and variety of pleasing objects, are the best remedies for this infirmity.*

—Dr. Solomon, p. 27

## HEROISM

*A Man is by nothing so much himself, as by his Temper, and the Character of his Passions and Affections. If he loses what is manly and worthy in these, he is as much lost to himself as when he loses his Memory and Understanding. The least step into Villany or Baseness, changes the Character and Value of a Life.*  
 —Shaftesbury, vol. 1, p. 82

### Lord Nelson's vow:

*"I felt depressed," said he, "with a feeling that I should never rise in my profession. My mind was staggered with a view of the difficulties I had to surmount, and the little interest [i.e., influence] I possessed. I could discover no means of reaching the object of my ambition. After a long and gloomy reverie, on which I almost wished myself overboard, a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within me, and presented my king and country as my patron. Well, then," I exclaimed, "I will be a hero! and, confiding in providence, I will brave every danger!"*  
 —Southey, Life of Nelson, p. 24

*He knew to what the previous state of dejection was to be attributed; that an enfeebled body, and a mind depressed, had cast this shade over his soul: but he always seemed willing to believe, that the sunshine which succeeded bore with it a prophetic glory, and that the light which led him on, was "light from heaven."*  
 —Southey, Life of Nelson, Vol. 1, p. 25

## HOME

### Young Nelson first leaves his brother William :

Early on a cold and dark spring morning Mr. Nelson's servant arrived at this school, at North Walsham, with the expected summons for Horatio to join his ship. The parting from his brother William, who had been for so many years his playmate and bed-fellow, was a painful effort, and was the beginning of those privations which are the sailor's lot throughout life. . . . He was put into the Chatham stage, and on its arrival was set down with the rest of the passengers, and left to find his way on board as he could. After wandering about in the cold, without being able to reach the ship, an officer observed the forlorn appearance of the boy, questioned him; and, happening to be acquainted with his uncle, took him home, and gave him some refreshments. —

. . . He paced the deck the whole remainder of the day, without being noticed by any one; and it was not until the second day that somebody, as he expressed it, "took compassion on him." —Southey, Life of Nelson, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8

### The pain of leaving home:

The pain which is felt when we are first transported from our native soil, when the living branch is cut from the parent tree, —is one of the most poignant which we have to endure through life. There are after-griefs which wound more deeply, which leave behind them scars never to be effaced, which bruise the spirit, and sometimes break the heart: but never do we feel so keenly the want of love, the necessity of being loved, and the sense of utter desertion, as when we first leave the haven of home, and are, as it were, pushed off upon the stream of life. Added to these feelings, the sea-boy has to endure physical hardships, and the privation of every comfort, even of sleep. Nelson had a feeble body and an affectionate heart, and he remembered through life his first days of wretchedness in the service.

—Southey, Life of Nelson, Vol.1, pp. 8-9

INDOLENCE

*There is not in the world a more useless, idle animal than he who contents himself with being merely a gentleman. He has an estate, therefore he will not endeavour to acquire knowledge; he is not to labour in any vocation, therefore he will do nothing. But the misfortune is that there is no such thing in nature as negative virtue, and that absolute idleness is impracticable. He who does no good will certainly do mischief; and the mind, if it not stored with useful knowledge, will necessarily become a magazine of nonsense and trifles: wherefore a gentleman, although he is not obliged to rise to open his shop, or work at his trade, should always find some ways of employing his time to advantage. If he makes no advances in wisdom he will become more and more a slave to folly; and he who does nothing because he has nothing to do will become vicious and abandoned, or at least ridiculous and contemptible.*

*I do not know a more melancholy object than a man of an honest heart and fine natural abilities whose good qualities are thus destroyed by indolence. Such a person is a constant plague to all his friends and acquaintance, with all the means in his power of adding to their happiness; and suffers himself to take rank among the lowest characters, when he might render himself conspicuous, among the highest.*

—Connoisseur, from The Female Reader, p. 78

## JUSTICE

*The qualities of candour, fortitude, charity, and generosity, for instance, are not in their natures virtues; and if ever they deserve the title it is owing only to justice, which, impels and directs them. Without such a moderator, candour might become indiscretion, fortitude obstinacy, charity imprudence, and generosity mistaken profusion.*

*A disinterested action, if it be not conducted by justice, is, at best, indifferent in nature, and not infrequently even turns to vice. . . .*

*—Goldsmith, in The Female Reader, p. 115*

## MORAL PHILOSOPHY

### Self-knowledge

*I shall therefore endeavour to lay down some rules for the discovery of those vices that lurk in the secret corners of the soul; and to shew my reader those methods, by which he may arrive at a true and impartial knowledge of himself. The usual means prescribed for this purpose, are to examine ourselves by the rules which are laid down for our direction in sacred writ, and to compare our lives with the life of that person who acted up to the perfection of human nature, and is the standing example, as well as the great guide and instructor, of those who receive his doctrines. . . .*

*We should likewise be very apprehensive of those actions, which proceed from natural constitution, favourite passions, particular education, or whatever promotes our worldly interest or advantage. In these or the like cases, a man's judgment is easily perverted, and a wrong bias, hung upon his mind. These are the inlets of prejudice, the unguarded avenues of the mind, by which a thousand errors and secret faults find admission, without being observed or taken notice of. A wise man will suspect those actions to which he is directed by something besides reason, and always apprehend some concealed evil in every resolution that is of a disputable nature, when it is conformable to his particular temper, his age, or his way of life, or when it favours his pleasure or his profit.*

—*from The Spectator, in Elegant Extracts*

### Principle and practice

*It has often been observed, that principle speaks in practice; right opinions, faithfully adhered to, will operate in virtuous and steady conduct; otherwise they must increase the condemnation and confirm the misery of the mind that lives at variance with its own determinations, and suffers its judgment to satirize its actions.*

—Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 309

### Manners and the Stage

*If we form an opinion of the present state of national manners from the most favoured productions of the theatre, how great must be our falling off; not in verbal decorum indeed, but in what is far more important, virtuous principle. In what we now consider as the licentious period of British comedy, vicious women were introduced; but it was in the light of degraded and disgusting objects. It is true, even the heroines often talked indelicately; but they always acted chastely. The times were then unrefined, and blunt coarseness of expression was not considered as an offence against morals or manners. I am*

unwilling to admit, that the character of our sex is really as much debased as their theatrical portrait persuades us to suppose. I rather hope, that the magic of the scene, and the attractive colourings of favourite actors, have made exceptional passages pass unregarded, and diverted the attention of the audience from the tendency of the plot, to the sprightliness of the exhibition. Yet it is an extraordinary coincidence, that in the three pieces that have been of late most honoured with public favour, the Stranger, Pizarro, and John Bull, the heroines are women of lost character. { Note : "The same remark applies to Lovers' Vows." }  
 —Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 315-16

### Sacrifice of pleasure

It is by the sacrifice of our pleasures, or by the limitation of our desires and accustomed comforts, that we fulfill the two injunctions of "letting our moderation be known to all men," and of "doing to others as we would they should do unto us." Beneficence, like "mercy, is blest in him who gives and in him who takes," when, by exercising this quality at the expence of a favourite inclination,, we prevent our passions from gaining dominion over us, and obtain a real conquest over ourselves by the act which administers succor to the afflicted.  
 —Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 338-39

## NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

### Reason and religion:

*Intellectual acquirements are the support, the defence, and the glory of human nature: without a proper exercise of our reasoning faculties, we become a disgrace to society, a burden to ourselves, and liable to all those deviations from rectitude which must finally doom us to obscurity, or involve us in disappointment. The most important knowledge in all situations of life, is that of our duty to God and Man; which the Scriptures teach, and all the attributes of the Deity most impressively enforce. Hence the truths of religion, and those of natural philosophy, by their affinity, combine in their effects, and unitedly enliven our present enjoyments, and strengthen and confirm our future hope.* —Preface, Margaret Bryan, Lectures on Natural Philosophy

*To seek for evidences of the Deity in the operations of his power, and the arrangement of his plans, is no impeachment of our faith; for we may naturally suppose these things were designed for our investigation—in order to confirm us in faith and goodness.* —Margaret Bryan, p.287

### Science and the Sublime

*So grand, beautiful and sublime is the whole scheme of the universe, that it requires the association of all the most elevating ideas, to raise the mind to a pitch of thought capable of conveying even the weakest impression of its astonishing excellence! yet the assimilating power of science enables us to calculate many of its sublime effects, and to view and understand its resplendent beauties, and most powerful energies, with ease, satisfaction and conviction.* —Margaret Bryan, p.273

### Natural philosophy recommended to women

*Natural history, experimental philosophy, botany and astronomy, open a delightful field of instructive entertainment to every young woman; and if pursued with propriety and discretion, cannot fail to furnish them with many agreeable ideas to solace the winter of life, when our infirmities in a great measure seclude us from society, and the falling away of our dear connexions*

*compels us to depend on self-amusement. A temperate pursuit of these sciences will also be of great service in quickening our observation, or rather in diverting it from frivolous objects, and in forming habits of close attention and argumentative deduction; qualities in which women are supposed to be defective.*

—Mrs. West, vol. II, pp. 424-25

**REFLECTION**

*There have been men, those called philosophers too, who have maintained, that the exercise of the mind is no farther agreeable than by the prospect of the fame and reputation, which it was probable we might gain thereby: but certainly our inward reflexions are sufficient to convince us, that we are frequently engaged in reading and meditation without any other intention, than that of spending the present hours agreeably. This exercise of the mind is so delightful, that sometimes it fills the soul with such extasy, that she seems to have freed herself from the body.*

—*Intellectual Sentiments*, pp. 71-72

*No man is obliged to learn and know every thing; this can neither be sought nor required, for it is utterly impossible: yet all persons are under some obligation to improve their own understanding; otherwise it will be a barren desert, or a forest overgrown with weeds and brambles. Universal ignorance or infinite errors will overspread the mind, which is utterly neglected, and lies without any cultivation.*

*The common duties and benefits of society, which belong to every man living, as we are social creatures, and even our native and necessary relations to a family, a neighbourhood, or government, oblige all persons whatsoever to use their reasoning powers upon a thousand occasions; every hour of life calls for some regular exercise of our judgment, as to time and things, persons and actions; without a prudent and discreet determination in matters before us, we shall be plunged into perpetual errors in our conduct. Now that which should always be practised, must at some time be learnt.*

*Besides, every son and daughter of Adam has a most important concern in the affairs of a life to come, and therefore it is a matter of the highest moment, for every one to understand, to judge, and to reason right about the things of religion. It is vain for any to say, we have no leisure or time for it. The daily intervals of time, and vacancies from necessary labour, together with the one day in seven in the Christian world, allows sufficient time for this, if men would but apply themselves to it with half so much zeal and diligence as they do the trifles and amusements of this life, and it would turn to infinitely better account.*

*Thus it appears to be the necessary duty, and the interest of every person living, to improve his understanding, to inform his judgment, to treasure up useful knowledge, and to acquire the skill of good reasoning, as far as his station, capacity, and circumstances, furnish him with proper means for it. Our mistakes in judgment may plunge us into much folly and guilt in practice. By acting without thought or reason, we dishonour the God that*

*made us reasonable creatures, we often become injurious to our neighbours, kindred, or friends, and we bring sin and misery upon ourselves: for we are accountable to God, our judge, for every part of our irregular and mistaken conduct, where he hath given us sufficient advantages to guard against those mistakes.*

—Watts, p. 1-2

*DEEPLY possess your mind with the vast importance of a good judgment, and the rich and inestimable advantage of right reasoning. Review the instances of your own misconduct in life; think seriously with yourselves how many follies and sorrows you had escaped, and how much guilt and misery you had prevented, if from your early years you had but taken due pains to judge aright concerning persons, times, and things.*

—Watts, p. 3

*Presume not too much upon a bright genius, a ready wit, and good parts; for this, without labour and study, will never make a man of knowledge and wisdom. This has been an unhappy temptation to persons of a vigorous and gay fancy, to despise learning and study. They have been acknowledged to shine in an assembly, and sparkle in a discourse on common topics, and thence they took it into their heads to abandon reading and labour, and grow old in ignorance; but when they had lost their vivacity of animal nature and youth, they became stupid and sottish even to contempt and ridicule.*

—Watts, p. 6

*It is meditation and studious thought, it is the exercise of your own reason and judgment upon all you read, that gives good sense even to the best genius, and affords your understanding the truest improvement.*

*A well furnished library, and a capacious memory, are indeed of singular use toward the improvement of the mind; but if all your learning be nothing else but a mere amassment of what others have written, without a due penetration into the meaning, and without a judicious choice and determination of your own sentiments, I do not see what title your head has to true learning above your shelves.*

—Watts, p. 7

*By study and meditation we improve the hints that we have acquired by observation, conversation, and reading: we take more time in thinking, and by the labour of the mind we penetrate deeper into the themes of knowledge,*

*and carry our thoughts sometimes much farther on many subjects than we ever met with, either in the books of the dead or discourses of the living.*

—Watts, p. 30

*Remember that your business in reading or in conversation, especially on subjects of natural, moral, or divine science, is not merely to know the opinion of the author or speaker, for this is but the mere knowledge of history; but your chief business is to consider whether their opinions are right or no.*

. . . .

—Watts, p. 41

## RELIGION

*To fix devotional habits in a young mind, forms must in some degree be attended to. Those who constantly make a point of repeating a prayer at a stated time, though it may be termed mechanical devotion, yet learn to consider it as a duty; and piety may imperceptibly warm the heart that was at first unmoved by the task. It is however to be lamented that so great a stress is laid on the mere act as to lead many to imagine that they have made their peace with God, and may securely rely on his favour, only because they punctually read over a long prayer, and observe the ceremonies enjoined by religion to keep alive the vital spirit, which, amongst frail mortals, stands in need of bodily support to give it permanency and effect. Obedience is the only daily incense pleasing to the Supreme Being. Yet many women who constantly address him do not attempt to govern their tempers, or render their dependents comfortable, though they think they are not like other women on this very account; they go to church twice a week and give alms.*

—*The Female Reader*, Preface, pp. vii-viii

*Be punctual in the stated performance of your private devotions morning and evening. If you have any sensibility or imagination, this will establish such an intercourse between you and the Supreme Being as will be of infinite consequence to you in life. It will communicate an habitual cheerfulness to your temper, give a firmness and steadiness to your virtue, and enable you to go through all the vicissitudes of human life with propriety and dignity.*

*I wish you to be regular in your attendance on public worship, and in receiving the communion. Allow nothing to interrupt your public or private devotions except the performance of some active duty in life, to which they should always give place. —In your behaviour at public worship observe an exemplary attention and gravity.*

—Dr. Gregory, in *The Female Reader*, p. 355

### State of Religion in France

*. . . I believe it may be said that the difference between the state of religion before and during the revolution was this. Before the revolution, among the great, if there was an outward show of it, there was little in the heart; —among the middling class, there were many very seriously pious and worthy people, attached to their religion from principle, and acting in conformity with the principles they professed; —while among the multitude*

habit supplied the place of actual principle; and if they could not readily give a reason for the faith that was in them, they were from habit at least attached to that faith. The difference during the revolution was, —that those who had placed themselves at the head of affairs, the then great of the country, openly professed the irreligion which the former great had only practiced in secret; it was therefore more known, and what they professed was erroneously imputed to the whole nation; —that the middle class were constrained, from inability to resist the torrent, in silence to regret the irreligion which they could not avoid seeing; while they endeavoured, as far as the confined sphere in which they moved would permit, to counteract its pernicious effects; —and to the multitude their religion only became the dearer from the violent attempt made to deprive them of it. That thirty millions of people could in one moment be converted to atheism is an idea so monstrous, that it is only astonishing how it ever could be entertained by persons capable of reflection.

I am inclined to think that there are at present many more persons in France seriously and from principle religious, than there were formerly; and that for a very obvious reason. As a perfect freedom of opinion in matters of religion is fully established, and persons are not now afraid of their religious tenets interfering with their temporal interests, they are not deterred from examining into the fundamental principles of religion, and embracing it under such a form as carries the strongest conviction of truth to their minds. Besides, the misfortunes which so many people have gone through, have naturally led them to a more serious and reflecting turn.

—Mrs. Plumptre, pp. 135-36

Religion is now in short placed throughout the French empire upon the only footing on which it ought to be placed in any country: the metaphysical part of it is considered a concern solely between the individual and his Almighty Creator, it is with the moral part alone that the state concerns itself. This is however a matter to which few people, in considering the present state of France, have paid the attention which it deserves; few people indeed seem fully aware of it.

—Mrs. Plumptre, p. 137

Christianity alone ever did, Christianity alone ever can, give due honor to the Character of WOMAN, and exalt her to her just place in the creation of God.

—Revd Buchanan, p. 57

*Rational piety is our best defence against the temptations of the world.  
You well know that piety should not be confined to the church or the closet.*

*—Mrs. West, vol. II, p. 413*

## TEMPERAMENT

*THE smallest disappointment in pleasure, or difficulty in the most trifling employment, will put wilful young people out of temper; and their very amusements frequently become sources of vexation and peevishness. . . . The same craving restless vanity will there endure a thousand mortifications which in the midst of seeming pleasure will secretly corrode her heart, whilst the meek and humble generally find more gratification than they expected, and return home pleased and enlivened from every scene of amusement, though they could have staid away from it with perfect ease and contentment.*

—Mrs. Chapone, in *The Female Reader*, pp. 80-81

## TASTE

### Moral Taste

By Gentlemen of Fashion, I understand those to whom a natural good Genius, or the Force of good Education, has given a Sense of what is naturally graceful and becoming. Some by mere Nature, others by Art and Practice, are Masters of an Ear in Musick, an Eye in Painting, a Fancy in the ordinary things of Ornament and Grace, a Judgment in proportions of all kinds, and a general good Taste in most of those Subjects which make the Amusement and Delight of the ingenious People of the World. Let such Gentlemen as these be as extravagant as they please, or as irregular in their Morals; they must at the same time discover their Inconstancy, live at variance with themselves, and in contradiction to that Principle, on which they ground their highest Pleasure and Entertainment. . . .

THE Admirers of beauty in the Fair Sex, wou'd laugh, perhaps, to hear of a moral Part in their Amours. Yet, what a stir is made about a Heart! What curious Search of Sentiments, and tender Thoughts! What Praises of a Humour, a Sense, a je-ne-sçais-quoi of Wit, and all those Graces of a Mind, which these Virtuoso-Lovers delight to celebrate! Let them settle this Matter among themselves; and regulate, as they think fit, the proportions which these different Beautys hold one another: They must allow still, there is a Beauty of the Mind, and such as is essential in the Case. Why else is the very Air of Foolishness enough to cloy a Lover, at first sight? Why does an Idiot-Look and Manner destroy the effect of all those outward Charms, and rob the Fair-One of her Power; tho' regularly arm'd, in all the Exactness of Feature and Complexion? We may imagine what we please of a substantial solid Part of Beauty: but were the Subject to be well criticiz'd, we shou'd find, perhaps, that what we most admir'd, even in the Turn of outward Features, was only a mysterious Expression, and a kind of shadow of something inward in the Temper. . . .

THE Men of Pleasure, who seem the greatest Contemners of this Philosophical Beauty, are forc'd often to confess her Charms. They can as heartily as others commend Honesty; and are as much struck with the Beauty of a generous Part. They admire the thing it-self; tho' not the Means. And, if possible, they wou'd so order it, as to make Probity and Luxury agree. But the rules of Harmony will not permit it. The Dissonancys are too strong.

—Shaftesbury, Characteristicks, Bk 1, pp. 91-94

Nature and Taste

IT has often been observed that a good taste and a good heart go together: . . . but an intimate acquaintance with the works of nature and genius in their most beautiful and amiable forms humanizes and sweetens the temper, opens and extends the imagination, and disposes to the most pleasing views of mankind and providence. By considering nature in this favourable point of view, the heart is dilated, and filled with the most benevolent sentiments; and then indeed the secret sympathy and connexion between the feelings of natural and moral beauty, the connexion between a good taste and a good heart, appears with the greatest lustre.

—Dr. Gregory, in *The Female Reader*, pp. 99-100

TRAVEL

*Impossible as it is to see the persons whose brilliant actions are consigned to immortality in the pages of history, the next thing is to visit the spots which have been the scenes of those actions. Resting on such spots, the imagination can almost deceive itself into a belief that it is holding converse with the departed spirits of those to whom they owe their celebrity, and what is deeply impressed on the memory appears as if resuscitated before our eyes. When we accompany the traveller in idea over the many scenes of wonder and of beauty which he has passed, —when we read of the sublime features of nature which he describes, of the stupendous rocks and mountains he has climbed, of the deep recesses in the very bowels of the earth into which he has penetrated, our minds, filled with filled with eager curiosity, can no longer be satisfied with knowing these things only by description, we feel an irresistible longing ourselves to climb the same mountains, to explore the same wondrous caverns. Turning to the milder features of nature, the favourite themes of the poet's pen, to gushing fountains, shady groves, meandering streams, glassy lakes, — not content with admiring their beauties in idea, we cannot be satisfied without convincing ourselves by our own experience whether such scenes of enchantment actually exist, or whether they are only to be found in the imagination of the writer.*

—Mrs. Plumtre, p. 2

## VIRTUE

*Virtue is to be acquired; goodness is a gift of nature: therefore, with a great portion of goodness, we may err, and commit great faults. The good man is interesting, the virtuous man estimable. Since to be virtuous it is necessary continually to struggle to conquer our inclinations, and to triumph over ourselves, it is evident that we should not make such efforts without the most powerful motives. What are the motives which determine the impious to pursue virtue? the fear of public censure, the desire of being honoured, the love of glory: these sentiments will produce brilliant actions, but they will never inspire that delicacy, that purity of mind, which belongs to the religious man alone. Human passions decrease with age; time moderates and destroys them. How fragile are virtues when they only arise from the passions! like the flowers of the field which are blasted, or torn up by a storm, so obstacles, reverse of fortune, or only an illness, is often sufficient to destroy them for ever. But the waste of the body, the loss of youth, cannot enfeeble these striking ideas; "I am in the presence of God, who reads the bottom of my heart every moment of my life: his justice reserves for me eternal rewards or punishments."*

*Let us again observe, that religion renders every virtue more perfect, and that there are several which religion only can produce; for instance, purity of mind. . . . None but a true Christian can possess perfect purity of mind, and consequently he only can be constantly virtuous: he alone finds as great an interest in thinking as in acting well; to do good in secret, as to perform brilliant actions; to repress the wanderings of his imagination, to regulate the emotions of his heart, as to preserve himself a reputation free from reproach. . . .* —Madame Genlis, in *The Female Reader*, p. 363-65

## Sources for the Commonplace Book

- Anon. *Flora Domestica, or, the Portable Flower-Garden; with Directions for the Treatment of Plants in Pots; and Illustrations from the Works of the Poets*. London, 1823
- Anon. *Intellectual Sentiments Explained by the Study of Sensations. Inscribed, by Permission, to Her Royal Highness The Duchess of York, by a Young Lady*. London, 1809.
- Bryan, Margaret. *Lectures on Natural Philosophy: The Result of Many Years' Practical Experience of the Facts Elucidated. With An Appendix: containing A Great Number and Variety of Astronomical and Geographical problems; also Some Useful Tables, and A Comprehensive Vocabulary*. London, 1806.
- Buchanan, Revd. Claudius. *Christian Researches in Asia: with Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. London, 1812.
- Clarkson, Thomas. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*. 2 vols. London, 1808.
- Hays, Mary. *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of all Ages and Countries. Alphabetically Arranged*. 6 vols. London, 1803.
- Knox, Vicesimus. *Extracts, Elegant, Instructive, & Entertaining, in Prose, &c*. Books Third, Fourth, & Fifth. 3 vols. London, 1791.
- Pasley, Charles William. *Essay on the Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire*. London, 1810.
- Plumptre, Anne. *A Narrative of A Three Years' Residence in France, Principally in the Southern Departments, From the Year 1802 to 1805: Including Some Authentic Particulars Respecting the Early Life of the French Emperor, and a General Inquiry into his Character*. 3 vols. London, 1810.
- Shaftesbury, Anthony, Earl of. *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. 3 vols. 1749.
- Smith, Charlotte. "A Walk in the Shrubbery." *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*. Ed. Stuart Curran. NY: Oxford UP, 1993. 303-06.
- Solomon, Samuel, M.D. *A Guide to Health; or, Advice to Both Sexes, in Nervous and Consumptive Complaints, Scurvy, Leprosy, and Scrofula; also, on a Certain Disease, Seminal Weakness, and a Destructive Habit of a Private Nature, to which is added, An Address to Parents, Tutors, and Guardians of Youth, with Observations on the Efficacy of Hot and Cold Bathing*. [1796]. 57<sup>th</sup> ed. London, 181?.
- Southey, Robert. *The Life of Nelson*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. London, 1814.
- Watts, Isaac, D.D. *The Improvement of the Mind. To which is added, A Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth. With a Life of the Author*. London, 1814.
- West, Jane. *Letters to a Young Lady; in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered, Chiefly with a Reference to Prevailing Opinions*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 3 vols. London, 1811.
- [Wollstonecraft, Mary.] *The Female Reader; or Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse; Selected from the Best Writers, and Disposed Under Proper Heads; For the Improvement of Young Women. By Mr. Cresswick, Teacher of Elocution. To which is prefixed a Preface, Containing Some Hints on Female Education*. London, 1789. Facsimile reproduction with an Introduction by Moira Ferguson. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1980.