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**TWO UNLIKELY LADIES IN THE LIFE OF JANE AUSTEN:  
PHILADELPHIA AUSTEN HANCOCK  
AND ELIZA DE FEUILLIDE AUSTEN**

**by**

**KAREN L. HARTNICK**

**A dissertation submitted the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

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**Abstract****TWO UNLIKELY LADIES IN THE LIFE OF JANE AUSTEN:  
PHILADELPHIA AUSTEN HANCOCK  
AND ELIZA HANCOCK DE FEUILLIDE AUSTEN****by****Karen L. Hartnick****Adviser: Professor Rachel M. Brownstein**

**Philadelphia Austen Hancock and her daughter Eliza de Feuillide Austen are close female relations of Jane Austen's whose lives have been relegated to the margins of Austen biographies. This biography places these two women at center stage. Philadelphia, the sister of Jane Austen's father, opted to go to India in the eighteenth century to find a husband and a maintenance. In India she met and married a man considerably older than she and nine years after her marriage, when living in Calcutta, she had a daughter Eliza, most probably the result of an affair she had with Warren Hastings who would become the Governor General of Bengal. Hastings supported the two women throughout their lives. When Tysoe Saul Hancock, Philadelphia's husband, died, Philadelphia took Eliza to Paris where, because of their connection to Hastings (Eliza had been made Hastings's goddaughter) they dined at Versailles, the court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, befriended a circle of French aristocrats, and eventually Eliza married M. de Feuillide who said he was a French count and who was to be guillotined during the Reign of Terror. Eliza**

soon thereafter married her cousin, Jane Austen's favorite brother, Henry.

This biography puts to rest once and for all the idea that Jane Austen knew little of the great historical events going on outside her English country village: the French Revolution, for instance, and the British colonial enterprise in India. Unlike Austen's imaginary heroines who go through a process of self-discovery emerging as moral leaders in their community and to Austen's readers, Philadelphia and Eliza were neither self-reflective nor concerned with moral issues. Theirs were lives intriguing to Austen but alien to her aesthetic and moral purpose. It is in the juvenilia that Austen comes closest to expressing the sensibilities similar to those of Philadelphia and Eliza—their sense of adventure, their flaunting convention, their impulsivity and exuberance. Although much of this spirit is suppressed in Austen's mature work it is something of this very spirit which energizes the major novels.

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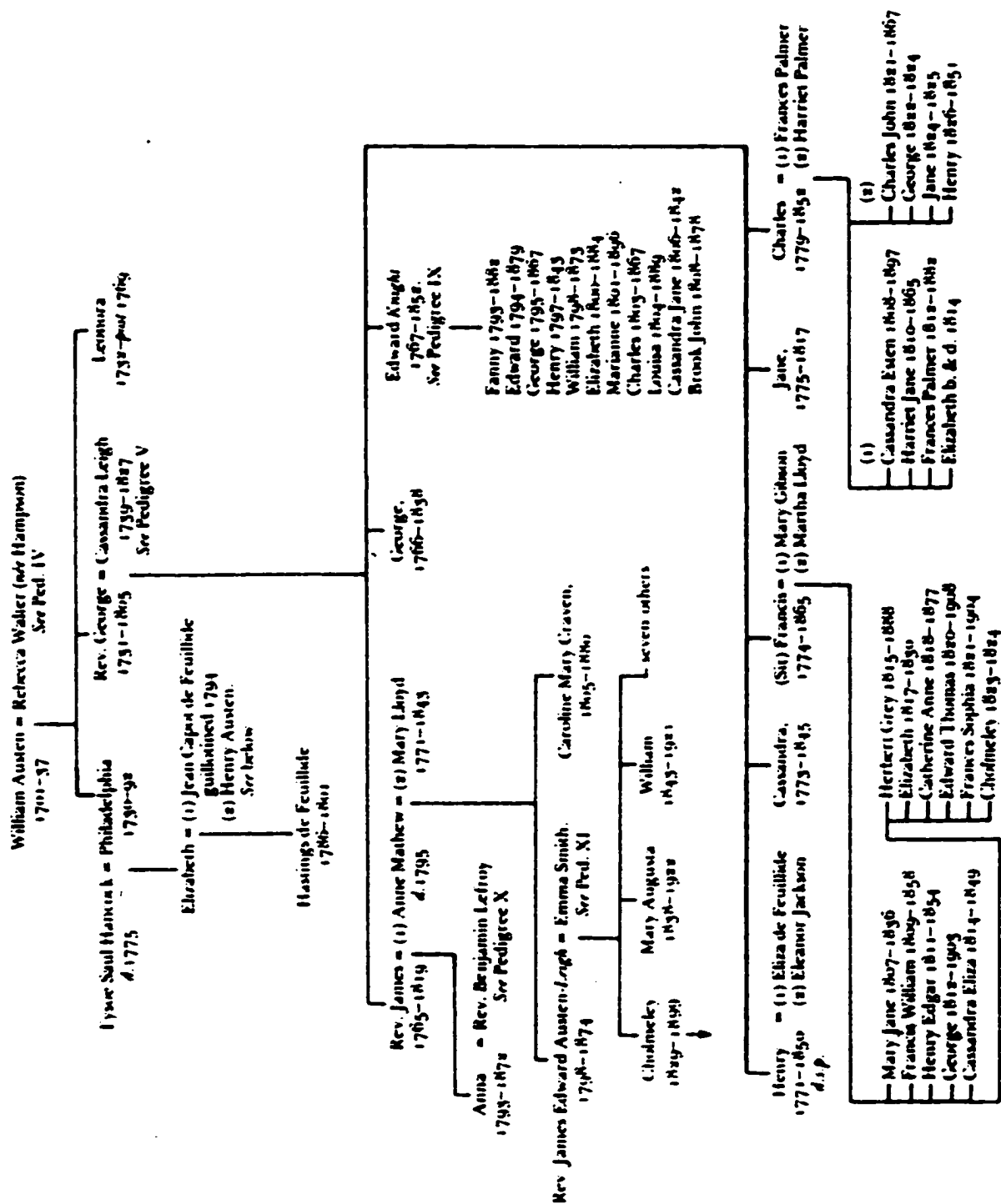


*Philadelphia Hancock*



*Eliza, Comtesse de Feuillide*

## III. WILLIAM AUSTEN



## Chronology

**December 25, 1711 or December 25, 1723--Possible dates of birth for Tysoe Saul Hancock.**

**May 1730--Philadelphia Austen born to Rebecca Hampson Austen and William Austen.**

**May 15, 1730--Philadelphia baptized.**

**1731--Philadelphia's brother George Austen born.**

**1732--Philadelphia's sister Leonora Austen born.**

**1730--Death of Philadelphia's sister Hampson Austen. (She was born in 1728.)**

**1732--Rebecca Austen died.**

**1737--William Austen died.**

**1737-1745--We do not know where Philadelphia lived during this period. We only know that her Freeman cousins were good to her then.**

**1745-1750--Philadelphia apprenticed to Covent Garden Milliner, Hester Cole.**

**November 1751--Philadelphia petitions Court of East India Directors for permission to go by Bombay Castle to Fort St. David's, India.**

**January 18, 1752--Philadelphia sails for India.**

**August 4, 1752--Philadelphia arrives in Madras.**

**February 22, 1753--Philadelphia marries Tysoe Saul Hancock--settles in Fort St. David.**

**1759--The Hancocks move to Calcutta. Tysoe Saul Hancock appointed surgeon at Fort William.**

**December 1761--Elizabeth Hancock (known as Betsy and later Eliza) born in Calcutta.**

**1761--Philadelphia Walter born to William and Rebecca Hampson Austen.**

**1765--Tysoe Saul, Philadelphia and daughter leave India for England. Arrive in London in the summer of 1765. Settle in London.**

**Autumn 1768--Tysoe Saul Hancock returns to Calcutta as surgeon and trader, leaving Philadelphia and daughter behind.**

**June 8, 1771--Birth of Henry Austen. Philadelphia probably in attendance.**

**1772--Warren Hastings gives Repondentia Bond for 40,000 Rupees as present for his godaughter Elizabeth Hancock.**

**1773--Philadelphia present for birth of Cassandra Austen.**

**November 5, 1775--Tysoe Saul Hancock dies in Calcutta.**

**December 16, 1775--Birth of Jane Austen at Steventon. Philadelphia possibly in attendance.**

**1775--Hastings increases amount of Bond to 10,000 pounds and a trust is set up in Philadelphia's name with George Austen and Mr. Woodman as her trustees.**

**1777--Philadelphia, Eliza, and Indian maid Clarinda set off for the continent; visit Germany and Belgium.**

**1779--Philadelphia and Eliza settle in Paris.**

**1780--Eliza meets Jean-Francois Capot de Feuillide.**

**August 1781--Eliza engaged to M. de Feuillide**

**December 1781--The marriage of Eliza and M. de Feuillide has taken place (date uncertain).**

**February 1784--Leonora Austen dies.**

**1784-1786--Eliza and Philadelphia visit M. de Feuillide's mother in Guienne.**

**January 1786--Eliza discovers she is pregnant.**

**May 1786--Philadelphia and Eliza return to England.**

June 25, 1786--Hastings de Feuillide born to Eliza in London.

1786--James Austen visits M. de Feuillide in Guienne.

Christmas 1786--Philadelphia, Eliza, and Hastings spend holiday at Steventon.

Remain until end of January 1787.

1787--Jane Austen starts writing her Juvenilia.

April 1787--16-year-old Henry Austen visits Philadelphia and Eliza in London.

December 1787--Christmas at Steventon. Eliza acts in family theatricals along with James Austen, who had just returned from a trip on the Continent, and other members of the Austen family.

Christmas 1788-1789--Jane Austen writes Henry and Eliza.

1790--Philadelphia, Eliza, and Hastings return to England from France.

Spring 1791--Philadelphia develops breast cancer. 1792--M. de Feuillide visits wife and son in London and returns to Paris.

June 1791--Jane Austen finishes Love and Freindship and dedicates it to 'Madame la Comtesse de Feuillide.'

February 26, 1792--Philadelphia dies.

March 6, 1792--Philadelphia buried at Church at Hampstead.

August 1792--Jane Austen writes Catharine, or the Bower. February 1794--M. de Feuillide arrested.

February 22, 1794--M. de Feuillide guillotined.

December 1796--Eliza considering marrying James Austen.

August and September 1797--Eliza removes funds from trusteeship of Mr. Austen and Mr. Woodman.

December 1797--Henry Austen engaged to Eliza.

December 31, 1797--Eliza marries Henry Austen at Marylebone Church,

London. (Henry in the Oxfordshire militia in East Anglia.)

Autumn 1801--Hastings de Feuillide dies at fifteen years old.

1801--Henry Austen resigns his commission in the Oxfordshire Militia and becomes an army agent and banker in London. He and Eliza live at Upper Berkeley Street, then a little house in Brompton, then No. 64 Sloane Square.

1803--Henry and Eliza take advantage of Peace of Amiens (signed March 1802) to go to France to try to recover the de Feuillide property. War between France and Great Britain renewed while they are in France and they flee back to England.

1803--Jane Austen sells Susan to Crosby of London.

April 23, 1801--Eliza gives large evening musical party attended by Jane Austen. Austen meets Eliza's French emigree friends.

January 21, 1805--George Austen dies.

October 1811--Sense and Sensibility published.

January 1813--Pride and Prejudice published.

Winter 1813--Eliza becomes ill with terminal disease, probably breast cancer.

April 1813--Henry calls Jane Austen to Eliza's deathbed to be with her for last days of her life. She remains with Henry until May 1st.

April 15, 1813--Eliza dies. Buried in Hampstead Parish Churchyard where Philadelphia and Hastings had been buried.

May 1814--Mansfield Park published.

December 1815--Emma published.

January 1815--Jane Austen starts Sanditon.

March 1815--Jane Austen abandons Sanditon.

**July 18, 1817--Jane Austen dies.**

**January 18, 1827--Cassandra Austen (Mrs. George Austen) dies.**

**1834--Philadelphia Walter Whitaker dies.**

**March 1850--Henry Austen dies.**

"For one likes romantically to feel oneself a deliverer  
 advancing with lights across the waste of years to the  
 rescue of some stranded ghost...waiting, appealing,  
 forgotten, in the growing gloom. Possibly they hear  
 one coming. They shuffle, they preen, they bridle. Old  
 secrets well up to their lips. The divine relief of  
 communication will soon again be theirs."

Virginia Woolf  
 "The Lives of the Obscure"  
The Common Reader

"I have my share of the *wandering spirit* our countrymen  
 are in general possessed with, which together with my being so  
 early accustomed to a *vagabond* life makes me seldom regret a  
 change of scene."

Eliza de Feuillide to Philadelphia Walter  
 Paris, May 7 1784

## Introduction

Jane Austen's aunt, Philadelphia Austen Hancock, had died that February of 1782 and her daughter Eliza, the Countess de Feuillide, was in mourning at the Austen rectory at Steventon. George Austen, Jane's father, was Philadelphia's brother, and he and his wife had kindly taken Eliza in for a few months of healing. A life such as Philadelphia's was the stuff of a novel Jane Austen would never write--its focus too far from England. Jane would adhere to advice she once gave her niece Anna, an aspiring novelist herself: "better not leave England [. . .] you will be in danger of giving false representations [. . .]." <sup>1</sup> Yet in the six months following Philadelphia's death, while working on her first novel, Catharine, or the Bower, Jane flirted with such "false representations," recalling the stories she had heard from childhood of her aunt Philadelphia's journey to India to find herself a husband, so unlike the decorous confinement of the heroines she would later immortalize in her mature novels who would live out their lives amongst "3 or 4 Families in a Country Village."<sup>2</sup>

Philadelphia did marry in India, a dour surgeon much older than she, and her courage to journey to a distant continent changed the course of her life. In England she had been a lowly milliner's apprentice and, without a dowry, was probably destined not to marry and to become a governess or companion to an older woman for the rest of her days, the kind of servitude that was the lot of many poor young English girls of the genteel class. Ironically, the British Empire, now associated with oppression, offered Philadelphia and other young girls like her opportunities and freedom unavailable at home. She was able to marry almost immediately upon arrival in Madras, and soon moved into a social

set in Calcutta that included the English governor and his wife and Warren Hastings, who would become the Governor General of Bengal. Less carefully supervised than English girls living under the surveillance of their immediate family, after nine years of marriage Philadelphia gave birth to a daughter Elizabeth (who would later change her name to Eliza) whose father was most probably not her husband Tysoe Saul Hancock, but Warren Hastings, whose own wife and infant daughter had recently died. (Eliza became goddaughter to Hastings, who supported her and her mother for the rest of their lives.)

Philadelphia and Eliza were not only mother and daughter. They were to be inseparable during Philadelphia's life in India, back home in England and on their sojourn in France, after Philadelphia was widowed, when Eliza would meet and marry a would-be count, give birth to a son, Hastings de Feuillide, return to England, and eventually, after being widowed herself when her husband was guillotined in the Reign of Terror, remarry, this time not to a foreign "count" but to a first cousin, Henry Austen, Jane Austen's favorite brother, bringing the center of her life back to the bosom of her family—a return to the roots she and her mother had escaped during their vagabond years wandering the four corners of the earth.

Philadelphia Hancock and her daughter Eliza de Feuillide Austen have appeared as colorful figures in the margins of Jane Austen's life in biographies of Austen, from the Memoir written in 1870 by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh (1798-1874) to the recent books by Claire Tomalin,<sup>3</sup> Brian Southam,<sup>4</sup> and David Nokes.<sup>5</sup> Most of the basic information about them is there in the several early biographies written by members of the Austen family<sup>6</sup> in which authors, using unpublished manuscripts and letters, give Philadelphia and Eliza more or less weight in the central story of Jane Austen's life. All stress

Philadelphia and Eliza's ties to Warren Hastings, a revered figure in the Austen family who befriended Philadelphia during the period of her married life in India. Probably it was at Philadelphia's suggestion that Warren Hastings sent his young son to England, eventually to be educated at the home of George Austen, Philadelphia's brother, who would later become the father of Jane Austen. Philadelphia's daughter Eliza was goddaughter to Warren Hastings and these special ties to the famous man made the mother and daughter of particular importance to the Austen family. Mention is also made repeatedly of Philadelphia and Eliza landing at the Austen rectory at Steventon with their cosmopolitan tales of India and France, the Court of Louis XVI, and the French Revolution. In Jane Austen: A Family Record, edited by W. and R.A. Austen-Leigh in 1913, and revised and brought up to date by Deirdre Le Faye in 1989, an early chapter is entitled "India and France, 1752-85." The editors write,

The title of this chapter may seem at first far removed from the life of Jane Austen but her aunt and cousin, Mrs. Hancock and her daughter Eliza, were the bright comets flashing in the otherwise placid solar system of clerical life in rural Hampshire and the news of their foreign travels and fashionable London life together, with their sudden descents upon the Steventon household in between times, all helped to widen Jane's youthful horizons and influence her later life."<sup>7</sup>

Although the Memoir is the one first-hand account of Jane Austen we have it is far from objective: it carefully suppresses all the information about Philadelphia and Eliza that the family did not want published. This is true of all the family biographies. In Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends (1902), Constance Hill, a relative of J.H. Hubback, grandson of Jane Austen's brother

Frank, mentions little about Eliza except that she was a leading member of the little acting company at Steventon. Hill and her sister focus their book on places associated with Austen which they visit and describe for their readers. Women scholars like Claire Tomalin,<sup>8</sup> and before her critics such as Q.D. Leavis<sup>9</sup> and Deirdre Le Faye,<sup>10</sup> became fascinated enough by these Austen relatives to look around for new information to fill out or change our view of their lives. Sometimes the information they gleaned posed new questions and confused the story. For instance, Robin Vick, an Austen scholar, informed Tomalin that Philadelphia's husband, Tysoe Saul Hancock, was not twice her age but only seven years her senior, contradicting even contemporary evidence, yet Vick asserts he got his information from Hancock's tombstone which had heretofore been misread.<sup>11</sup>

The lives of these women seem more significant now in the light of the current concern with women's history and the becoming visible of people whose lives have historically been relegated to the margins. Several male scholars, including J.H. Hubback (Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers (1906)<sup>12</sup>) and Brian Southam (Jane Austen and the Navy (2000)<sup>13</sup>) have been more fascinated by Austen's sailor brothers than by Philadelphia and Eliza, and the ladies are way off in the margins of their biographies or not factored in at all. Hubback and his daughter Edith, grandson and great grand-daughter of Jane's brother, Sir Francis Austen, only mention Philadelphia and Eliza in relation to their association with Hastings, but like all the family biographies their book deliberately skirts what must have been the obvious connection between Philadelphia and Hastings, that they had had an affair which resulted in the illegitimate birth of Eliza. This fact that is difficult to miss: the two women lived in

style for most of their lives supported by Hastings's trust fund, which was supervised by George Austen and Hastings's brother-in-law Woodman, at Hastings' request. Hubback's is the first biography to mention Philadelphia and Eliza's role in expanding Jane Austen's universe, and giving her the opportunity to hear first-hand of the affairs of India and of France. The revelation of Austen's relation to these two women obliged scholars to address why Austen chose not to include events in the larger world in her novels, as this could no longer be attributed to her ignorance of anything occurring outside of a few English country villages.

In Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters (1913), Philadelphia and Eliza move from the margin toward the center of the book in the chapter "Warren Hastings and the Hancocks 1752-1794."<sup>14</sup> The biography is intended to be a supplement to the Memoir as it makes use of additional material available to the authors including the letters of Jane Austen edited by Lord Brabourne, the elder son of Fanny Knight, Jane's brother Edward's eldest daughter. Also available to Lord Brabourne was correspondence between the Austens and their "kinsmen of the half-blood Walters of Kent and afterwards Lincolnshire" from which we derive the most significant information about Philadelphia and Eliza. The "varying fortunes of the two ladies" are described as an "object of constant thought and discussion at the Rectory" and because of them "Jane had an early opportunity of becoming interested in the affairs of India and France."<sup>15</sup>

As Eliza was married to Jane's favorite brother Henry, who became her business manager upon the death of her father, it seems likely that she did occupy a more central position in Austen's life than the earlier biographies allowed. Jane made frequent visits to Henry and Eliza when they were living in London and found their company warm and entertaining and London a

stimulating diversion from the quiet of an English village. The authors infer that the Austen family disapproved of Eliza's marriage to Henry. "Though he was endowed with many attractive gifts," they write, "there was a certain infirmity of purpose in his character that was hardly likely to be remedied by marriage to his very pleasure loving cousin."<sup>16</sup>

Elizabeth Jenkins' Jane Austen (1932), was the first biography by a non-family member.<sup>17</sup> Jenkins drew on letters of Cassandra and Jane Austen that were first published in 1932, as well as on unpublished family papers in the Austen-Leigh archive. A novelist and a woman, Jenkins finds Eliza an intriguing character and moves her closer to the center of the biography than earlier authors had done. "Beside the immediate family," she writes, "there is a relation from Jane's seventh year who [. . .] occupied a most important place in the Austen's attention; whose cleverness and elegance and fashion made her fascinating to Jane as the latter grew up."<sup>18</sup> Jenkins speculates that Jane delighted in the positive wit and sparkle of her father's niece. Jenkins is the first critic to raise the issue of the influence of Eliza de Feuillide on the novels of Jane Austen. This controversial issue brings Eliza closer to the center of Jane Austen studies: the question of whether or not the characters are based on real people was an issue speculated upon during Austen's own time. Her brother Henry denied that she would use actual people as originals. "Her power of inventing characters," he wrote in a "Biographical Notice" that was published along with Northanger Abbey and Persuasion in 1818, seems to have been intuitive, and about unlimited. She drew from nature, but, whatever may have been surmised to the contrary, never from individuals."<sup>19</sup> Jenkins asks whether Eliza might have been an inspiration for the character of Mary Crawford in Mansfield Park. She maintains that Mary was not intended as a picture of Eliza

even though there may be similar traits in the real Eliza and the imaginary Mary--spontaneous good nature, liveliness and grace. Jenkins criticizes those who would read fiction for biographical truth rather than tracing influence in fiction. Probably Mary Crawford's role in the Bertram family theatricals, Jenkins remarks, was suggested by Eliza's role in the Austen plays, but this in no way makes her the model for Mary.

In 1941-1942 an important female critic of the time, Q.D. Leavis, raised this question again in a series of articles in Scrutiny. In "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings" she remarked on the resemblance between Eliza Hancock, who received a good deal of space in the Life and Letters, and Austen's character Lady Susan whom she closely resembled. They both were flirtatious even when recently widowed and both found it difficult to surrender liberty by marrying again. Leavis goes so far as to aver that Eliza's flirtation with Henry was the occasion of the draft of the novel "preserved in the fair copy we know as Lady Susan."<sup>20</sup> Several aspects of the Lady Susan story, Leavis maintains, reflect the situation caused by the

Comtesse de Feuillide's irruption into the tranquil life of the Steventon Rectory, though the situation has been simplified and her character altered [. . .] one guesses that the alterations were made both in order to avoid an emotional or personal treatment of a sore and delicate subject and in order to make effective in a brief space something that the still immature writer knew not how to consign to paper in other than bold outline and satiric terms. <sup>21</sup>

Leavis's theory is that Lady Susan was eventually made over into Mansfield Park, placing Eliza right in the center of Jane Austen's story. The "function of Susan to beguile the hero and torment him, is made over to another version of

Eliza de Feuillide and one both more sympathetic and more in keeping with history."<sup>22</sup> The implication is that Eliza had to be altered beyond recognition before it would be safe for Austen to use her.

In 1964 Brian Southam, in Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts,<sup>23</sup> took issue with Leavis's theory of influence. He observes that Austen herself was troubled by readers who imagined that they could identify originals for her characters. "She repudiated the suggestion that her figures were modeled upon friends, and denied that their oddities had been recorded. She is reported [in the 1870 Memoir] to have expressed "a dread" of what she called such an 'invasion of the social proprieties.' "<sup>24</sup> Jane Austen, Southam tells us, emphasized that "it was her desire to create, not to reproduce," a point made in the Memoir.<sup>25</sup> She was contemptuous of Egerton Brydges's novel Arthur Fitz-Albini because it "offended her sense of literary and social decorum."<sup>26</sup> "Never did any book," Austen wrote Cassandra, "carry more internal evidence of its author. Every sentiment is completely Egerton's."<sup>27</sup> Austen's plots and characters, Southam says, are based on the familiar surroundings of her own social group but "reproduction or imitation are no part of her aim; whereas verisimilitude and fidelity to common experience are inseparable from her concept of artistic truth."<sup>28</sup> Southam agrees that there is a remarkable similarity between Eliza and Lady Susan but this is a similarity and "nothing more." The weight of evidence, Southam avers, "makes it impossible to accept that Lady Susan is a portrait of Eliza."<sup>29</sup> For one thing, it was written by 1795 before the courtship of Henry and Eliza; for another, Cassandra would never have allowed such a damaging account of Henry's affairs to remain in existence. But the effect of Southam's argument is to place the theory about Eliza's influence on

Austen's characters in the center of his argument, moving Eliza from the margins of Jane Austen criticism to a more central position. R.W. Chapman in his 1948 Jane Austen: Facts and Problems<sup>30</sup> had argued, as Southam did, that Eliza may have suggested ideas to Austen that influenced her characterization of Mary Crawford, but that Austen did not base characters on people she knew in real life; rather, her experience and people she knew may have triggered her imagination.

George Holbert Tucker's A Goodly Heritage (1983)<sup>31</sup> situates Austen as a member of the class of the landed gentry of England. The book endeavors to demonstrate how family influence shaped Austen as a writer. The story of Philadelphia and Eliza is brought out of the margins and foregrounded in many pages of this book. Tucker refers to the two ladies as "the exciting birds of passage in the otherwise stay-at-home Austen family."<sup>32</sup> He discusses how Eliza's open flirtation with both James and Henry went down in Austen family history. The epilogues that James wrote for the family theatricals, Tucker maintains, were tailored to Eliza's specifications. The precocious twelve-year-old Jane Austen must have been a spectator of the intrigue that accompanied the highly charged rehearsals and performances. Eliza and her mother were significant influences on Austen's family life and later on the experiences and people and familial stories that triggered some of her thinking in her novels, particularly in the family theatrical scenes in Mansfield Park.

Biographies of the 1980s vary in their placement of Philadelphia and Eliza in the margins or closer to the center of the Jane Austen narrative. John Halperin's The Life of Jane Austen (1984)<sup>33</sup> gives the stories of Philadelphia and Eliza very little weight and contains several errors in the telling of their story. Halperin attributes a letter from Philadelphia Walter to Philadelphia

Hancock and attributes a letter as being from Eliza de Feuillide to her mother which in fact is from Eliza to Philadelphia Walter.<sup>34</sup> (There are no extant letters from Eliza to her mother.) Park Honan in Jane Austen: Her Life (1987) devotes a chapter to Eliza, "Lady from France."<sup>35</sup> He claims quite direct and specific influence of Eliza on Jane Austen's novels, continuing the ongoing critical dialogue about influence. Honan believes that Austen had Eliza in mind when she wrote the novella in letters which her nephew later called Lady Susan. "A master of language and a fine plotter and planner," Honan writes, "Lady Susan has Eliza's gaiety and Jane Austen's love of assertion and fondness for making things happen at nineteen and twenty."<sup>36</sup> He also thinks that Eliza was a "source of Jane Austen's success in portraying sexuality in the early novels, as in the jumping up, sitting down, fresh and cool Isabella Thorpe of Northanger Abbey."<sup>37</sup> Recent biographies of the 1990s and later have viewed Philadelphia and Eliza with renewed interest, especially the material that was formerly suppressed about Philadelphia's affair with Warren Hastings. Deborah Kaplan's Jane Austen Among Women (1994),<sup>38</sup> a feminist text, portrays Eliza as an interesting figure not so much because of her liberated point of view, as because she is an example of characteristics of eighteenth-century women which interest Kaplan. To her, Eliza represents, for instance, the voice of dissent among women who did not always accept their subservient role in the patriarchal society. She does not feel that raising a child is a natural instinct, for example, and writes of Eliza's resistance to motherhood in a letter to her cousin Philadelphia Walter. Eliza is quoted as being in the tradition of females belittling their domestic experience. "I have no news, at least nothing but home news to send you," she once wrote her cousin Philadelphia Walter, "the most

remarkable occurrence of this nature is that my son and heir who promises to be as great a pickle as any who ever deserved that appellation, has laid aside his feminine garb, & now makes almost manly appearance in a jacket and trowsers.”<sup>39</sup> Kaplan uses Eliza’s language as an example of the romantic, although not erotic, language young women used about their friendship with each other. “Women’s assertions of same-sex ties in these declarations and demonstrations of similarity were not in themselves subversive, but they were often joined with women’s sense of distance from men. Eliza de Feuillide once claimed to Philadelphia: “I don’t think either you or I very likely to lose either our gaiety or peace of mind for any male *creature breathing*.”<sup>40</sup> Kaplan sees Eliza’s letters as representing the contradictions in women’s thinking at the time, both praising female self-denial and encouraging female self-gratification. “This fluidity in women’s attitudes even within a single letter signals,” says Kaplan, “an early, inchoate stage of feminist consciousness. For that reason and because the form of private letters was marked by contradiction as well as fluidity in women’s views, these writings are of particular interest.”<sup>41</sup> Betty Rizzo in Companions Without Vows (1994) focuses on the richness and diversity of relationships between middle to upper-class women in eighteenth-century England, particularly the relation of employer and the humble companion. Rizzo notes that in many ways “the companionate relationship of the eighteenth century mirrored the marriage relationship and was often identified with it.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1997 David Nokes, a biographer of Jonathan Swift and John Gay, published Jane Austen: A Life,<sup>43</sup> using manuscripts from the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester and the India Office Newspaper Library and Manuscript Department of the British Library as sources concerning the lives of

Philadelphia, Eliza, and Tysoe Saul Hancock. Nokes opens his biography of Austen in a highly unusual way with a description of an old and wasted Tysoe Saul Hancock in his "lonely make-shift hut" in the Sunderlands, Bengal, 1773. His thoughts of his wife and daughter in England, perhaps even at the Steventon Rectory visiting the George Austens, represent to him his wife's close relationship with her brother and his family. The surprise of opening a book on Jane Austen and reading about a British family with husband and wife living worlds apart and the father wasting away in the "fetid-salt flats" of India gives us an instant picture of lives well known to Jane Austen which are as far as one can imagine from three or four families living snugly in an English village. The marriage of the Hancocks contrasts with marriages we read of in Austen's novels: the couple spent most of their married life apart. We begin to realize that what we think about eighteenth-century women comes more from Austen novels than from the lives of real women of the time. While living in India, Hancock was "up-country about company business," while Philadelphia was "sharing the diversions of the English Bengal community with the other Company wives."<sup>44</sup> Nokes's biography comes full circle from the early biographies by family members. Philadelphia and Eliza often take center stage as their tale intrigues Nokes. Rather than presenting a highly edited set of facts to preserve the honor of the family, Nokes speculates freely about the lives of these people and their influence on the Austens. When there is no existing information about an incident he fills in the gaps from his imagination. Philadelphia and Eliza are not only portrayed as colorful figures in Austen's life but their stories are dramatized so that they become central characters, bringing intrigue and energy and excitement into each scene in which they appear.

By implication, this would have been their effect on the Austen home

each time they made their frequent appearance. Nokes speculates, without documentation, that Eliza made a strong impression on the young Jane Austen.

She had long heard of her scandalous cousin, and often wondered what such a person must be like. The woman herself was a kind of revelation. There was nothing of impropriety in her manner, and yet she had a kind of shocking frankness; a beguiling manner which permitted all sorts of freedoms that could only be admired. What would it have been like, she wondered, to have lived a life of such bold adventures? How must such a worldly woman regard her provincial female cousins, who had never ventured more than fifty miles from home?<sup>45</sup>

All this Nokes conjectures as there are no letters from Jane Austen revealing such feelings. Nokes fantasizes about Eliza's feelings when attending the trial of her godfather, Hastings, asserting that it became a point of honor to demonstrate her feelings by publically befriending the second Mrs. Hastings by taking tea with her at St. James Place, attending the opera together in Hastings' private box, visiting Mrs. Hastings at her estate of Beaumont Lodge and going to the trial in Westminster Hall. It is questionable whether Eliza befriended Mrs. Hastings because of a point of honor. She was, after all, Hastings's goddaughter and she and her mother were supported by him. Nokes gives a wildly colorful and graphic version of the arrest of Eliza's French husband, which he says Eliza observed with her own terrified eyes. In fact, it is most probable that Eliza was in England when the "count" was arrested and guillotined and she did not find out about his death for months afterwards. Nokes often positions Philadelphia and Eliza in the center of his story, but adds material from his vivid imagination.

My dissertation attempts to stick to the facts while also placing Philadelphia and Eliza in the center. Their life stories are flamboyant enough without elaborating on them as Nokes does in his biography which is in part historically accurate and in part a product of his imagination. These ladies, after all, were real and not characters created by the imagination of a novelist.

In 2000 Claire Tomalin, biographer of several intriguing women including Mary Wollstonecraft, Katherine Mansfield, a Regency actress, Mrs. Dora Jordan, and a Victorian actress (The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens), revised her 1997 biography, Jane Austen: A Life, incorporating "important new material relating to Philadelphia Austen" given to her by Robin Vick, and "drawn from his meticulous and wide-ranging studies."<sup>46</sup> Tomalin became fascinated by Philadelphia and Eliza and walked miles in the Gers in France and in Paris on Eliza's track. Again, Philadelphia and Eliza move from the margins of Austen's life to a more central position, in this case because the author is fascinated by women's lives. Tomalin's interest in this subject leads her to speculate about conversations Eliza could have had with Jane which might have raised important issues concerning women.

The question [Tomalin writes] of how much control a woman had over her own life was one to ponder during that year of weddings and engagements. Money, money, money, again. There was no freedom for a woman without it, married or unmarried. Eliza talked to Jane about her mother's experience, how Aunt Philadelphia had been obliged to travel out to India alone as a girl and marry a man she did not care for, making the basic bargain, her body and companionship for his money; and Jane was so struck by this part of her story that she incorporated it into her writing that summer.<sup>47</sup>

Tomalin's book was exciting for me as it is really the first book since the early biographies, and since the letters of Philadelphia and Eliza and Tysoe Saul Hancock were made available, that gives new information about these two women and their family. Tomalin uncovers Hancock's age, the death date of Leonora Austen, Philadelphia's sisters, and most interesting of all the information of Philadelphia's apprenticeship to a Covent Garden milliner from the time she was fifteen until she went to India at twenty-one. Philadelphia's years as an apprentice milliner were never mentioned by the Austen family in any of their biographies. As Tomalin tells us that being a milliner was a somewhat disreputable profession in the eighteenth century, perhaps the Austens felt that it would cast a poor light on their family that a relative of theirs worked the millinery trade. Tomalin uncovered the information during her research at the Public Record Office in London. She also discovered that the milliner to whom Philadelphia was apprenticed was a Hester Cole who had the same name as the milliner in John Cleland's novel Fanny Hill. Fanny, the heroine, is given to the care of a Mrs. Cole of Covent Garden, "a middle-aged discreet sort of woman, ostensibly a milliner, actually a bawd."<sup>48</sup> The coincidence of the names is particularly surprising when we learn that Fanny Hill was published in 1748-9, the same period as Philadelphia's apprenticeship to Hester Cole. Tomalin encourages her readers not to draw any conclusions about Philadelphia from this coincidence but admits that Cleland must have been aware of the real Mrs. Cole when he wrote his novel. Tomalin's book is so intriguing on the subject of Philadelphia and Eliza that one would want to put them in the center, as I have done, to focus on their lives and adventures rather than on their roles in the life of Jane Austen.

In her introduction to The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in

Georgian England,<sup>49</sup> Amanda Vickery, an English feminist social historian, tells of “using women’s manuscripts to illustrate a tale of increasing female passivity and ever-heightening domestic encirclement” among wealthier British women between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.<sup>50</sup> Female options were declining and for most genteel women their most active role coincided with marriage when they would take on the task of running a household and caring for a family. Wider cultural horizons were exposed to women mostly through reading periodicals. Women in Vickery’s study “considered themselves to be profoundly conventional [. . .] they were hostile to errant duchesses, adulterous wives, female fraudsters and pregnant servants and held on to the view that the woman who set the world at naught was very far gone.”<sup>51</sup> Philadelphia and Eliza, unlike these women, did not focus on the bounds of propriety. Their lives demonstrate that the boundaries of propriety were wider than we would think from Jane Austen’s novels. Propriety to Austen, however, had a very particular meaning. “From the beginning to the end of her writing career,” writes Jane Nardin in Those Elegant Decorums, “Jane Austen maintains her view that propriety is true propriety only if it is backed up by solid moral considerations [. . .]. True propriety can only spring from some sort of sincere moral commitment to self and others in society.”<sup>52</sup> Philadelphia and Eliza would not have been suitable as Austen heroines because in important ways they were not concerned with morality. Their lives, in fact, are intriguing because they were uninhibited by the codes of behavior expected of either an Austen heroine or a genteel woman “anchored in the hills of the North of England,” like the women described in Vickery’s book. In this dissertation women’s manuscripts, published and unpublished, are used to tell a tale not of female passivity and domestic encirclement but of women in two generations who gave themselves

agency and who lived outside of the circles of domesticity, even though they took comfort and pleasure in arriving at the doorsteps of their family for extended visits or offering urban hospitality to their kin. Women's lives take on a range of new possibilities in the lives of Philadelphia and her daughter Eliza who basked in the glory of living, or posing, for a while at least, as the glamorous, flirtatious, liberated and cosmopolitan Countess de Feuillide.

Philadelphia and Eliza challenge the "separate spheres" model that has dominated women's history in recent years—the argument that women's lives were, in the eighteenth century, dominated by men who controlled social and institutional life, while at the same time they existed in a sisterhood of women apart from men. Philadelphia and Eliza defy this separate sphere theory and one would suppose they were not alone in this. Their lives were not lived in communities in which they had little or no autonomy and they were not the passive victims of controlling men. They existed primarily in a sphere of two, both females, in contact with friends, mostly kin, by letter and periodically by extended visits. Having money of their own, a gift from Warren Hastings, their male benefactor, these women were not forced to make the compromises that Philadelphia once had to make when at twenty-one, she sold herself for a man and a maintenance.

Because Austen's novels, rather than women's history, are what most of us read, we tend to think of Austen's heroines as representative of genteel women of the middle class. Once the lives of Philadelphia and Eliza, real rather than imaginary women, are foregrounded, we change our view of the kinds of choices open to women in the eighteenth century. This retelling of the lives of Philadelphia and Eliza is unique in that it places these women in the center of the story rather than on the margins of Jane Austen's life, and focuses on their

exceptional and often outrageous lives. Philadelphia and Eliza are protagonists here; in history they quickly faded into obscurity, only resurrected as players of small parts in the life of their famous female relative—hardly the complete story of any one's life.

Rather than focusing on the life of one woman, this biography has two subjects—two women—a mother and a daughter, their lives spanning two generations. Philadelphia and Eliza lived inseparably until Philadelphia's death and Eliza once described her young son, Hastings, as having “two Mammās.” Philadelphia raised Eliza without a husband for most of her life in England and then in France and later lived with her during her marriage in France with her first husband. This is an unusual story of female bonding and one that we would not necessarily associate with the experience of eighteenth-century women living in patriarchal families. Female bonding was an important element of the lives of women in that era, but for the most part women participated in two worlds, and female friendship belonged to a private arena. As Deborah Kaplan describes it in Jane Austen Among Women, female bonding offered women “diversion in the quiet of their homes, particularly when their male kinfolk were out in the public realm.”<sup>53</sup> These women, however, forged their own bonds with each other, made their own decisions always, and usually disregarded the advice of men. In fact, their husbands and male relatives often lived far away from them—in separate countries, or continents. Philadelphia and Eliza crafted their lives according to their own taste in an age of male dominance in domestic and economic matters. Furthermore, their decisions were not usually driven by considerations of social decorum or even of morality. Rather, they lived to please themselves and each other, and if they served a useful purpose in the lives of their kinfolk it was because it pleased

them to do so and gave them a sense of roots they might not otherwise have experienced in their vagabond wanderings. This mother and daughter formed a family unit unto themselves for much of their lives. Although both women married, their lives were centered in each other rather than in their marriages.

Deborah Kaplan makes the point that Austen herself participated in a "distinct set of relationships composed of women exclusively."<sup>54</sup> She observes that Austen subscribed to the larger community's patriarchal conception of the female "organized by the ideology of domesticity" but also to "an alternative vision of an independent self-assertive female implicitly and explicitly critical of the dominant patriarchal version of the female self and her domestic duties."<sup>55</sup> It is this latter alternative vision that Austen must have recognized in the life stories of Philadelphia and her daughter Eliza and which attracted her to these women in her family. As an unmarried woman, Jane Austen deepened the already close friendship with her unmarried sister Cassandra which became the dominant relationship of both their lives. We see something of this close sister bonding in Jane and Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice, but it is more pronounced in Jane Austen's own life where the sisterly relationship was closer to a marriage. When Jane died Cassandra wrote: "She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow. I had not a thought concealed from her, and it is as if I had lost a part of myself."<sup>56</sup> Eliza's feelings towards her mother are equally impassioned, indicating that the relationship was the principle one in their lives. Writing to her cousin Phylly Walter during the first era of her marriage to M. de Feuillide, Eliza remarked: "My situation is always agreeable, certain of never being separated from my dear Mama whose presence enhances every other blessing I enjoy [ . . . ]."<sup>57</sup> In fact, it could be said that once you learn of the intensity of the friendships and relationships between

women in the eighteenth century you never read Jane Austen's novels the same way. Emma Woodhouse's relationship with her governess Miss Taylor, the relationship between Jane and Elizabeth Bennet and between Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are female bonds and feelings towards each other which are different from female relationships of today.

Betty Rizzo in Companions Without Vows focuses on the richness and diversity of the relationships between middle to upper-class women in eighteenth-century England, particularly the relation of employer and the humble companion. Rizzo notes that "many of the companionate relationships of the eighteenth century mirrored the marriage relationship and were often identified with it."<sup>58</sup>

Reading the lives of Philadelphia and Eliza prompts us to compare the kinds of women's lives we know from Austen novels where one was either like Elizabeth Bennet or Charlotte Lucas, determined by one's view of marriage, to the real life stories of these Austen relatives. Jane Austen perfected the novel of the young girl on her journey towards marriage—a heroine whose journey towards maturity requires her to educate herself in the knowledge of self and to offer to her community and to the reader of the novel, an example worthy of emulation. Philadelphia and Eliza are more impudent, more crude, more "out there" than any Austen heroine. They often flaunt morality and their decisions only affect themselves. Their lives, like most lives of real women, do not end with their wedding and marriage is not the pinnacle of their lives or their most important relationship. They are real women living out their lives; Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse are creations of Austen's imagination designed with a feminist intent to empower a strong but imaginary woman with the control of her own destiny through the use of reason and intellect—a heroine whose

whole life will culminate in the marriage of her wisely considered choice. Jane Austen herself recognized that her characters were figments of her imagination and not representative of the real world of women she knew. Once she went to an art gallery to find a portrait of Elizabeth Bennet but she could not find her character: she was from the world of her mind and could not have sat for a portrait by any other artist. "I went," Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra of a trip to the Society of Painters in 1813, "in hopes of seeing one of the sisters [Elizabeth] but there was no Mrs. Darcy."<sup>59</sup>

Somehow we sense that Jane Austen must have known the whole story of her aunt and cousin, what was revealed and what was suppressed in the family biographies in the interest of privacy. What Eliza and Jane Austen shared was that they were both gifted story tellers and undoubtedly shared each other's tales. Jane Austen would have been interested in the stories of Philadelphia and Eliza even if her gift was not for such narratives. We know that because, as a child, she was told Philadelphia's story by Eliza the summer of her mother's death. This inspired Jane to write Catherine, or the Bower, in which her own version of her aunt's story is told. Women, writes Deborah Kaplan, even in the conduct books, "were instructed to find friends to whom they could talk and whom they could trust."<sup>60</sup> They often forged bonds in the guarding of secrets such as one which Philadelphia Walter, Eliza's cousin, confided to her, prompting Eliza to write: "I am infinitely obliged to you for the mark of friendship you have given me and [ . . . ] I feel the value of the confidence you repose in me--if possible it has made you dearer than ever to your Eliza."<sup>61</sup> The habit of letter writing, the sole means of communication with persons at a distance, encouraged women to develop their story-telling skills. Philadelphia and Eliza lived much of their lives at a distance from their relatives and they

became consummate correspondents, which is why we have the materials to write this biography. Because personal information contained in letters often prompted the recipients to burn letters, there are gaps and silences in the discourse of women as it comes down to us in letters. This biography, based as it is mostly on letters between family members, is characterized by such gaps and silences.

Virginia Woolf, in her essay, "The Lives of the Obscure," speaks of how tempting it is to speculate wildly about lives of which you know little and how it is necessary to be on guard against such flagrant speculation, unrelated to facts:

But here we encounter [Woolf writes] one of the pitfalls of this nocturnal rambling among forgotten worthies. It is so difficult to keep, as we must with authenticated people, strictly to the facts. It is so difficult to refrain from making scenes which, if the past could be recalled, might perhaps be found lacking in accuracy.<sup>62</sup>

This dissertation attempts to tell the story of Philadelphia and Eliza with as much documentation as possible and to make sure that when speculation is offered, it is identified as such.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, "To Anna Austen," 10 August 1814, letter 104 of Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 269.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, "To Anna Austen," 9 September 1814, letter 107 of Letters, 275.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Brian Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy (London: Hambledon and London, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> David Nokes, Jane Austen: A Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Jane Austen's life story became the shared property of her large and extended family several of whom wrote biographies and biographical notes or edited her letters after her death in 1817. These family texts include:

1817--Henry Austen, "Biographical Notice of the Author," Preface to Volume I, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.

1867--Caroline Mary Craven Austen (youngest daughter of Jane Austen's oldest brother James), My Aunt Jane Austen.

1870--James Edward Austen-Leigh (nephew of Jane Austen, son of Jane Austen's brother James), A Memoir of Jane Austen, ed. R.W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

1902--Lord Edward Brabourne (eldest son of Fanny Austen, Lady Knatchbull, daughter of Jane's brother Edward) Letters of Jane Austen. 1902--Constance Hill, Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends (London and New York: Lane,

1902).

1906--J.H. Hubback and Edith Hubback (grandson and great-granddaughter of Jane Austen's brother Frank), Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers (London and New York: Lane, 1906).

1913--William Arthur Austen-Leigh (son of James Edward and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, William's nephew), Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters. A Family Record.

1942--Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Austen Papers 1704-1856.

<sup>7</sup> W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library, 1989) 26.

<sup>8</sup> Tomalin, Jane Austen : A Life.

<sup>9</sup> Q.D. Leavis, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings, II, 'Lady Susan' into Mansfield Park," Scrutiny, Volume X, 1941, 114-42; 1942, 272-294, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings, Letters," Scrutiny, Volume XII, No. 1, Winter, 1943, 104-113.

<sup>10</sup> W. Austen-Leigh, R.A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record; Deirdre Le Faye, "Three Austen Family Letters," Notes and Queries, September 1985, 329-335; Deirdre Le Faye, "Jane Austen and Her Hancock Relation," The Review of English Studies, Vol. xxx, No. 117, February 1879, 12-27.

<sup>11</sup> Tomalin 298 (note 7 to chapter 2 "Meritocrats"). It was widely believed, from false information or from a mis-transcription of the tombstone in India, that Hancock was born in 1711. Vick maintains that he was born in 1723, the son of the rector of Wormshill and Hollingbourne. The information, he observes, is substantiated by baptisms of four siblings at Hollingbourne, two of whom, Olivia

and Colborne, mentioned in Hancock's letters, were baptized in 1731 and 1733 respectively.

<sup>12</sup> John H. and Edith C. Hubback, Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers (London, 1906).

<sup>13</sup> Brian Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy (London: Hambledon and London, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> William Arthur Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters. A Family Record (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1913).

<sup>15</sup> Austen-Leigh, W.A. and R.A. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Austen-Leigh, W.A. and R.A. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Jenkins, Jane Austen: A Biography (London: Gollancz, 1938).

<sup>18</sup> Jenkins 17.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Austen, "Biographical Notice of the Author," Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, 13 December 1817, ed. R.W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>20</sup> Q.D. Leavis, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," Scrutiny X, (1941-42; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 120.

<sup>21</sup> Leavis 122.

<sup>22</sup> Leavis 128.

<sup>23</sup> B.C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>24</sup> Southam 137 (quoting 1870 Memoir, 202).

<sup>25</sup> James Edward Austen-Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen (1870) ed. R.

W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1926) 202.

26 Southam 138.

27 Jane Austen, Letter to Cassandra, 25 November 1798, Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 22.

28 Southam 139.

29 Southam 142.

30 R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen: Facts and Problems (Cambridge: The Clarendon Press, 1948).

31 George Holbert Tucker, A Goodly Heritage: A History of Jane Austen's Family (Manchester: Caranet New Press, 1983).

32 Tucker 37.

33 John Halperin, The Life of Jane Austen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

34 Halperin 20, 132. A letter of Philadelphia Walter to her brother James describing her impression of the Hastings trial is said to be written by Philadelphia Hancock—one of several dispatches sent back to Steventon. Halperin attributes a letter to Eliza de Feuillide and observes that it was written to her mother concerning the family holdings in Devonshire. In fact, the letter was from Eliza to Philadelphia Walter. There are no extant letters from Eliza de Feuillide to her mother.

35 Park Honan, Jane Austen: Her Life (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1987).

36 Honan 100.

37 Honan 136.

38 Deborah Kaplan, Jane Austen Among Women (Baltimore and London:

<sup>38</sup> Deborah Kaplan, Jane Austen Among Women (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Kaplan 49. Quoting letter of Eliza de Feuillide "To Philadelphia Walter," 1 August 1791, Austen Papers, 142.

<sup>40</sup> Kaplan 73. Quoting letter of Eliza de Feuillide "To Philadelphia Walter." 16 May 1780, Austen Papers, 92.

<sup>41</sup> Kaplan 85.

<sup>42</sup> Betty Rizzo, Companions Without Vows: Relationships Between Eighteenth-Century British Women (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 11.

<sup>43</sup> David Nokes, Jane Austen: A Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Nokes 91.

<sup>45</sup> Nokes 91.

<sup>46</sup> Tomalin iii.

<sup>47</sup> Tomalin 82.

<sup>48</sup> Tomalin 15. Although Tomalin is the first biographer to mention Philadelphia's being a milliner in her youth, Jane Austen does have a milliner in The Beautifull Cassandra, written when she was about twelve and Philadelphia was still alive. The heroine's mother is "the celebrated milliner of Bond Street," who switches gender roles in the story by supporting her family. Like Jane's Aunt Philadelphia, Cassandra's romantic life is highly unconventional and she falls in love with "an elegant Bonnet" made by her mother and happily elopes with it.

<sup>49</sup> Amanda Vickery, The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in

50 Vickery 1.

51 Vickery 11-12.

52 Jane Nardin, Those Elegant Decorums (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973) 15.

53 Kaplan 64.

55 Kaplan 3.

56 Kaplan 4.

57 Cassandra Austen to Fanny Knight, 20 July 1817, Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 344.

58 Rizzo 1.

59 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," May 24, 1813. Letters, 212.

60 Kaplan 69.

61 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," February 11, 1789.

62 Virginia Woolf, "The Lives of the Obscure," The Common Reader First and Second Series (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925) 162. Ironically, Virginia Woolf herself can be found "lacking in accuracy" in her essay, "Jane Austen," in The Common Reader in which she quotes "little Philadelphia Austen" writing of her cousin Jane that she "is not at all pretty and very prim, unlike a girl of twelve... Jane is whimsical and affected." These words, however, were actually written by Philadelphia Walter (not by Philadelphia Austen) to her brother James in a letter of July 27, 1788 (see Austen Papers 131.)

## Chapter One

### Philadelphia Austen: Her Passage to India

#### Part I- Madras

"Often do I sit and trace her features in his, till my heart overflows in my eyes," wrote Eliza de Feuillide in October of 1792 from Steventon, meditating on the resemblance between her uncle, Jane Austen's father, and her mother, Philadelphia Austen Hancock. Jane Austen's Aunt Philadelphia had died in February of 1792 and her daughter, Countess Eliza de Feuillide, had spent several months in mourning at the Austen rectory at Steventon. During Eliza's visit, the sixteen-year-old Jane Austen had written her novel, Catharine, or the Bower, in which we hear about Cecilia Wynn, an orphan and childhood friend of the heroine who made a journey to India similar to that of Jane Austen's Aunt Philadelphia forty years before. If only because of the timing, there can be little doubt that Austen had her aunt's story in mind when she wrote her novel during that first summer after Philadelphia's death. In the novel, Cecilia Wynn,

had been obliged to accept the offer of one of her cousins to equip her for the East Indies, and tho' infinitely against her inclinations had been necessitated to embrace the only possibility that was offered to her, of a Maintenance; Yet it was *one*, so opposite to all her ideas of Propriety, so contrary to her Wishes, so repugnant to her feelings, that she would almost have preferred Servitude to it, had Choice been allowed her--. Her personal Attractions had gained her a husband as soon as she arrived in Bengal, and she had now been married nearly a twelvemonth. Splendidly, yet unhappily married. United to a Man of double her own age,

whose disposition was not amiable, and whose Manners were unpleasing, though his Character was respectable.<sup>1</sup>

Catharine, or the Bower was dedicated to Jane's sister Cassandra. Almost all of Austen's juvenilia were dedicated to family and friends. "Her early pieces," writes Brian Southam, "with their fragile, often allusive humour, were designed for an intimate hearing" of family members. "She could depend on the full understanding of her listeners."<sup>2</sup> In this context, the young Austen undoubtedly felt free to use a distant episode in family history in a thinly disguised way, her aunt's journey to India to find a husband. Philadelphia's story was well known to the Austen family as she and her daughter Eliza had been frequent visitors at her brother's rectory. "In giving this account of Cecilia's fate," wrote Southam, "Jane Austen was perhaps making a gesture of sympathy and respect."<sup>3</sup> It is possible, Southam continues, that events and conversations in Jane Austen's "Letter the Third" and "Letter the Fourth," from a collection of letters in the Juvenilia, are also taken from Jane Austen's personal observations but "their historical content has passed away with the memory and lives of the Rectory audience [. . .]. Its recovery is a task for the historian [. . .] or biographer."<sup>4</sup>

Our awareness of the family background, [writes Southam] is also reinforced by scenes presented so vividly that they seem to carry the impress of reality. Such a ring of truth amongst material that is not so sharply focused, suggests for example, that the events or conversations in 'Letter the Third' and 'Letter the Fourth' are taken from incidents within Jane Austen's personal observation.

Perhaps these are the living dramas of the parish, the history of her neighbors, now recorded and recreated for all the family to remember and laugh over [. . .]. For our purpose it is enough to be

aware of this stratum of lost or hidden meaning; the principle and permanent entertainment is that of burlesque, which still carries much of its original point.<sup>5</sup>

The story of Philadelphia and Eliza recovers the lost or hidden meaning from Catharine, or the Bower as the Austen story sheds light on Jane Austen's interpretation of an incident that occurred within the confines of her own family's experience.

A life such as Philadelphia's had been the stuff of a novel Jane Austen would never write in her maturity, ranging from Calcutta under British colonial rule to Paris during the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. Austen's novels would take place only in settings with which she was herself thoroughly familiar.<sup>6</sup> The central characters of the major novels would be from the gentry and the texts would exclude the lives of the working class or the aristocrats. As Dorothy Van Ghent observes of Austen's work:

The exclusions and limitations are deliberate [ . . . ] . What she excludes from her fictional material does not [ . . . ] reflect a personal obliviousness, but, rather a critically developed knowledge of the character of her gift and a restriction of its exercise to the kind of subject matter which she could shape into most significance.

When we begin to look upon these limitations, not as having the negative function of showing how much of human life Jane Austen left out, but as having, rather, the positive function of defining the form and meaning of the book, we begin also to understand that kind of value that can lie in artistic mastery over a restricted range. This 'two inches of ivory' (the metaphor which she herself used to describe her work), though it may resemble the handle of a lady's

fan when looked on scantily, is in substance an elephant's tusk; it is a savagely probing instrument as well as a masterpiece of refinement.<sup>7</sup>

Philadelphia's and Eliza's stories make it clear that choice, not ignorance, determined Jane Austen's "limitations."

Philadelphia Austen (1730-1792), Jane Austen's father George (1731-1805), and a sister Leonora (1732-1784) were orphaned when Philadelphia was seven, George six, and Leonora five years old. Their mother Rebecca had died shortly after Leonora's birth; their father William remarried but died himself five years later. Susanna Kelk, their step-mother, refused to take responsibility for her husband's children and they were sent to live in St. Paul's Churchyard, London, with their father's brother Stephen Austen, who treated them "with neglect, if not with positive unkindness."<sup>8</sup> His idea of education developed itself strongly in a determination to thwart the natural tastes of the young people as much as possible.<sup>9</sup> George Austen, the only male child, was sent eventually to live with his Aunt Hooper in Tunbridge, and his Uncle Francis Austen of Sevenoaks paid his tuition at the Tunbridge School. At sixteen he went up to Oxford as a Tunbridge Fellow and in 1754 was ordained as a Deacon of Christ Church Cathedral at Oxford. As to Philadelphia, after being orphaned she was helped by her maternal relatives, the John Cope Freemans who had two daughters of their own. (Mr. Freeman was her maternal first cousin.)

In May of 1745, when she was fifteen years old Philadelphia was apprenticed to Hester Cole, a Convent Garden milliner, and was paid forty-five pounds by Mrs. Cole in return for spending five years in central London learning how to make and sell hats. Working as an apprentice in the millinery trade, Claire Tomalin observes in her biography of Jane Austen, was only "on the

border of respectability," and the fact that a genteel young woman would be reduced to this kind of work reflects the fluidity of class in England at the time, as an impoverished orphan girl born into the genteel class could be thrust among colleagues of a lower class, while her brother was attending Oxford and preparing for the ministry.<sup>10</sup> Tomalin further observes, in a letter, that Philadelphia's apprenticeship to a lowly milliner "puts an even stronger light on the poverty and social inferiority of the Austen side of the family."<sup>11</sup>

As soon as Philadelphia became twenty-one and inherited her share of her father's estate, she applied to the British East India Company for permission to sail on the Bombay Castle to visit "friends" in Fort Saint David, the English settlement which had been established in India in 1691 about a hundred miles to the south of Madras and sixteen miles south of Pondicherry. Her choice to take this risk was partially based, no doubt, on the scarcity of husbands in England for poor girls without a dowry, but also life in England may have seemed boring to Philadelphia, whose daughter would later describe herself as having her mother's "wandering spirit" and "vagabond life."<sup>12</sup> Surely, the sense of adventure which India represented in contrast to her dull prospects in England must have influenced her to make this choice. In any event, when she applied for permission to travel to India, Philadelphia did not give the Company the names of the friends she proposed to visit. It is probable that she was actually going to India at the suggestion of her wealthy uncle Francis Austen, as a prospective bride for his bachelor client Tysoe Saul Hancock.

We know little of Philadelphia's sister Leonora Austen except that she had been taken care of by a relative, Mrs. Elizabeth Hinton, who died without leaving a will in 1769 when Leonora was thirty-eight. Tysoe Saul Hancock, Philadelphia's husband, writes, "I think Mr. Hinton, [the late Mrs. Hinton's

husband] has behaved very nobly to poor Leonora for he certainly had not the Least Obligation to do anything for her.”<sup>13</sup> It is unclear what was meant by him acting nobly to Leonora, but he probably provided her with either money or a continued home, something he did not have to do. Hancock indicated that he would continue to contribute to Leonora’s support. “My Parts shall be always done by her with Great Chearfulness,” writes Hancock to Philadelphia,” but adds, “I am not the Least Surprised that Mrs. Hinton left nothing to Her.”<sup>14</sup>

Leonora is not mentioned again in any surviving letters even though she lived until 1784, dying at fifty. She was buried in Islington. Hers was the fate of many poor, genteel women of the eighteenth century who never married and became life-long dependents. Philadelphia escaped this fate by her courageous decision to go to India to find a husband.

There was a tedious application process for permission for a single woman to make the dangerous journey to India, which could take anywhere from six months to a year, should the ship arrive at all. Court records show that Philadelphia first petitioned the East India Company on November 29, 1751. The Court Book records “the several petitions of Mary Elliott and Philadelphia Austen praying leave to take passage to their friends at Fort St. David on the Bombay Castle.”<sup>15</sup> As men went to India to make their fortune in trade, so English women went out to the British colonial territories to find a husband and a maintenance. Those women who had to search for a husband after their arrival in India, or one of the other British colonial settlements, came to be labeled “the fishing fleet.” Philadelphia was technically not in this category, as her marriage was most likely prearranged. Two years before Philadelphia made her journey, another poor orphan, Warren Hastings, made a similar journey to India, his headmaster at Westminster believing that he had a better

chance to make his way as a clerk for the East India Company than by going on to a University. Warren Hastings went to Calcutta. Philadelphia remained in Madras for several years, before she too moved to Calcutta and befriended Hastings. But this is getting ahead of our story.

On December 18, 1751, orders appeared in the Court Records "that Miss Philadelphia Austen and Miss Mary Elliott have leave to go to their friends at Fort St. David in their giving the usual security and the Company being at no charge thereby."<sup>16</sup> They were probably paired this way because they used the same men as sureties, although it is possible that they knew each other before the journey. At a Court of Directors meeting held on Friday the 20th of December 1751, it was resolved by ballot that James Adams of London and John Lardner of Southwark, both merchants, "were approved of as Security for Miss Philadelphia Austen and Miss Mary Elliott passengers for Fort St. David, in 200 pounds each."<sup>17</sup> At a Court of Directors held Friday the 3rd of January 1752, it was ordered "that Miss Mary Elliott and Miss Philadelphia Austen be each excused Paying the Company the usual Permission for the Liberty of going to the East Indies, and that they be permitted to take with them a Black Woman Servant [who came home from India] with Mrs. Foster, also that Mrs. Millicent Sewell have liberty to return a Black [Indian] servant of Mr. Wedderburn's back to Bengal--Both free of charge to the Company."<sup>18</sup>

The Bombay Castle was one of the tall, deep-hulled three-masters known as East Indiamen, the largest English merchant ships afloat in the early eighteenth century. Indiamen were armed against pirates, with as many as thirty guns, and were chartered by the Company for their East India trade. We do not have letters from Philadelphia describing her journey on the Bombay Castle. Mary Elliott, whose name appears on the passenger list, ultimately did

not accompany her on her journey, but married in England and came out to India a year later. We do have extant, however, a first-hand description of the actual crossing of the Bombay Castle, in the original journal of Thomas Brown, the Captain of the ship during Philadelphia's journey.<sup>19</sup> The captain of such a vessel was an important personage, not much inferior in society to naval officers such as Jane Austen's navy brothers, and having the advantage of taking home prize money, after capturing an enemy ship, worth his pay for three hundred years. A common seaman's prize money was only fifteen times his yearly pay of twelve pounds.<sup>20</sup> In addition to carrying the Company's goods or troops conveyed at the company's expense, the captain might fill cargo space with his own private merchandise and carry on private trade. By this means quantities of English comforts and luxuries were carried to Bengal for sale to Englishmen abroad and tea, chinaware and the heavy wines of Madeira and Oporto were brought back to England on the return voyage. More lucrative than the material cargo, however, was the captain's right to charge fees for cabin accommodations, according to the rank of the passenger. Special accommodations for ladies were the highest price, 500 pounds or more for a berth, twice as much as a general's fare. The ships left London crammed with cargo, passengers, and livestock—cows, goats, and poultry for the voyage—leaving small space for amenities, even for those who paid highly. Private berths were spaces between decks screened off with canvas and furnished at the passenger's expense.

The Bombay Castle sailed out of Gravesend on January 19, 1752. The trip was perilous. Sailors fell overboard and were drowned and sickness broke out early on in the voyage. By June 6th, the ship was on the West coast of Sumatra. By this time many of the soldiers aboard and the seamen had taken

ill, although no mention is made in Captain Brown's log of the health of the passengers. As a matter of fact, no mention is made of the passengers in the entire log. The ship made sail for the islands towards Ben Coolen, "by consultation," the Captain records, "of self and others for the reasons given in said consultation, the principle of which was to save the lives of so many of the Hon'ble Company Soldiers that are down with the scurvy and other Distempers, as well as Several of our own Seamen."<sup>21</sup> As the length of the journey depended on the winds, it might be at least a month before they reached India, the captain wrote:

which considering the great number of Sick People now on board that in a month's Time in all human probability we might not have people enough left alive to Navigate the Ship, Company Soldiers as well as Sailors included it being now 5 months on Salt Provision since we left 2 or 3 Days Excepted.<sup>22</sup>

When they landed on June 19th in Ben Coolen they dispatched to shore on a Long Boat, 46 of the Company soldiers and 22 seamen, "Being sick with scurvy and other Disorders."<sup>23</sup> (The eleven women passengers are again not mentioned.) Empty casks were sent ashore to be filled with fresh water. The ship was caulked and provisions were taken aboard. On July 8th they set sail, anchoring at Fort St. David Road on July 31st where they took on provisions and soldiers moved on to Cuddalore, "For the convenience of taking on 700 baggs of salt peter"<sup>24</sup> used medicinally and for gunpowder at the time. Charles Boddam, a friend of Robert Clive, who would later become the Company's Governor General of Bengal and Baron Clive of Plessey, came on Board for Madras and "took the Government there."<sup>25</sup> On August 3rd the ship moved on

to Fort St. George to deliver "66 chests of the Company's treasure ashore and 66 soldiers, plus 50 bags of salt peter."<sup>26</sup>

The site of Fort St. David where Philadelphia landed was an English settlement founded in 1691. It was one of the important trading posts on the Coromandel coast, each fortified and surrounded by its native town: Fort St. George in Madras, and Fort St. David, both British posts and between them Pondicherry, the most important French town in India and one hundred miles down the coast from Madras. This whole area was part of the Carnatic of which the main towns were Trichinopoly and Arcut. It was the area too where the French and the British were fighting for domination in India. In 1744 an all-out war had been fought here between the two nations, which resulted in the French under Dupleix attacking and Dupleix ordering the destruction of the East India fortifications at Madras and imprisoning the English garrison. He then set about the destruction of Fort St. David, a great loss to the British Company as it was its last stronghold on the Coromandel coast and the most profitable area for trade in India at the time. At the end of the War of Austrian Succession back in Europe, the peace treaty of 1748 provided for the restoration of conquests, and Madras became British once again. What had become apparent during the war in India was the ineffectiveness of the native Indians against the Europeans. Dupleix and the British had ignored the protestations of the Nawab of the Carnatic and had marched over his territory. The British, writes P.J. Marshall, "became increasingly confident in the efficacy of force. As early as 1751 a free-lance soldier was trying to convince British ministers that the government of Bengal could be overthrown by an expeditionary force of 20,000 Europeans."<sup>27</sup>

A year before Philadelphia's arrival in Fort St. David, Robert Clive persuaded the Governor of the Fort, Thomas Saunders, to attack Arcot, the

capital of the Dupleix puppet Nawab. The expedition left Madras August 26, 1751, under the leadership of a twenty-five-year-old, inexperienced Clive, and easily occupied the capital, proceeding to force a combined French and Indian force to surrender at Trichinopoly. As P.J. Marshall observes:

The East India Company, from being the holder of a mere couple of forts on the Coromandel coast, had become one of the most powerful forces in southern India. The French Company had lost nearly all it had gained [. . .] [and] was beginning on its long and powerful journey into the interior of India.<sup>28</sup>

Dupleix did not entirely capitulate, however, threatening Fort St. David from the land and the sea, and a truce was not established until Dupleix was replaced in 1754. This then was the tumultuous state of political affairs upon Philadelphia Austen's arrival in Madras.

We have no letters from or reports of Philadelphia during her stay in Fort St. David either before or after her marriage, even though Claire Tomalin speculates that Philadelphia wrote regularly to her brother George during her stay in India. We do, however, have the words of Edward E. Ives, an Englishman, who published in 1786 a book entitled, A Voyage from England to India, in the Year MDCCLIV [1754]. The book is a historical narrative of the operations of the British squadron and army in India under the command of Vice-Admiral Watson and Colonel Clive in the years 1755-1757 and in it Ives describes Admiral Watson's arrival at Fort St. David from Madagascar in 1754, two years after Philadelphia's arrival. Ives had entered into a contract with Watson, "on the part of his majesty," for establishing a hospital in the several settlements of India, "into which I was to receive," he writes, "the sick and hurt of the squadron, and provide them with medicinal and surgical assistance, and

also with provisions, nurses &c.&c."<sup>29</sup> Ives's description helps us to visualize what Philadelphia must have seen when she first landed in Fort St. David. He talks of a strong fort with a wall around it and a town situated near the sea. Many neat houses with gardens are "laid out with much good taste" by gentlemen in the Company's service. The gardens produce pineapples, oranges, limes, pomegranates, plantains, bananas, mangoes, and guavas. There are exotic animals and beautifully colored birds perched in the pleasant rows of the ever-green tulip trees which are planted "in the same manner as the elms in St. James' Park." European residents ride around in their palanquins, "a covered machine with cushions in it [. . .] carried on the shoulders of four or six men." Ives describes the natives as being various shades of black. The men are dressed in "only a piece of rag around their hips." The women wear a "sash of different colors that forms a tolerably decent dress, as the part that comes over the shoulders, quite covers the breasts."<sup>30</sup> The children wear no clothes at all.

We do not know who met Philadelphia in Fort St. David or with whom she stayed when she got there. Most probably her uncle had arranged for her to stay with friends. Letters exist from other young women who made the voyage to India mentioning family friends who met them. In one case, friends who were supposed to have met young ladies at the ship had moved to Northern India by the time the ship arrived! From a list signed in Fort St. George, dated February 21, 1753, of inhabitants, "not in the Service of the Honourable Company," who were living in the two forts in the Madras area, we know that Philadelphia Austen was included among the names of unmarried women. (The list was signed in Fort St. George because the government of the Madras Presidency was conducted in the old buildings of this British settlement, although most of

the British inhabitants lived outside the walls.)<sup>31</sup> The list of unmarried inhabitants included Margaret Maskelyne, who sailed on the Bombay Castle with Philadelphia, and Mary Elliot who sailed a year later as the wife of a Captain Buchanan, so the list appears not to be entirely accurate. (Captain Buchanan was to die in the Black Hole of Calcutta, a horrifying prison massacre of English men and women during a time of civil strife and racial animosity, and Mary Elliot was to become the first wife of Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of Bengal who would figure prominently in the life of Philadelphia Austen and her daughter.) Shortly after the list of unmarried inhabitants was recorded, Philadelphia married Dr. Hancock at Cuddalore, a settlement a few miles south of Fort St. David.

Although we have no direct information about Philadelphia's welcome to India, we do know that Robert Clive, then a steward and a captain in the military, received a letter from Charles Boddam during the course of the Bombay Castle voyage informing him that ships were arriving from England with desirable young women aboard. "After such a campaign as you had," Boddam wrote Clive:

these beauties will have a wonderful effect upon you [. . .] there are eleven ladies coming over, Mrs. Keane, Mrs. Edwards, two young ladies to Mrs. Ackell, Miss Elliott [this name is given a variety of spellings in different documents] and Miss Austen, Miss Ross, a Scotch lady, and a prodigious fine girl it is said and Miss Maskelyne, your friend's sister. The others I have not heard the names of but, however, I would advise you to guard your heart well against them.<sup>32</sup>

Robert Clive did not succeed in guarding his heart and in six months time he

married Margaret Maskelyne. Like Philadelphia Austen, whose name Boddam's letter indicates he knew, Margaret was typical of the genteel women who came to India in the early eighteenth century with the hopes of marrying one of the "servants," as the employees were called, of the East India Company. Unlike Philadelphia, however, Margaret came from a "clan" of Anglo-Indians. It was not an accident that Clive chose to marry a woman from the well-connected Maskelyne clan. The Fowkes, Walshes and Maskelynes were not only intermarried but were all members of the East India Company clan, which had made Margaret's marriage prospects a far simpler matter than those of Philadelphia. An orphan, like Philadelphia, Margaret had lived with aunts who cared for her before her journey to India. Her father had been a civil servant. She was fortunate in having an uncle and two aunts living in India and a brother, Edmund (or "Mun" as he was called) in whose house in Vesper, a suburb west of Fort St. David, she could live upon her arrival. Another brother, Dr. Nevyl Maskelyne, would become a celebrated mathematician and, afterwards, Astronomer Royal. In 1750, Mrs. Joseph Fowke, née Eliza Walsh, had written to her aunts in England that her cousin Mun Maskelyne had "laid out a husband for Peggy [his fifteen-year-old sister] if she chose to take so long a voyage for one [meaning a prospective husband] "that I approve of extremely, but she must make haste, as he is in such a marrying mood that I believe the first comer will carry him."<sup>33</sup> Margaret took the risk, sailed to India and married Clive on February 18, 1753. She was seventeen years old.

Eliza Walsh (1731-1760), who had written back to England from India to alert her aunts to the advantages of her cousin Margaret hustling over to India to marry Clive, had herself met her husband in India. Her father, Joseph Walsh, had been Governor of Fort St. George and she had lived in India from her birth

in 1731 until her mother's death in 1734 when she had been sent to live with her aunts Jane and Sara Maskelyne in England. In 1749 she returned to India with her brother John Walsh, who was fortunate to have had some capital to supplement his Company salary of five pounds a year. Eliza hardly knew her brother when they sailed to India together, as John had been raised by his paternal and she by her maternal relatives. Later John became a member of Parliament. As a member of the Indian "clan," which existed on both sides of the Cape, and eventually even got to Virginia, Eliza arrived in India to be swept into a whirl "of balls, moonlight suppers and childish games played upon the streets." She described her life in India as "just like living in a country town in England but in a much grander manner."<sup>34</sup>

Eliza Walsh's letters will be used to give us first-hand impressions of a young English woman's voyage and her first arrival in India three years before Philadelphia Austen made that same journey. On February 20, 1750 Eliza Walsh had written home to her aunts from Fort St. David telling them of her voyage:

I cannot describe to you the misery suffered, no sickness I ever felt came near to it--the little hole of a Cabin I was stuffed into where there was not a breath [. . .] made me worse [. . .] and the continual noise, nastiness and stink made me almost distracted, but flatter myself with a more agreeable humor now I shall have so good a companion as Mr. Fowke [her husband]. The young ladies, my shipmates were very good natured girls but quite like children. They were almost always out upon the Deck in the day and used to go to bed before me at night so that I had very little of their Company. I delivered myself with reading all the morning and

again till te [. . .] . My brother and I played Whist till supper and about ten we all retired. I generally took up my book again till I was sleepy, and that was my life aboard ship [. . .] I never was gladder than when I saw shore. The Poor Miss Rouses had the misfortune to find their Pappy dead, no relation here but a distant cousin who however has taken them and will be extremely kind to them, they are entirely dependent upon him for they have not a farthing of their own [. . .] this would be looked on as an extraordinary piece of Generosity in England, but here 'tis thought only common Humanity and I believe there are often families that are strangers would have taken them if he would not, they are certainly more hospitable here than in Europe. I believe they look upon themselves as a little community Banish'd their country, so think themselves obliged to make it as agreeable to one another as they can.<sup>35</sup>

When Eliza Walsh arrived in India she wrote to her aunts that she was being cared for by a Mrs. Prince, a friend of her brother's, who acquainted her with Indian customs and accompanied her on social visits. Presumably, similar arrangements had been made for Philadelphia Austen, as the role of British women living in India included welcoming and offering help to newly arrived British ladies, as soon as they came ashore. Of her impression of Fort St. David, Eliza Walsh wrote:

You'd be surprised to see what strange holes people are forc'd to put up with, and all the English houses were knocked down when the French attacked the place. So we are all obliged to live in the black people's, they are built in the same fashion actually like an

English Barn, that I live is as good as any place. It's a little Bed Chamber divided off at each end and the middle is our Parlour [. . .] . Mrs. Prince has as many servants to wait upon her as a Duchess, everybody has here. They are so intolerably lazy they can't stick a pin in themselves. It would make you smile Mummy to see your child carried along in a Pallangreen which is a Coach with a tilt over it like the Vaux hall boats by five blacks and a soldier marching before with a sword in his hand and a boy running by my side to keep my petticoats down [. . .] it has such an air of grandeur but people of fortune have half a Dozen of these soldiers.<sup>36</sup>

In February 1750 Eliza Walsh wrote her aunts that she was going to move to one of the Company houses in Madras, a house which belonged to the Roman Catholics who had been turned out of the English settlements and their houses confiscated "for being suspected of giving us some foul play when the French took the town."<sup>37</sup> She did not have to pay rent for this house and dined each night with Mrs. Prince. Eliza found Madras far more agreeable as there was more company and better houses. "If the house in St. David's was a little Barn," she wrote, "that I am going into is a little palace."<sup>38</sup>

The most important news that the British families awaited from a daughter or other female relation who had gone out to India was that she had received a proposal of marriage. Philadelphia must have written such a letter to George Austen when she became engaged to Tysoe Saul Hancock. Eliza Walsh announced her engagement a year and a half after her arrival in India. On May 7, 1750 Eliza married her brother's friend and partner in the diamond trade, John Fowke; the couple were among Robert Clive's circle of friends in Madras

where Mr. Prince was governor. Announcing her marriage to her aunts in England, Eliza wrote:

I have the satisfaction to acquaint you that one of your kind wishes is accomplished I mean a Husband [. . .] . I was married to Mr. Fowke, you have often heard my Brother mention him and if I am not mistaken you laid him out for me yourselves, at least I find by my Uncle Walsh's letters that he did. I believe you approve of this match better than any of the Fort St. David's Gentlemen [. . .] (supposing I could have had them) for they have not got their money with the greatest honor in the World.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, in the rapacious effort to line their own pockets, many Britains had become plunderers and the term "Nabob" had become a term of reproach applied to individuals who had served in the East India Company in Asia, implying that the persons to whom it applied had made their fortunes by grievously oppressing the natives of India. According to a Dictionary of the Words of Anglo-India the word "Nabob" was used originally to signify a deputy governor of a province under the great Mogul. Later it became an honorary title of "rank without office" occasionally bestowed on Muslims of distinction. In the eighteenth century it was applied to any Anglo-Indian who returned home after making a fortune in India.<sup>40</sup> Mr. Fowke had been wealthy when he arrived in India and was therefore not a Nabob.

Eliza's letters to her aunts help us to understand the political unrest which Philadelphia would have faced when she arrived in India two years after Eliza Austen Hancock's wedding. We learn from her the physical and emotional cost of these women's decisions to go out to India, as well as the gains, and how much they relied on the company of other English women, living

as they did in such a strange and foreign land with its dangerously oppressive climate, cut off from their families and their roots. "The French," she wrote her aunts, "are setting up one Nabob and we another [. . .] their design to drive us off the coast."<sup>41</sup> The Nabobs "appeared to be buying their way into everything including the government."<sup>42</sup> Eliza assures her aunts that they "need not worry because her husband has, an easy fortune and if he sees things take a bad turn will certainly leave India."<sup>43</sup>

Eliza Fowke thought little of the society in Madras and said there were too few people to make it worth while to spend a fortune because not enough people could witness one's grandeur! She was delighted when her younger cousin Margaret joined her in India as she found the Madras community confining. "Madras," she wrote her Aunt Jenny, July 27, 1751:

offers no variety [. . .] we have little company and those not overly agreeable [. . .] parties in such a little place as this, are very disagreeable [. . .] generally have somebody at my house and sometimes go on little jaunts of pleasure into the country.<sup>44</sup>

Time was spent sightseeing, visiting pagodas and journeying to visit women in Fort St. David who had been shipmates on the journey over.

Female friendship was important to Anglo-Indian women transplanted from friends and family. So much had Eliza wanted her cousin Margaret to join her in India that she had "offered to pay for her to go for a year to a good day school in London, to perfect her French and also her dancing,"<sup>45</sup> skills considered essential for a woman in order to be successful in the social world in England and in India as well. Although Eliza had succeeded in finding herself a husband, the goal of her quest in India, she still yearned for female

companionship.

We do not know for certain whether Philadelphia Austen's marriage, which took place six weeks after her arrival in Fort St. David, was arranged as Eliza Walsh's was, but it does seem likely that her Uncle Francis Austen made the introduction by letter from England. We know little of Tysoe Saul Hancock's background other than that he was probably born on Christmas day 1723 and baptized at Sittingbourne, Kent on January 10, 1724. He was the son of the Reverend Thomas Saul Hancock, rector of Wormshill and Hollingbourne, and his wife Elizabeth. Hancock described himself as "a Coxcomb in my younger years."<sup>46</sup> He had four siblings including two mentioned in his letters, a brother, Colbron, who was an unsuccessful businessman in Charing Cross, and a sister, Olivia Lightfoot of Margate, whom he helped to support. Hancock had been in India since 1748 as a surgeon's mate for the East India Company and assisted at the King's Hospital at Cuddalore, a few miles south of Fort St. David, "during the time the sea and land forces were here."<sup>47</sup> In 1751 he was promoted to surgeon at Dovecottah, an English settlement forty miles south of Fort St. David, and he successfully treated Robert Clive for wounds he received in 1752. This act of kindness Clive would later repay when, at his instigation as Governor of Bengal, Hancock was appointed surgeon at Fort William, Calcutta. At the time, English bachelors in India were often ranked by single ladies according to their monetary worth. Civil servants were at the top of the desirable list, labeled "three hundred-a-year-dead-or-alive men" from the pay they received. Next were men in the military. Third tier were professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and chaplains. Hancock, as a surgeon for the Company, was in the third tier, earning thirty-six pounds a year and supplementing his income by private trade, using Philadelphia's Uncle Francis as his agent. Surgeons were

familiar to Philadelphia, as her father William Austen and her maternal grandfather Sir George Hampton had both been surgeons. Fort St. David had become the seat of government, or presidency, of all the English settlements on the Coromandel coast after Madras, the former presidency, was taken by the French in 1746. In 1752, the year that Philadelphia arrived, the presidency was moved back to Madras, but a subordinate Counsel under a Deputy Governor was still at Fort St. David. In June 1758 Fort St. David was taken and demolished by the French, but Philadelphia and her husband by this time had most probably moved on to Calcutta. In Jane Austen's Catharine, or the Bower, female characters debate the pros and cons of a young woman's voyage to India to seek a mate. Camilla Stanley, oblivious to its risks, maintains,

Well, I cannot conceive the hardship of going out in a very agreeable Manner with two or three sweet Girls for Companions, having a delightful voyage to Bengal or Barbadoes or wherever it is, and being married soon after one's arrival to a very charming Man immensely rich—. I see no hardship in all that.<sup>48</sup>

Kitty comes down on the side of prudence and decorum:

Your representation of the Affair, said Kitty laughing, certainly gives a very different idea of it from Mine. But supposing all this to be true, still, as it was by no means certain that she would be so fortunate either in her voyage, her Companions, or her husband; in being obliged to run the risk of their proving very different, she undoubtedly experienced a great hardship—. Besides, to a Girl of any Delicacy, the voyage in itself, since the object of it is so universally known, is a punishment that needs no other to make it very severe.<sup>49</sup>

Camilla has the last word: "I do not see that at all. She is not the first Girl who has gone to the East Indies for a Husband, and I declare I should think it very good fun if I were as poor."<sup>50</sup>

Writing a fictionalized version of her recently deceased aunt's journey to India, Austen may have lent her own responses to Cecilia's choice in the words of the narrator who tells us that Cecilia's acceptance of the offer of her cousin to equip her for the voyage was "infinitely against her inclinations," and was necessary because it was the only possibility of a maintenance offered to her. It seems likely that Philadelphia's choice might have been made with similar reservations. Jane Austen contributes what may well be her own response to this woman's plight when she characterizes Cecilia's choice as "*one*, so opposite to all her ideas of Propriety, so contrary to her Wishes, so repugnant to her feelings, that she would almost have preferred Servitude to it, had Choice been allowed her--."<sup>51</sup> We have no way of knowing whether Philadelphia made this choice of her own free will or whether she was unhappy when she first married Hancock. We do know from the tone of Hancock's letters that he was plagued by gout and by infirmities caused by living in the tropics, that he could be disgruntled and petulant, and that he was haunted by financial worries, so like Cecilia's husband one might say that he was "unamiable." Again, that Cecilia spoke with pleasure only of returning to her friends in England is certainly Austen's fictionalized version of how she speculated an English girl might feel under such circumstances. It is not uncharacteristic of Austen's own choice to live in and write about a very circumscribed area of England surrounded by close female friends and family. In this early text she might therefore be defining her young self against the adventurous type of young woman Philadelphia was, although we do not know whether Philadelphia was

adventurous at this point. Surely later on when as a widow she chose to leave her comfortable surroundings in England and take her daughter to France to live, she embarked willingly on a very different life's journey than that of her cousin Jane.

It seems clear and fascinating too that Austen at sixteen saw in her aunt's story a reflection of the difficult choices women were forced to make in the eighteenth century and expressed her concern for the plight of genteel girls without a dowry who were forced to take exceptional roles in order to find a husband to support them. The alternative was most often to accept roles like that of Philadelphia's sister Leonora or Cecilia's sister, "Dependent even for her Cloathes on the bounty of others, who of course do not pity her, as [ . . . ] they consider her as very fortunate" to have been supported by the kind charity of relatives.<sup>52</sup> Readers of Austen's novels will recall Fanny Price of Mansfield Park, who like the Wynne sisters, becomes a poor dependent on rich relatives, assuming, until she marries, a role somewhere between a member of the family and a servant. Jane Austen herself and her sister Cassandra, would also be lifelong dependents on family support. After her father's death in January of 1805, Jane, her sister Cassandra, and her widowed mother were left with a combined income of two hundred pounds a year to which Henry, James, and Edward, three of the Austen brothers, each were asked to contribute a further annual sum of two hundred pounds. It was expected that impoverished women would be supported by male relations.

When Warren Hastings made his first trip to Bengal in 1750, he stopped at Fort St. David, Madras, before landing in Calcutta, where he probably kept accounts of the East India Company's transactions and engaged in private trading, particularly in silk, like many of the Company's other badly paid factors.

The year that Philadelphia Austen arrived in India, Hastings was sent up river to the trading post at Kasimbazar Murshidabad, Bengal's capital, and gradually moved up the Company's ranks. Before Hastings went out with Clive to liberate Calcutta in 1756 he had married Mary Elliott Buchanan, the woman who was to have sailed with Philadelphia and who became a widow of one of the British officers lost in the Black Hole. In 1757 in Kasimbazar, Mary gave birth to a son, George, and the following year to a daughter Elizabeth, who died in infancy in 1758.

When Hastings arrived in Kasimbazar he had recognized that a surgeon was needed and had asked Clive to appoint the doctor who attended Mary during what was to be her last illness. Mary died July 11, 1759. Clive refused Hastings's request, and appointed Tysoe Saul Hancock from Madras as surgeon at Fort William, Calcutta, to repay Hancock for treating him when he was wounded in battle. The Hancocks arrived in Kasimbazar shortly before Mary's death. In January 1758, Fort St. David had been captured and demolished by the French. Houses were burned and property destroyed. It is unclear where the Hancocks were living when this calamity occurred, but a year later we know they had settled in Calcutta where Philadelphia's life was to take a turn that would forever affect her destiny and that of Eliza, her daughter, who would be born there.

## Notes

## Chapter One Part I

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, Catharine, or the Bower, The Works of Jane Austen: Minor Works, Volume VI, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 194.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) 6.

<sup>3</sup> Southam 7.

<sup>4</sup> Southam 7.

<sup>5</sup> Southam 7.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Austen, "To Anna Austen," 10 August 1814 and 9 September 1814, letters 104 and 107 of Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 269.

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1953) 99-100.

<sup>8</sup> Lefroy MS. qtd. in W. Austen-Leigh, R.A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record, (London: The British Library, 1989) 3.

<sup>9</sup> Hubback MS. qtd. in A Family Record, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 15. (This information does not appear in the earlier 1997 edition of this book.) Tomalin discusses the coincidence of Cleland's Fanny Hill, published in 1748-9, the exact period of Philadelphia's employment by Hester Cole, having a character called Mrs. Cole with a millinery shop in Covent Garden that is a cover for a bawdy house. Tomalin believes Cleland probably knew of the real

Mrs. Cole but "we are not entitled to conclude anything about Philadelphia from Cleland." 290

<sup>11</sup> Claire Tomalin, Letter to author, 26 April 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 May 1789, Austen Papers, 111.

<sup>13</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 17 January 1770, Austen Papers, 1704-1856, ed. R.A. Austen-Leigh, (Spottiswoode: Ballantyne & Co. Ltd, 1942) 65-66.

<sup>14</sup> R.A. Austen-Leigh, ed., Austen Papers, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Court Records, December 18, 1751, British East India Company, (British Library, India Office Library) 601.

<sup>16</sup> Court Records, December 18, 1751, 601.

<sup>17</sup> Court Records, December 20, 1751, 608.

<sup>18</sup> Court Records, January 3, 1752, 618.

<sup>19</sup> Captain Thomas Brown, Log on Bombay Castle, Log 125-C, January 19, 1752-November 29, 1753, Received December 5, 1753. British Library--India Office Records L/MAR Section II Ships' Logs 1702-1856.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy (London: Hambledon and London Ltd., 2000) 121.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Brown Log.

<sup>27</sup> P.J. Marshall, "The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion," The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 499.

<sup>28</sup> Marshall, 501.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Ives, A Voyage from England to India in the Year 1754 (London, Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1773).

<sup>30</sup> Ives, Voyage.

<sup>31</sup> Register of British Inhabitants of Madras Area not Employed by British East India Company, Unmarried Women, Fort St. George: February 21, 1753, British Library--India Office, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Boddam, "To Robert Clive," 22 January 1752. Powis Collection, Box 20, British Library, India Office.

<sup>33</sup> Eliza Walsh, "To Jane and Sarah Maskelyne," 17 February 1750, Mss. EurDD546-551, Orthwaite Collection, India Office Library, London.

<sup>34</sup> Walsh, 17 February 1750.

<sup>35</sup> Walsh, 20 February 1750. Orthwaite Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Eliza Walsh, "To Jane and Sarah Maskelyne," 10 October 1749, Orthwaite Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Walsh, 17 February 1750.

<sup>37</sup> Walsh, 17 February 1750.

<sup>38</sup> Eliza Walsh Fowke, "To Jane and Sarah Maskelyne," 30 September 1750, (Orthwaite Collection).

<sup>39</sup> Fowke, 30 September 1750.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis Ivor, ed., A Dictionary of the Words of Anglo India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997) 173.

<sup>41</sup> Ivor 173.

<sup>42</sup> Ivor 173.

<sup>43</sup> Eliza Walsh Fowke, "To Jane and Sarah Maskelyne," 17 February 1750, Orthwaite Collection.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret Maskelyne, "To Jenny Maskelyne," 27 July 1751, Orthwaite Collection.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Maskelyne, 27 July 1751.

<sup>46</sup> R.A. Austen-Leigh, ed., Austen Papers, 67.

<sup>47</sup> The information on Tysoe Saul Hancock is from Claire Tomalin's Jane Austen: A Life, 299, footnote 7. Tomalin acknowledges her source as Robin Vick (a person who writes for the Jane Austen Society Bulletin).

<sup>48</sup> Austen, Catharine, 205.

<sup>49</sup> Austen, Catharine, 205.

<sup>50</sup> Austen, Catharine, 205.

<sup>51</sup> Austen, Catharine, 194.

<sup>52</sup> Austen, Catharine, 205-206.

Chapter One  
Philadelphia Austen: Her Passage to India  
Part II-Calcutta

The charter of the East India Company had forbidden females in its factories, or trading stations, which housed the Company "servants." After 1657, Company servants passed through a regular gradation of rank as apprentices, writers, factors, merchants and senior merchants, all having come to India not for conquest, but to make their fortune in trade. In the seventeenth century, servants lived inside the walls of Fort St. George, and at night the gates were locked to protect the company from the disease, fighting, and famine beyond the walls. The collegiate factory life, based on celibacy, was, of course, a short-lived one. In the 1670s, in order to prevent British men from marrying Portuguese or French Catholic women, or from miscegenation by relations with Indian women, the Company sent to Bombay annually twenty single British women, and continued this precedent until a few decades into the eighteenth century. As late as 1719 an issue of Madras Consultations expressed the Company's disapproval of "young gentlemen" from "good families" in the Company service marrying non-English women. Their families, so the article read, would be "scandalized by such marriages." By the early eighteenth century, following the practices of the Portuguese, the Company began to ship out batches of very young marriageable women to India, but there was a difference between the practices of the English and the Portuguese. The first European ladies to make the voyage to India had been Portuguese; their King sent a small group of female orphans each year. Pietro Della Valla, who visited India in 1623, describes these ladies as: "Poor, but well descended orphans

which were wont to be sent from Portugal every year with a substantial and tempting dowry which the king gives them, to the end they may be married in India, in order to further the peopling of the Portuguese colonies in those parts.”<sup>1</sup> Their English counterparts, however, were classified either as “gentlewomen” or as “other women” and provided by the Company with but one set of clothes and a “diet,” or allowance, for only one year, the time allotted for them to find a husband. If the women were suspected of behaving immorally, they were warned that if they did “not apply themselves to a more sobre and Christian conversation” they would be deprived of their liberty and fed on bread and water until they were shipped back to England.<sup>2</sup>

By Philadelphia Austen's time, the mid-eighteenth century, the East India Company had abandoned the practice of exporting women to the Indies. Single women of the genteel class, like Philadelphia, sailed on their own, with permission from the Company and letters of introduction to friends or relatives in India. “At any time during the rule of the East India Company,” writes P.J. Marshall, “there was a heavy predominance of males over females among the European population of Calcutta.”<sup>3</sup> Most Europeans who went to India were relatively young men, and even if they were married their wives were unlikely to have accompanied them as there were limits to the number of wives permitted to travel abroad and the cost of maintaining a wife in India was prohibitive for many. It was a common pattern, observes Marshall, to delay marriage until one's return to Britain, while cohabiting with Indian concubines. Most European women, like Philadelphia, came to Calcutta already married. By the eighteenth century, most of the unmarried women who came to India to seek wealthy husbands “became matter for comment, most of it ill-natured.” When Philadelphia arrived in Calcutta it was a settlement “dominated by wealthy men

who lived high.”<sup>4</sup>

The Company trading station, or “factory,” as it was called, at Calcutta, had been built in the seventeenth century. It was named Fort William after King William III. In the beginning the East India Company was not interested in doing more militarily than repulsing attacks by the French. “It rightly saw involvement in purely Indian wars as ruinous,” observes Bruce Leneman.<sup>5</sup> But from the 1720s the British and the rulers of Bengal had been on a collision course, as the British intruding presence had become intolerable to the Indians. In 1756, three years before the Hancocks’ arrival in Calcutta, the Siraj-ud-Daula, Nawab of Bengal, captured the settlement, and at least fifty British perished in what was known as the tragedy of the Black Hole. Calcutta, however, was recovered by Robert Clive in January of 1757 when he took his army up to Plassey to defeat Siraj-ud Daula. Clive captured, as well, the French settlement at Chandanagore and shortly thereafter became the Governor General of the English settlements at Bengal.

During his governorship Clive appointed a young co-servant, Warren Hastings, who was to play a key role in the lives of Philadelphia and Eliza, as his representative to the Council Board in Calcutta. From the time of Plassey, British supremacy was established over a relatively centralized state which the British would eventually manage without an Indian ruler. Plassey also ushered in an era of individual enterprise in which Company servants, in partnership with each other or with Indians, made fortunes in internal trade. Three years after Plassey, having made his fortune, Clive returned to England and was succeeded first by John Howell, the hero of the Black Hole, and then by Henry Vansittart, a member of an East India Company family, who became the Governor shortly after the Hancocks arrived in Calcutta and in whose circle of

friends Philadelphia and Dr. Hancock were to be included.

The capture of Calcutta by Siraj-ud-Daula and the subsequent defeat of Siraj at Plassey had ushered in a period of rapid transition in Calcutta and the settlement the Hancocks entered was characterized by a spirit of commercial adventure and cosmopolitanism. It was also a period of unbridled corruption and abuse, as the merchants dedicated themselves to amassing personal fortunes.

The Hancocks became part of the elite set of Henry Vansittart, the Governor General appointed two years after Hancock's arrival, and his wife and sons. Philadelphia's choice had been rewarded; leaving England, she had created opportunities for herself unimaginable had she stayed at home. When Fanny Price is uprooted from her Portsmouth family to live in Mansfield Park, she is treated partly as a poor relation and partly as an unpaid servant and companion. Philadelphia's journey was a greater risk and though it brought her, like Fanny, to life on a grander scale than home, it transported her to a deracinated society in which poor relations could be absorbed into the community as equals. Professionals like Dr. Hancock enjoyed a good deal of social status and could easily socialize with people in high places such as the Governor General. The English may have reproduced British life in India, but class barriers were less restrictive.

When Philadelphia arrived in Calcutta there were architects available to build houses for Europeans to occupy. Some were even professional engineers working for the Company who made extra income as private architects. Much of the new building, observes P.J. Marshall, was on a grandiose scale. "Strict classical models were applied with a very few concessions to climate or available building materials." Visitors (such as W.

Hodges, in his book, Travels in India, published in 1793) commented on 'the superb appearance' of houses with 'great projecting porticoes or surrounded by colonnades or arcades, which give them the impression of Grecian temples.' "6

Another visitor, John Stewart, in a letter back home, told of:

spacious and showy houses, such as in appearance eclipse, (not to speak of London) almost anything in Paris or Italy. It is an appearance though, for they will not bear an examination, they are all of brick plastered over and whitewashed, but all attempt some order of architecture and you see nothing but porticoes, colonnades and galleries etc. some few in good taste, several tolerable, and many wretchedly bad [. . .].<sup>7</sup>

Philadelphia might have had the first impressions of Calcutta that another English woman, Mrs. Jemima Kindersley, described in the 1770s. Mrs. Kindersley, traveling with her artillery officer husband from 1765-1768, published her travel letters in 1770, in which she gives her first response to being in Calcutta:

[I]t is as awkward a place as can be conceived, and so irregular, that it looks as if all the houses had been thrown up in the air, and falled down again by accident as they now stand: people keep constantly building; and everyone who can procure a piece of ground to build a house upon, consults his own taste and convenience, without any regard to the beauty and regularity of the town.<sup>8</sup>

In order to reduce the extreme heat, architects built homes with thick walls and high ceilings. Verandas projecting out towards the sea were shaded by canvas awnings. The streets were said to have glistened with white buildings for, as

stone was not available in Calcutta, brick was used which was then covered with a stucco made of white lime, or "chunam," made from burnt shells. Houses were set in large gardens which visitors could see as they sailed up the river Hugli.<sup>9</sup>

The English population was expanding rapidly, many settlers having fled from Fort St. David, and houses were scarce and expensive. The Hancocks had to rent a house when they arrived, but rents were exorbitant; so were all English commodities such as clothes and wine. The house they rented from a Mr. Butler was the very house that Dr. Hancock would buy years later (although by then the neighborhood was more congested) when he returned from London without Philadelphia to live out the rest of his days in Calcutta. Despite high prices, insufferable heat, frequency of disease and recurrent monsoons, the Hancocks developed a comfortable life style amongst a group of British friends living in handsome houses with an abundance of servants who lived in shabby straw huts on the premises. Servants were inexpensive and the English depended on them to translate business documents and to make their purchases in the markets or bazaars.

The women of the settlement wore costumes which replicated the gowns of their counterparts in London and Paris as little concession was made to the extreme difference in weather. Wigs and powdered hair were worn by men and women. Ladies wore hoop skirts and hairdressers were employed to arrange turban-like coiffures adorned with bows, ribbons, and flowers. At a time when there were neither fans nor ice, men wore lace mufflers and voluminous neck cloths. Flowered coats and white breeches required frequent laundering so that men's wardrobes were remarkably large. During the day the brocades and silks worn to soirées were replaced with sleeved waistcoats, plain cotton shirts

and breeches of dimity or nankeen, and little starched white caps were worn instead of wigs. In fact, the elite British of Calcutta, with whom the Hancocks socialized, "were determined to have nothing but the best in British terms,"<sup>10</sup> except for Indian hookahs which were more expensive than pipes and which came into fashion with increasing wealth and ostentation.

The Hancocks' friends, including Governor Vansittart and his wife and family, were of an elite circle, probably because of Dr. Hancock having been appointed Company surgeon at Fort William by Vansittart's predecessor, Robert Clive. Warren Hastings, who lost his wife shortly after the Hancocks' arrival, was among their friends and Dr. Hancock and Hastings became partners in a private trading enterprise. Hastings was a resident at Murshidabad when the Hancocks arrived, as he was chief of the Company's factory in Kasimbazar and the Company's ambassador to the court of Mir Jafar, the Muslim Governor. He came to know the Hancocks well enough that he lived with them during his visits to Calcutta, until he built his own home when he was appointed to a seat on the Council of Calcutta in 1761. If Hastings's first wife Mary had been a friend of Philadelphia's in London, it would be possible that the two ladies renewed their friendship in India for the few months preceding Mary's death on July 6, 1759, at Cossimbazar. Also, Hastings might have known of Philadelphia because he was a Westminster school fellow of her half-brother, William-Hampson Walter of Hampshire. (Jane Austen's grandfather William Austen, a surgeon, had married Rebecca, daughter of Sir George Hampson, a physician of Gloucester. By her first husband Rebecca had a son, William-Hampson Walter (1721-1798) who seems to have had no profession or occupation but fathered six children, including Philadelphia Walter (1761-1834), who may have been named after Philadelphia Austen. By William Austen, Rebecca had four

children, one of whom was Philadelphia.) Of the tightly knit English community in which the Hancocks lived in Calcutta we can learn something from the letters that a Reverend Samuel Staveley wrote to Hastings, keeping him abreast of local news when he was living in Murshidabad. We learn from Staveley's letters that Dr. Hancock was away from home for long periods of time, attending his patients who lived outside of Calcutta, and Philadelphia was left with her small community of English friends.

Two years after her arrival in Calcutta, Philadelphia, who had been married and childless for nine years, gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. She was named after Hastings's daughter who had died in infancy shortly before the death of her mother. The Hancocks asked Warren Hastings to be their daughter's godfather, and he gave the baby a large gift of five thousand pounds. While living in India the child would be called "Betsy" and she is mentioned in Staveley's letters to Hastings describing their mutual English friends. Sydney C. Grier, a novelist whose works were serialized in Blackwells Edinburgh Magazine, and who was the editor of Letters of Hastings to His Wife (William Blackwell & Sons, 1905) paraphrases Staveley's letter in an article on Hastings which she wrote for Blackwells in 1904:

There are Governor and Mrs. Vansittart, [she wrote of Hasting's Calcutta set] with their two little boys, and amiable Miss Ironside, who plays the guitar [her father later became Hastings's military secretary]--little Betsy Hancock is very fond of both the lady and the instrument--and good Mr. and Mrs. Bowers, the latter always ready to do or get anything for anybody, and a friendly chorus of young officers and civilians. There are festivities at the baptism of the Vansittart baby, and pleasant evenings spent at the Gardens,

where 'we sup to-night all snug.'<sup>11</sup>

Staveley, who refers to himself as "Old Rattle" because his letters rattle on, writes of his impressions of Dr. Hancock at the time. "With all his airs," writes Staveley, giving the impression, fairly or not, that Hancock was given to pomposity, "I leave you to guess what he must have suffered by being so long absent from his wife and child. He has been night and day with Lyon."<sup>12</sup> When the Honourable James Philip Lyon, Hancock's patient who had been so ill that he required full time medical attendance, died, years later, he was considerably in debt to Dr. Hancock for unpaid medical bills, contributing to the doctor's chronic financial woes.

Philadelphia was a colorful figure at Fort William, possibly verging on the notorious, as she found herself involved in several scandals. Once, Henry Vansittart, while Governor of Bengal, had invited his wife and Philadelphia to join him when he visited an important Nawab, and the ladies' visit turned out to offend the Indian community, as Hindu women of class were prohibited from appearing in public and genteel English ladies were expected to follow suit. This incident was probably due to an oversight of the Governor's but the ladies were accused of committing a cultural slight.

The Vansittart indiscretion was not the only scandalous situation, nor the most serious one, in which Philadelphia was to find herself during her years in Calcutta. Mrs. Strachey, one of Dr. Hancock's patients and the wife of Clive's secretary, Sir Henry Strachey, one of the East India Company clan families, treated Philadelphia with contempt during these years, believing that she had "given herself" to Warren Hastings during the period after his first wife's death, and rumors spread that Betsy was the product of that liaison. Whether or not the

accusation was valid, shortly after the Hancocks and Hastings returned home to London in 1765, Clive wrote to his wife who was back in England,

In no circumstances whatever keep company with Mrs. Hancock for it is beyond doubt that she abandoned herself to Mr. Hastings, indeed, I would rather you had no acquaintance with the ladies who have been to India, they stand in such little esteem in England that their company cannot be of credit to Lady Clive."<sup>13</sup>

These lines, writes a biographer of Clive, "though still legible have been crossed out almost entirely, almost certainly by Margaret who wished to preserve Philadelphia's good name while knowing already that her child was rumored to be Warren Hastings'[s]".<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Clive, in compliance to her husband's wishes, did rebuff Philadelphia's overtures to renew their friendship in London. Later, after Dr. Hancock returned to India, leaving Philadelphia in London, he writes to her addressing the social slurs of the Anglo-Indian community:

You ought not, I think [to] have hesitated to tell Mrs. Strachey that her behaviour to you while in India, which plainly proved contemptuous of you, gave her no right to expect any favor from you. I am much surprised if Lady Clive's most extraordinary coolness be not owing to the Pride of that woman. Surely I did enough for her when I saved her life--her return for which was the basest ingratitude to you [. . .].<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Hancock probably realized that Hastings was Betsy's natural father but he acted as though she were his daughter and continued his relationship with Hastings throughout the rest of his life. After serving as a surgeon at Fort William for two years, Dr. Hancock resigned in 1761, the year of Betsy's birth,

and became one of Hastings's partners in a series of trading ventures in salt, timber, opium, and rice for the Madras market, a partnership which lasted from 1761-1765, during the time that Hastings was a member of the Council at Calcutta. Perhaps Hastings was attempting to make up to Hancock for betraying his trust. Surely there had to be some explanation for a man as competent as Hastings continuing in business with a man who turned out to be as incompetent as Hancock.

If clouds of scandal were surrounding Philadelphia, a veritable storm was brewing on the political scene in Calcutta by 1764. The relationship between the Company servants and the Indian princes had become openly hostile, a situation which would erupt eventually in the Bengal War. Hastings and Vansittart had proposed a compromise arrangement which would have given Mir Kasim, who had replaced Mir Jafar as Muslim Governor, more of the revenues he was entitled to, and that he had lost through the British-imposed system of freelance trading. The compromise, however, was turned down by the Council in Calcutta, which tried to reinstate Mir Jafar, but instead provoked an incident in which several employees of the Company were killed, Mir Jafar was restored forcibly and the same cycle of events that had led to his displacement was repeated. Hastings and Vansittart resigned, Clive was recalled to India to try to restore order and Hastings and Hancock, sensing imminent danger, decided to wind up their trading business and opium transactions in India and return home to England, leaving behind most of their trading capital. On December 20, 1764, after resigning his post at the East India Company, Hastings joined the Hancocks and their Indian servants Peter and Clarinda, taking passage on the Medway. They disembarked in England in June of 1765.

Hastings's return began tragically. It was not until he had disembarked that he learned that his seven-year-old son had died in the Autumn of 1764, while living with the George Austens at Steventon as their first live-in pupil. This was a sad beginning of an unfortunate era. Both Hastings and Hancock had expected that the money they had accrued in India and their investments would provide them with a comfortable income in England for the rest of their days. Their Indian investments, however, failed to generate the income anticipated and both men would feel impelled to return to India and work for the Company once again in hopes of replenishing their capital, that they might continue to enjoy the life style to which they had grown accustomed in Calcutta. (In London Hastings bought paintings and a carriage decorated with his arms and even commissioned Joshua Reynolds whom he had met through Samuel Johnson, to paint his portrait. But before long his money ran out.) Tysoe Saul Hancock would never return to England. Hastings convinced the Company to rehire him, this time as "second" to the newly elected governor of Madras, Josias Du Pre. He set sail in March of 1769 on the 499-ton East Indiaman Duke of Grafton, on board which he would meet yet another married woman whom he would marry during his second foray in India.

Jane Austen's novels, of course, do not represent the affluent middle class society in British-India during her lifetime, but she was keenly interested in the disruptions caused by the rise of a new wealthy middle class in England. They are represented by the Coles in Emma, who had made their money in commerce, and by the recently developed seaside resort at Sanditon. In the following passage, for instance, while satirizing Emma's snobbery towards this class, Austen investigates the theme of the *nouveau riche* presence in Highbury. As is often the case in Austen's novels, it is difficult to discern who it

is who is speaking. Is it Emma or Austen whose sensibility is being expressed and ironized?

The Coles had been settled some years in Highbury, and were very good sort of people--friendly, liberal and unpretending; but, on the other hand, they were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel. On their first coming into the country, they had lived in proportion to their income, quietly, keeping little company, and that little unexpensively; but the last year or two had brought them a considerable increase of means--the house in town had yielded greater profits, and fortune in general had smiled on them. With their wealth, their views increased; their want of a larger house, their inclination for more company. They added to their house, to their number of servants, to their expenses of every sort; and by this time were, in fortune and style of living, second only to the family at Hartfield.<sup>16</sup>

The *nouveaux riches* are characterized as offensive, but at the same time they are new blood in a community which Emma finds stifling, and Jane Austen plays with these tensions. The novel dwells on Emma's restless nature and her struggle between her attachment to the traditional values of Highbury and her frustration with stasis. The Gardiners in Pride and Prejudice are also examples of a new class of people making their way in English society and causing the inevitable discomfort to their more established neighbors. "The Netherfield ladies would have had difficulty in believing," the ironic voice of the narrator tells us of Mr. Gardiner, "that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable."<sup>17</sup> The people who made their fortunes in India were for the most part also *nouveaux riches*

Nabobs, as they were called, who, when they returned to England threatened to disturb the status quo much as the Coles did in Highbury or the Gardiners in Meryton.

The changes and disruptions taking place in English society during Austen's life are very much present in her last novel Persuasion and in the fragment of Sanditon, the novel which she was writing at her death. In Persuasion, written in 1818, a Baron, Sir Walter Elliot, falls into debt and is forced to let his estate Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, to a Naval officer, Captain Frederick Wentworth, even though he is contemptuous of the naval profession most of whom he considers to be upstarts. "The profession has its utility," he said, "but I should be sorry to see any friend of mine belonging to it."<sup>18</sup> Sir Walter and other aristocrats like him were offended by the Navy's "bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of."<sup>19</sup> Many of the naval officers, as Austen knew from her Navy brothers, had become rich from prize money and were, now that the war with France was over, looking for houses and often disrupting the status quo by letting homes from aristocrats who had fallen upon hard times financially. A new element was replacing the landed genteel homeowners and the threat to traditional ways and Austen is ever sensitive to the reverberations of this kind of disruption. Her last novel, Sanditon, makes this kind of change the subject of the text. Sanditon itself is a young, rising bathing resort, on the coast of Sussex, built by a Mr. Parker as a source of profitable speculation. Every five years, one of the characters says, a new place or other by the sea, like this one, starts up and springs into fashion. Sanditon is described by the narrator as "[Mr. Parker's] Mine, his Lottery, his Speculation and his Hobby Horse; his Occupation and his Hope and his

Futurity."<sup>20</sup> A few years before "it had been a quiet Village of no pretensions."<sup>21</sup> The resort is representative of the modern world intruding on the bucolic world symbolized by the Heywood family who never leave their house or their land except for occasional "adventurings" to visit their small circle of neighborhood friends. "They never left home," the narrator tells us "and they had a gratification in saying so."<sup>22</sup> The Heywoods are described as "older in Habits than in Age" and the contrast between them and the clients of Sanditon who are always seeking a new resort becomes the focus of the novel. Although they are unwilling to relinquish their traditional ways, the Heywoods allow their daughter Charlotte to visit Sanditon and through her eyes the reader of the novel experiences the contrasts between the traditional values with which Charlotte has been reared, the attachment to home and land and family and a small circle of friends, and the world of speculation and fancy spas and constant mobility which is intruding its presence into England's green and pleasant land.

Austen's Aunt Philadelphia had the choice to remain in England and live the traditional life of an unmarried English woman or to break away and take the risk of possibly finding fulfillment in a new and exotic place. The place she found in Calcutta was exciting, cosmopolitan, filled with unscrupulous merchants and material excess and in the process of palpable change. Philadelphia's daughter, who would become Jane Austen's friend, inherited her mother's vagabond spirit. Austen surely found such a spirit compelling. She left her quiet country home to pay frequent visits, later, to her adventuresome, fashionable, cosmopolitan cousin and friend who had been born in Calcutta in the era of the Nabobs and whose mother was a member of the inner circle of Governor Vansittart and Warren Hastings.

The commercial spirit which drove the Anglo-Indian community to which

Philadelphia Hancock belonged was not limited to British-India. Austen's knowledge of Philadelphia's sojourn in India had to have contributed to her thinking, as she matured, of the effects of the *nouveaux riches* like the Nabobs of Philadelphia's time, on traditional English society. Clearly, by the time that Austen died she had recognized that the dangers she refers to in her juvenile work, Catharine, or the Bower, were not limited to the Indies, but were imperiling "English verdure, English culture and English content," an idealized state which Austen subjects to her ironic gaze.

## Notes

### Chapter One - Part Two

<sup>1</sup> Pietro Della Valle, as quoted by William H. Carey, The Good Old Days of Honorable John Company (Calcutta: R. Combray and Co., 1908) 85.

<sup>2</sup> Joan M. Mickelson, British Women in India: 1757-1857 Phd Dissertation. University of Michigan, 1978, p.xiii. (Ms. Mickelson quotes from M. Edwardes, ed. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island. 3 vols. (Bombay: The Times Press, 1909) II, 62.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, P.J. "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," Modern Asian Studies, 34,2 (2000) 311.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall 312.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce P. Lenman, "Colonial Wars and Imperial Instability, 1688-1793," The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II, The Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 162.

<sup>6</sup> W. Hodges, Travels in India (London, 1793) qtd. in Marshall, 316.

<sup>7</sup> L.S. Sutherland, "A Letter From John Stewart," The Indian Archives, X (1956) 15, qtd. in Marshall, 317.

<sup>8</sup> Jemima Kindersley, Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, the Cape of Good Hope and the East Indies London, 1777, 273-274.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall 317.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall 330.

<sup>11</sup> Sydney Grier, "A Friend of Warren Hastings," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, April 1904, 497.

<sup>12</sup> Letters of Samuel Staveland qtd. in Sydney Grier in "A Friend of Warren

Hastings," 497.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Robert Clive "To Lady Clive," 24 August 1765-Powis Collection as qtd. in Mark Bence-Jones. Clive of India (London: Constable, 1974) 220.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Bence-Jones 342.

<sup>15</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock qtd. in R.A. Austen-Leigh, Austen Papers 1708-1856 (Spottiswoode: Ballantyne and Co., 1942) 74.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Austen, Emma, The Novels of Jane Austen. Volume VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 207.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, The Novels of Jane Austen. Vol. II, ed. R.W.Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 139.

<sup>18</sup> Jane Austen, Persuasion, The Novels of Jane Austen, Vol V, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 19.

<sup>19</sup> Austen, Persuasion, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Jane Austen, Sanditon, The Works of Jane Austen, Vol VI, Minor Works, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 372.

<sup>21</sup> Austen, Sanditon, 374.

<sup>22</sup> Austen, Sanditon, 373.

## Chapter Two

### The Hancocks in London

The Hancocks returned to London from Calcutta in the hopes of settling into an affluent life financed by Dr. Hancock's investments in India. Their plan was short-lived. The investments of both Hancock and Warren Hastings failed to yield their expected income and both men were obliged to return to India within three years time, with the hope of replenishing their capital.

Philadelphia's brother George Austen had, on April 26, 1764 (a year before her homecoming) married Cassandra Leigh, who in order to economize wore to her wedding her traveling dress of red wool cut in the style of a riding habit. Although George Austen was now Rector of Steventon, the house there proved to be too small for the newly married couple and they rented from the Rector at Deane a small, though low and damp, house two miles north of Steventon. Soon after their marriage, Mrs. Austen's mother, Mrs. Jane Leigh, came to visit, bringing with her George Austen's first live-in pupil, seven-year-old George Hastings, the only surviving child of Warren Hastings' marriage to Mary Elliott. The child had been living with the wealthy Leigh family of Harpsden since 1761 when he had been sent back from India to be educated in England. Hastings had known the family since childhood when his impoverished grandfather, the Rector of Daylesford, acted as curate in a parish near the Leigh home at Adlestrop. By the time the child was seven he had moved in with the George Austens, then childless, who became devoted to the boy, and when he died of "putrid soar throat," probably diptheria, Mrs. Austen felt that she had lost a child of her own. Hastings learned of his son's death after his return to London, as letters often took as long as a year to reach India

from England. Sadly, on August 15, 1765, Hastings received a letter from his friend in India, Marriot, sending kisses and salaam to "little ('great' I believe I should say) Betsy and a good hearty shake by the hand to George. I suppose if I were to go and kiss him he would give me a box on the ears—write me particularly how these little ones go."<sup>1</sup> By the time Hastings read this letter his young son was dead.

In February of 1765, six months before the Hancocks' arrival in London, Mrs. Austen gave birth, at Deane, to her first child, James. The infant was not living at home at the time of the Hancocks' arrival in England, as Mrs. Austen followed the custom of sending her babies to a cottage in the village to be nursed until they were old enough to run and talk. James was sent to live with John and Elizabeth Littleworth where he was no doubt living when the Hancocks arrived in London.

The Hancocks, feeling flush from their Indian investments, moved to a house in a fashionable section of London, in Norfolk Street, near Hastings, who had taken a house off the Strand in Essex Street. Philadelphia was living in style while her brother George, a poor clergyman, was living with his wife in a damp rented cottage.

When Betsy Hancock disembarked from the Medway in the summer of 1765, it was her first introduction to England. She was four years old and would most probably never remember her childhood days in Calcutta. During the three years the family lived together in London they became close friends of Hastings's sister Anne Woodman and her husband, and their son Tommy, who was about Betsy's age. When Hastings returned to India several years later, he wrote joint letters to Philadelphia and the Woodmans, thinking of them as one family. During this period Philadelphia became reacquainted with her Freeman

cousins and introduced Hancock to this family who had been kind to her during her orphaned childhood. Hancock may also have been introduced to Leonora, Philadelphia's sister, when she was living in Islington with the Hintons. In the summer of 1766 Philadelphia had her first reunion with her brother George Austen and he first met Dr. Hancock and Betsy. It is probable that the Hancocks visited the Austens in Deane that summer, as Dr. Hancock was made one of the godfathers of the Austen's second son, George, born August 26, 1766, and was most likely there for the christening. Hancock never got to know his godson as the child was discovered to be mentally and physically abnormal, was boarded out and eventually was sent to live in Monk Sherbourne with a family called Culham who cared as well for Mrs. Austen's retarded brother, George. Dr. Hancock remained concerned about his godson's welfare and was to write home from India implicitly criticizing Mrs. Austen for her irresponsibility in having so many children when George would have to be financially supported during his whole lifetime. Hancock knew well how difficult it was for Mr. Austen to live within his income as he himself had had to loan Austen money from time to time during the few years he had lived in London.

It is unclear why Hancock did not resume the practice of medicine when he was in London and began to realize that his Indian investments could not support him, but perhaps he had underestimated the cost of setting up a practice. Also we know from later letters from India that he had come to hate the practice of physick, as he called it. The luxurious lifestyle the Hancocks had enjoyed in Calcutta was difficult to sustain in London and it became impossible to support when his Indian investments failed to yield even half of the fifteen hundred pounds a year that the Hancocks were used to spending, not to mention the allowance which Hancock continued to send his sister Olivia.

When he decided to return to India to resume his trading ventures, Hancock was so poor that Warren Hastings had to lend money to Philadelphia to cover her expenses until her husband began to send home funds, and had further to lend Hancock money to pay his passage to India. Hancock's financial woes were caused in part by his failed investments but were also due to the fact that when he returned to England he had left many of his financial affairs outstanding and was considerably in debt. In 1768, after only three years together in London, Hancock was forced to give up retirement. Leaving his wife and child behind, he returned to India to recoup his losses. He sailed on the Duke of Grafton, but from the time he arrived in Madras he was plagued by troubles, being arrested almost immediately because of unpaid debts to someone he later referred to as "that dirty fellow Drake."

Immediately after Hancock arrived in India he began to correspond with his wife, copying his letters into a small journal so that when Philadelphia's letters arrived, many months later, he would remember what he had written to her. Hancock's letter-book is preserved in the British Museum. The letters tell a tale of woe, as Hancock encountered problems throughout his years in India and his disposition became increasingly petulant and self-pitying. In Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility the narrator, or perhaps the author, reflects about the relationship between the thirty-five-year-old Colonel Brandon and the twenty-five-year-old Elinor Dashwood in words that are close to Philadelphia's characterization of Hancock in a letter she wrote to her godfather shortly after Hancock's death. In fact, the relationship between Colonel Brandon and both Dashwood sisters has several sly touches which family readers might well have connected with Philadelphia and Tysoe Saul Hancock.

[. . .] for what could a silent man of five and thirty hope, [the narrator

of Sense and Sensibility writes of Brandon and Elinor] when opposed by a very lively one of five and twenty? [. . .] She liked him--in spite of his gravity and reserve [. . .] His manners, though serious were mild; and his reserve appeared rather the result of some oppression of spirits, than of any natural gloominess of temper. Sir John had dropped hints of past injuries and disappointments, which justified her belief of his being an unfortunate man, and she regarded him with respect and compassion.<sup>2</sup>

Philadelphia wrote to Warren Hastings (March 3, 1786) that despite her dismay over the people whose confidence Hancock betrayed by not paying his debts, she knew it was, "not through any fault of his, I will be bold to say, for never was there a man of better principles than Mr. Hancock, but for a concurrence of unlucky events--I know not what--some people are born to be unfortunate."<sup>3</sup> True, there is a world of difference between the wealthy Colonel Brandon and the impoverished Dr. Hancock, but it seems quite possible that Jane Austen had Hancock in the back of her mind when writing about the relationship between seventeen-year-old Marianne and the thirty-five-year-old Colonel Brandon, particularly because Elinor and Marianne, the book which the authors of Jane Austen: A Family Record call the prototype for Sense and Sensibility, was written in 1795, only three years after the death of Philadelphia Hancock.<sup>4</sup> Colonel Brandon, like Hancock, had been to the East Indies. He had seen "nabobs, gold mohrs, and palanquins."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, to Marianne "his understanding has no brilliancy, his feelings no ardour, and his voice no expression"<sup>6</sup>--and yet she married him, the man whom two years before she

had considered too old to be married--and who, when she married him, "still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat!"<sup>7</sup> ("And with me," Marianne had said "[. . .] a flannel waistcoat is invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the feeble.")<sup>8</sup> After his return to India, Dr. Hancock was the recipient of not one but three such waistcoats from Philadelphia, the last of which he threatened to return, saying he was too old for finery. Finally, Colonel Brandon has cared for two hapless young women, a mother and later her daughter, both named Eliza. The first Eliza was orphaned from infancy; the second lost her mother when she was three. Both have scandalous experiences with men and each has an illegitimate daughter. Brandon assumes a paternal role with the two Elizas and when he is telling the story of these two women to Elinor he observes how Marianne, whom he will later marry, reminds him of the first Eliza. The fictional story of Brandon and the two Elizas differs in many ways from the story of Jane Austen's aunt and Tysoe Saul Hancock, but there are echoes of the family story in the life of this mid-30s man, his marriage to a young woman, and his paternal relationship to two young Elizas. The scandal that surrounds the births of the Elizas, the compassionate treatment by Austen of these two female characters despite their immoral ways, the kind regard for Colonel Brandon who looked after them and will look after Marianne, suggests that Austen pondered the questions raised by the marriage between her aunt Philadelphia and Hancock. In her juvenile text, Catharine, or the Bower, Austen interrogates the issue of a young woman going to India to seek a husband and ending up marrying, against her inclinations, an older, and not entirely affable, man. In Sense and Sensibility Austen again explores the issue of the economic need for young women to marry and dramatizes an impoverished family, the Dashwoods,

attempting to pair off one, and then another, of their young daughters with an older bachelor. First, John Dashwood attempts to persuade his sister, Elinor, to marry Brandon; in the end Marianne goes against her romantic sensibilities and marries him. The marriage, as the convention of the courtship novel dictates, is said to be a happy one. "Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband, as it had once been to Willoughby."<sup>9</sup> At nineteen years old she found herself "submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village."<sup>10</sup> The marriage of Philadelphia and Tysoe Saul Hancock, on the other hand, became increasingly strained and often embittered during their long years of separation.

Like Colonel Brandon, Dr. Hancock was a serious man and one who had known family troubles which had a sobering effect on his personality. Like Brandon, too, Hancock was a kindly and generous person. His return to India, leaving behind his wife and daughter, was clearly wrenching, as one can tell from his frequent letters home to Philadelphia, his involvement in the details of her life, and his passionate interest in Betsy's education, happiness, and well-being. He lived a pitifully abstemious and frugal life in India in order to be able to send money to Philadelphia and a compassionate allowance to his sister Olivia. When he first returned to India, expecting to go back into trade, he was stymied: men who found themselves under the disagreeable necessity of a "second residence in Bengal" as the phrase went, had to return at their own expense and could not resume trading unless they obtained a post of factor or higher with the British East India Company. Hancock, having left behind unpaid debts, only avoided imprisonment by the intervention of a Mister Briggs. His first letter home to Philadelphia is heavy with disappointment. He tells her that he

can not get the *dastak* (official permission) needed to trade unless he obtains a company position and is therefore forced, against his inclinations, to accept a post of Surgeon Extraordinary to the garrison at Fort George. "You know," he wrote, "how much I hate the practice of Physick, yet I am obliged to take it up again. Nothing could have induced me to do so, but the hopes of thereby providing for my family."<sup>11</sup> He complained to his wife that the practice of medicine was "slavery" to him and that it forced him to spend money on a carriage in order to attend to his patients who lived outside of Calcutta in country houses. "The town being very populous," he writes, "my having more business than ever you knew me to have, but it's labour without profit."<sup>12</sup>

Hancock suffered from chronic bad health and soon after he arrived in India he referred to himself in a letter home as, "a very infirm old man [. . .] a carcase worn out with age and sickness, continually harassed by labour and disappointment."<sup>13</sup>

Before he moved back to the home he had lived in with Philadelphia, which he bought "cheap" to save money, he lived in an "unhealthy" part of town in a "paltry" house, which cost 450 pounds annual rent. Not only did his own illnesses plague him, but disease was ubiquitous and Calcutta was experiencing a terrible famine. "The deceases [sic] which have been and continue to be very fatal here," he writes, "are chiefly owing to putrifaction occasioned by the prodigious number of dead bodies in the streets and in places adjacent [. . .]. The mortality is the effect of a most terrible famine, which has half depopulated Bengal."<sup>14</sup> Hancock attributes the famine in part to the fact that the English residents' demand for grain kept the prices up beyond the means of the Indian population. The population had increased ten-fold since

Philadelphia had lived there and prices had doubled.

Hancock reports that he had lost many of his friends because they thought his misfortunes had soured his temper. In fact, in order to save money, he never invited anyone to his home and wrote in a querulous tone to Philadelphia that, "I have confined my diet to one dish a day [. . .] all this that I may save a little for you."<sup>15</sup>

Financial difficulties plagued Hancock even after he obtained his *dastak* and resumed his trading career. His first business venture after his return was a scheme to provide builders with *churnam* (plaster made from seashells, burned into lime) used for private houses and public works. Although the venture seemed promising at first, it failed and Hancock wrote to Philadelphia "You have been very pressing to know the result of the *churnam* contract. I am fortunate to have gotten rid of it with the loss of only 7300 rupees."<sup>16</sup> Hastings, who by this time was Second in Council at Madras, eventually bailed Hancock out by lending a man named Lacam about 25,000 rupees to buy Hancock's share of the business. Lacam made the venture so profitable that in 1775 he turned down a nomination to the Court of Directors of the Company because of the demands of this lucrative project. The experience in the *churnam* business reads, from Hancock's letters, like a descent into purgatory. *Churnam* was made, he wrote his wife, in the Sunderband Woods in the vicinity of Diamond Harbor on Calcutta's Hugli River, and Hancock and his partner had to make periodic inspections to check up on their workmen. Hancock writes:

Imagination can scarcely form an idea of a more dismal place than the Sunderbands [. . .]. The whole is divided by a prodigious number of rivers into islands [. . .] all entirely covered with jungles so thick that you cannot see ten feet into them, except in some few

places where the salt-makers have cleared the ground for the space of fifty or a hundred yards. Throughout all the woods, there is no fresh water but at two places. The only animals are the rhinoceros, tygers of a very large size, deer and wild hogs. The rivers abound with fish. In the Sunderbands are neither houses nor huts, therefore the people who are employed in making salt of *churnam* are obliged before sunset to remove in their boats from the shore into the middle of the rivers, where they are not perfectly safe, for the tygers sometimes swim off and take them out of their boats. We have unfortunately lost eight men by these terrible beasts.<sup>17</sup>

After the *churnam* venture failed, another business opportunity presented itself when Hancock was hired in 1772 to make the Company's gun-carriages and to do all the carpentry at the newly built Fort William. "You will be surprised to hear," Hancock wrote his wife, "that I am become a Carpenter and a Blacksmith; your Rank is certainly greatly lowered but you will be of more real Value thereby."<sup>16</sup> This venture too, however, proved a false hope, as the Company so reduced the budget that Hancock could make no profit from his labors. "How little industry and application can avail when Fortune, or whatever you please, is against a man,"<sup>18</sup> he wrote Philadelphia. Even Hastings was to let Hancock down, passing over him for the position of his private secretary. "I have not," Hancock writes his wife, "a hundredth part of the influence with the Governor which his head-bearer enjoys. At present I am somewhat in the situation of the clergyman mentioned by Swift, who made interest to be a lord's chaplain, but was obliged to be contented with being his lord's postilion."<sup>19</sup>

Philadelphia must have recognized from the melancholy tone of her

husband's letters that he would never return to England and she wrote to him suggesting that she and Betsy join him in India. She also may have wanted to return because Hancock had recently informed her of Hastings's interest in a Mrs. Imhoff, the young wife of the German Baron Carl von Imhoff, who was working as a cadet in the Company's army and as a painter of miniature portraits. Mrs. Imhoff, Hancock writes, is very pretty, sensible lively and a great wit, although her English needs improving, and he adds provocatively, "I should not have mentioned Mrs. Imhoff, but I know everything relative to Mr. Hastings is greatly interesting to you." Hancock in all probability tantalized his wife by telling her that Mr. Imhoff had gone to Bengal to seek new clients for his miniatures, leaving his wife in Madras living in Mr. Hasting's house at the Mount. He continued to say that Mr. and Mrs. Imhoff have often been at Hasting's private parties. Whatever her reasons for desiring to join her husband in India, Philadelphia's proposal was met with the harshest disapproval in a letter from Hancock, of September 23, 1772, filled with invective, referring no doubt to Philadelphia's behavior during Hancock's absences when they lived in Calcutta:

I will now give you my opinion [Hancock wrote] concerning Betsy's coming to India. You say she will be so well accomplished at twelve as many are at fifteen years of age. I believe she will, but let me ask you if it be possible she should have any degree of judgment at that tender age. Her arrival here would be at that period of her life when she will naturally form to herself false notions of happiness, most probably very Romantick, the disappointment of which may greatly embitter the rest of her days. You know very well that no girl, tho' but fourteen years old, can

arrive in India without attracting the notice of every Coxcomb in the Place, of whom there is very great plenty at Calcutta with very good persons and no other recommendation. You yourself know how impossible it is for a young girl to avoid being attracted to a young handsome man whose address is agreeable to her. Debauchery under the name of gallantry is the reigning vice of the settlement. I scarcely know to whom I would wish my daughter married were she a proper age; which she will not be for some years, as I am certain nothing shortens a woman's days so much as her being married when too young. The danger and inconvenience of a voyage to India are very great, but there is [a] much greater objection, I mean the possibility of your dying in the passage. If such an unhappy accident should happen, is it possible to reflect the Situation of the Child without Horror? It is very probable from my many dangerous ailments to which the climate is most unfriendly, that I may not live to receive you. Paint yourself the distresses you must suffer in a place where you are now a Perfect Stranger. Do not imagine there is the least of that friendly hospitality which was formerly so remarkable here; its place is supplied by self-interest. I am certain no argument can ever induce me to give my consent to the Introduction of my Daughter to so lewd a place as Bengal now is, were all the other objections removed.<sup>20</sup>

Philadelphia never did join her husband in Calcutta and Hancock would never see his family again. He sent home all the funds he could, but transferring money out of the country was difficult and he had to rely on

Hastings to make transfers for him. Hastings may have recognized that Hancock's financial plight was hopeless, for he astonished him in 1775 by relieving him at last from the responsibility of being the sole support of his wife and child. Hastings's first gift was a Respondentia bond for 40,000 rupees, about 5,000 pounds, and shortly thereafter, in March of 1775, Hastings changed the terms of the gift, sending 10,000 pounds in trust, to his brother-in-law John Woodman, a lawyer, and George Austen, for Hancock and Philadelphia during their lives and for Betsy after her mother's death. The initial interest on the money at the time of the gift would be 400 pounds a year ultimately making Betsy a wealthy woman and providing her a large enough dowry to make two what she thought to be good marriages. That Hancock was aware that Hastings's gift was an indication of his former relationship with Philadelphia seems clear when he writes in the letter informing her of the gift, "Let me caution you not to acquaint even the dearest friend you have with this circumstance. Tell Betsy only that her godfather made her a great present, but not the particulars."<sup>21</sup> There seems to be little doubt that Hancock knew that the gift itself was an indication of a situation which was better left undiscussed, as it would undoubtedly further injure Philadelphia's reputation, and be harmful to Betsy, should friends find out about it. As it was, rumors had spread about Philadelphia having "given herself" to Hastings, and this gift could only have confirmed suspicions.

Hastings's own letters to Philadelphia are also revealing of their continuing friendship through correspondence. He wrote her of matters concerning his career and of his leaving the Council Board at Fort St. George to relocate in Bengal. He sent her presents of chintz cloth and of Madeira and discussed with her his financial ventures. He wrote her how his health has held

out because of his new habit of temperance and asks her to kiss his dear Bessy for him and assure her of his tenderst affection. "May the God of goodness bless you both he writes on January 31, 1772, and adds "Before I close my letter,"

let me gratify my present feeling by telling you that great as my obligations have been to you, you have increased them by a recent and disinterested instance of your friendship for me in your last letter. My next shall remind you of the subject. Til then, adieu, my dear and ever valued friend.<sup>22</sup>

The letter from Philadelphia to which Hastings refers is unfortunately not extant, so we do not know the specifics of Philadelphia's gesture of friendship.

Over the years that the Hancocks lived apart, Dr. Hancock became increasingly critical of Philadelphia in his letters home. Of the drawing of Betsy that she sent him he writes, "[. . .] the Drawing is so very bad [. . .] I am sure Betsy was remarkably proportioned when I left England,"<sup>23</sup> and of the religious books she sent, "[. . .] pray do not send more on the subject of Religion, I have neither Time nor Inclination to read them."<sup>24</sup> Even Philadelphia's efforts to economize are met with disdain. "[. . .] By the bye, I have never known anything considerable saved by purchasing furniture second hand,"<sup>25</sup> he writes. In letter after letter Philadelphia apologized to Hancock for being extravagant, but even this was a cause of petulance. "I take it unkindly," Hancock writes,

that you should apologize to me, who have never in my life once hinted that I thought you the least extravagant [. . .] . I cannot help thinking that it seem to imply a suspicion of my grudging you the expense of living like a gentlewoman. Do me the favor of leaving

off apologizing, as it is totally needless.<sup>26</sup>

Philadelphia might not have had to apologize to her husband for her extravagances, but she was harshly criticized for her lack of skills in money management. "You know," Hancock writes,

how incapable you are of managing such complicated affairs [. . .]  
Oh Phila, had a very few of those hours which were formerly spent  
on dissipation been employed in acquiring the necessary and  
most useful knowledge of accounts, happy would it have been for  
us both.<sup>27</sup>

Even Betsy's education becomes a subject for acrimony. When Philadelphia engages a writing master for Betsy, Hancock remarks, "It is high time, for her hand is not the least mended since I left England."<sup>28</sup> When he requests that Philadelphia find a guitar teacher for Betsy, his resentment is flagrant: "As I hold myself to be a perfect Judge of this Matter I shall not submit to have my opinion controverted, but insist on your compliance with my request."<sup>29</sup>

What we know of Philadelphia's responses to Hancock is from remarks in his letters. "You have often told me that I always am inclined to take the gloomy side of any Question," Hancock writes his wife. "I believe you are right in your judgment, but I am sorry to say all my gloomy Predictions have proved true."<sup>30</sup>

If Philadelphia's gifts and efforts to economize were unwelcome, even more irritating was her habit of giving letters of introduction to poor friends and relations who wanted to stay with Hancock when they first came to India. Finally, when she did not take the hint from his letters objecting to this practice, he sent her a draft form of refusal for all future applicants. Philadelphia was not

intimidated by this, apparently, as she gave yet another letter of introduction to her cousin's son, Philip Dormer Stanhope, to whom Hancock refers in an enraged letter:

It gives me, I own infinite pain to have—recommended to me in the manner he is [. . .] Now I must keep a table, which the least recollection will remind you cannot be done but at very great expense. The only return will probably be that I am a stingy, sneaking old fellow. I have already paid more than 20 pounds for a budgerow to fetch him from Idgellee. By the failure of my contract and the accidents which have happened to a ship which was purchased on account of this contract, I this year lose 40,000 rupees [. . .] . Notwithstanding my circumstances, I will treat—with what kindness I can.<sup>31</sup>

This person who has the same name as the fourth Earl of Chesterfield was not related to him. Stanhope wrote and published in 1704 a book called Genuine Memoirs of Asiaticus, the second edition of which bears the name Philip Dormer Stanhope, Esq., late of the Regiment of Dragoon Guards. The book tells of his visit to India and discusses his relationship with Hancock, as evidenced in an extract dated October 1774:

On the tenth of last month we arrived in the river Hughley, and came to an anchor at Culpee, where a Budgeroe, or Indian boat somewhat resembling a state barge upon the Thames, attended from my friend Hancock to convey me to Calcutta [. . .] you know I went out particularly recommended to Mr. Hancock, whom I formerly knew in England, and whose lady is my near relation. I want words to express my gratitude for the favors with which this

gentleman has loaded me. He has given me an apartment in his house, has furnished me with a superfluity of all the articles of dress etc., and even granted me an unlimited order for money on his Dircar or cash-bearer [ . . . ] . I have been presented to the governor-general by Mr. Hancock, who has for many years been on intimate terms with him, and to whose recommendations he never fails of paying immediate attention [ . . . ] at present I shall continue to reside with Mr. Hancock, whose general knowledge of mankind renders him a most agreeable companion, and who though upward of fifty years of age still retains all the fire and pleasantry of youth.<sup>32</sup>

Stanhope was shipwrecked on his way to Madras and went back to stay a while with Hancock. When Hancock died Stanhope wrote in his book, May 1776:

I have sustained a loss which requires all my philosophy to support, and the death of Mr. Hancock has deprived me of a sincere friend and generous benefactor. I believe no man ever lived more generally beloved, or died more universally regretted. He was the patron of the widow and the fatherless, and I pay but a just tribute to his memory when I say that in unaffected character and real integrity of heart he was not inferior to Mr. Hastings.<sup>33</sup>

Much of the wording is conventional but we do get a different perspective of Hancock from anything we glean from his own letters to his wife.

Even though Hancock objected to Philadelphia's introductions, and the objection to Stanhope was justified as he became a financial burden and a lengthy house guest, Hancock sent Philadelphia letters of introduction requesting her to be hospitable to friends of his arriving from India. A letter from

Hancock dated August 5, 1776, includes such an introduction to an Alexander Elliot, "a very fine young gentleman" and a "friend of our great friend" Warren Hastings. Philadelphia was instructed to treat this visitor with the greatest civility. This was the last letter we know that Hancock sent to Philadelphia, as it is the last one copied into the book of correspondence preserved in the British Library.

Tysoe Saul Hancock died on November 5, 1775, a month before Jane Austen's birth. Critics debate whether he was sixty-four or fifty-two years of age, depending on their reading of the tombstone engraving. Robin Vick thinks that the widely held belief that Hancock was born in 1711 is false and probably based on "a mistranscription of his tombstone in India which apparently gave his age at death in 1775 as sixty-four."<sup>34</sup> Vick believes that Hancock was born on Christmas day 1723 and supports this theory by the baptismal dates of his siblings also born at Hollingbourne including Olivia (1731) and Colbron (1733). Philip Dormer Stanhope also gives credence to this theory as he described Hancock, whom he knew well, as being "upward of fifty years of age" a year before his death. All the money Hancock had left went to paying off his debts. He was buried in the Great Burying-ground at Chowringhee. In 1774, Hancock had written his will naming Hastings as one of his executors. "To my daughter Elizabeth," a section of the will read "I bequeath the miniature of her mother painted by Smart and set in a ring with diamonds around which I request she will never part as I intend it to remind her of her mother's virtues as well as of her person."<sup>35</sup> This seems like a strangely ambivalent message to leave one's daughter and one wonders what Hancock had in mind when he wrote these words. Surely Philadelphia's virtues had been a lifelong issue for him and it is curious that he would suggest that the miniature remind her daughter of her

mother's virtues when virtues are not the first thing that necessarily comes to mind when one looks at a portrait. It was six months before Philadelphia and Eliza were to learn the news of Hancock's death. George Austen and his wife were visiting them at the time the news arrived in a letter from a Mrs. Bowers, closely followed by a letter from Hastings. Mr. Woodman wrote to Hastings, "We feel much for her [Philadelphia], and endeavor to support her under the affliction."<sup>36</sup> The Woodmans and the Hancock ladies had formed a friendly circle, celebrating the birthdays of Betsy Hancock and Tommy Woodman and dining on important occasions with Aunt Elizabeth Hastings. Eliza was fifteen years old and had not seen her father since she was seven. Philadelphia had lived alone with her daughter for seven years. Hancock's letters home had been regular, but he had grown increasingly despondent, and long ago it was clear that they would never see him again. Mother and daughter had meanwhile formed a bond that would keep them together for the rest of Philadelphia's life, a bond that was probably stronger than any of those formed with their respective husbands. Unlike Jane Austen, they were never rooted in an English country village, but seemed comfortable and even at home in the distant corners of the globe. "I have my share of the wandering spirit our countrymen are in general possessed with which together with my being so early accustomed to a vagabond life makes me seldom regret a change of scene,"<sup>37</sup> wrote Eliza to her cousin Philadelphia Walter, May 7, 1789, expressing something of the sensibility the mother and daughter shared. This sensibility was to be intriguing to Jane Austen (although so different from her own presentation of her countrymen's spirit) when her cosmopolitan cousin, Eliza came to visit at the Steventon rectory and later in life when the two, so different in age and temperament, became friends.

But what, one asks, of Philadelphia during her seven years as a "grass-widow" in London? And Betsy? What was it like for the wife and daughter after Dr. Hancock left, as it turned out, for good? Philadelphia, who at twenty-one had picked herself up and traveled to India to improve her lot, was not one to be defeated by her husband's absence and increasing criticism, or by the challenge of raising her daughter without a father in the house.

As soon as her husband left for India, Philadelphia and her young daughter became a welcome addition to the lives of their Austen relatives at the Steventon rectory to which they had moved in the summer of 1768, a few months before Dr. Hancock returned to India. Mr. Austen, writing to Mrs. Walter, (née Susanna Weaver who was the wife of William Hampson Walter, half brother to George Austen), would express his happiness, looking forward to a visit from his "sister Hancock and Bessy," and Mrs. Austen, writing on August 26, 1770 to the same Mrs. Walter, captures for us some of the colorful, determined personality of her sister-in-law and alludes to the fact that Philadelphia and Betsy moved about after Hancock's departure. In fact they moved to several houses on the fashionable West End, first living in Bolton Street, then Hertford Street, Manchester Square, and then living for a while in a cottage in Surrey which Philadelphia disliked because of the frequent riverside floods. Mrs. Austen's letter to Susanna Walter reads:

Sister Hancock staid with us only a few days, she had more  
 Courage than you had and set out in a Post Chaise with only her  
 little Bessie, for she brought neither Clarinda or Peter with her, but  
 believes she sincerely repented, before she got to her journey's  
 end, for in the middle of Bagshot Heath the Postillion discover'd  
 he had dropped the trunk from off The Chaise. She immediately

sent him back with the Horses to find it, intending to sit in the Chaise till he return'd, but soon was out of patience and began to be pretty much frightened, so began her walk to The Golden Farmer, about two miles off, where she arrived half-dead with fatigue, it being in the middle of a very hot day. When she was a little recover'd she recollected she had left all the rest of her things (among which were a large parcel of Indian letters, which she had received the night before and some of them she had not read) in The Chaise with The Door wide open--she sent a man directly after them and got them all safe and after some considerable time The Driver came with The Trunk, and without any more misfortune got to Bolton Street about Nine O'Clock--she is now settled in her Cottage, her direction is at Byfleet, near Cobhams Surrey--The Letters brought accounts both of My Brother Hancock and Mr. Hastings.<sup>38</sup>

Philadelphia was not settled in her Byfleet cottage for long, however, as by December Mrs. Austen writes Mrs. Walter:

I find my sister Hancock has been incommoded by the waters, so fancy she won't be sorry when the time comes for her going to town, which I think she says is to be next month. I have a great notion she will soon be tired of Byfleet, as it seems to be a very bad winter place.<sup>39</sup>

One of the roles of female family members at the time was to help female relatives during the period of their confinements and the birth of their babies. Women relations called each other "sister," and indeed there was a sisterhood in the community of female relatives who helped each other out with household

responsibilities including cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry for a newly delivered mother. Single women and widows were most likely to serve this function and Philadelphia, as a "grass widow," often assumed this role for Mrs. Austen. Jane Austen, who had not been born at this point, would experience from her childhood this community of women which reflected the intimacy of the female world that existed quite apart from the society which included fathers, husbands and brothers. Deborah Kaplan in Jane Austen Among Women speaks of "the women's culture" in Austen's world produced by women banding together in friendship. "Female friendship," she writes, "properly belonged to the private not the public arena, offering women diversion in the quiet of their homes, particularly when their male kinfolk were out in the public realm."<sup>40</sup> Kaplan makes the point that although female friendships

sometimes functioned in the service of genteel domesticity, at other times they enabled women to distance themselves from domestic ideology and to view their duties quite differently. At such moments women expressed common values and perceptions decidedly unlike those encompassed by the domestic ideology. These alternative values and perceptions constituted another, distinct culture specific to women.<sup>41</sup>

What we know about this women's culture comes down to us mostly in letters that women such as Philadelphia and Eliza wrote to their female friends and relations expressing, among other things, their private responses to their female roles, their interest in flirtation before and after they were married, and a restlessness that may well have been prevalent among women and which was so strong in these two women that it led them to uproot themselves from England and from the family circle and to explore other options, less

conventional, that were open to women in the eighteenth century. Emma, in Jane Austen's novel, although she leads a far more conventional life than Philadelphia or Eliza, expresses over and over again this restlessness in women and their periodic inner dissatisfaction with the narrowness and dullness of their little restricted worlds.

In November 1772, Mrs. Austen wrote Susanna Walter informing her that she was quite pregnant, "heavy and bundling as usual, I believe my Sister Hancock will be so good as to come and nurse me again, for which I am sure I shall be much obliged to her, as it will be a bad time of The Year to take so long a journey."<sup>42</sup> The child Mrs. Austen was carrying was her first daughter, Cassandra-Elizabeth, born January 9, 1773. As Mrs. Austen indicated that Philadelphia had helped her in a former pregnancy it is probable that she was there too for the birth of Jane Austen's favorite brother, Henry, born at Steventon, June 8, 1771, who would one day marry Philadelphia's daughter Eliza. Philadelphia may well have been present at the rectory too when Jane Austen was born, the month after Dr. Hancock's death. Jane never did meet her uncle Hancock, nor did she come to know her Aunt Philadelphia or cousin Eliza until 1786, when the mother and daughter adventurers would return to London from the Continent to which they had moved in the winter of 1777 when Jane was but two years old. Shortly after her father's death Betsy changed her name to Eliza "for what young lady of common gentility," as Jane Austen would later write in Northanger Abbey, "will reach the age of sixteen without altering her name as far as she can?"<sup>43</sup>

While living in London, after her husband's departure, Philadelphia remained close to Hastings's family, the Woodmans, and Mr. Woodman

enjoyed his son Tom's devotion to Betsy Hancock. "Tom and she are as fond of each other as when you was in England," Mr. Woodman wrote to Betsy's godfather in India. Mrs. Woodman's letters to her brother, Warren Hastings, also reflect the close friendship between the Hancocks and the Woodmans during these years: "Mrs. and Miss Hancock are very well," she writes Hastings, "whom we have had the pleasure of seeing; we are all very happy then on Miss Hancock's birthday, and in particular, Tommy, there being a ball for the young folks."<sup>44</sup>

Luckily for a biographer, Philadelphia and Betsy developed a friendship not only with the Woodmans, but also with their Kentish relatives, the Walters, particularly with their half-cousin Philadelphia Walter who was exactly Eliza's age and with whom they would correspond during their years on the Continent.\* The letters from Eliza preserve for us the quality of her personality which could only be captured in her own words. Letters are deceptive records in that they only reveal what the writer decides to share with the person addressed, and surely there were many aspects of Eliza's nature and interests which she did not share with Philadelphia Walter. Yet without these letters Eliza would have vanished, whereas with them she and the world she lived in come alive. Few of Philadelphia Hancock's letters remain, but we know what she looked like before her husband returned to India from the miniature by John Smart, an outstanding realist miniaturist of the eighteenth century, that was left to Eliza by her father in his will. "This miniature shows her to be a slender, elegant woman with large

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\*Philadelphia Walter was one of six children of Susanna Weaver Walter and William-Hampson Walter, the son of Mrs. Austen and her first husband, Dr. William Walter. She married a Mr. Whitaker at the age of 50.

dark eyes and smooth upswept hair, wearing a turquoise dress and a pearl choker.”<sup>45</sup> Smart was said to “possess a great knowledge of anatomy” and his portraits were reputed to be “drawn with the greatest anatomical accuracy” and “to possess more distinction than any other miniature painter of his time.”<sup>46</sup> Hancock had had to send the miniature back to England, as it was in danger of being ruined by the Indian climate, and asked that Smart restore it. The miniature, bearing Smart’s initials and framed in gold, silver and diamonds, is now a part of the Jane Austen National Trust. It bears the characteristics of Smart’s work, being “quiet and grey in its coloring” with “the flesh tints elaborated with much subtlety” and the features “modeled in an exquisite fashion.”<sup>47</sup>

Although Hancock had been in India for seven years, he continually made suggestions to Philadelphia concerning the education and upbringing of the child he knew he would never see again and he wrote to Betsy frequently. He wished for her to have a musical education including lessons in guitar and harp and asked that she be given a Kirkman harpsichord and be taught by the finest music masters--and in this he did her a great service, for throughout her life, playing the harpsichord was one of her special pleasures. When she visited the Austens, Mrs. Austen rented a harpsichord for her to play for the family. In Mansfield Park, Mary Crawford tells Fanny in an ironic tone, of the importance of a musical education for ladies of the time, something that Hancock insisted on for his daughter.

But it is very foolish [Mary says] to ask questions about any young ladies [ . . . ] for one knows, without being told, exactly what they are--all very accomplished and pleasing, and *one* very pretty.

There is a beauty in every family.--It is a regular thing. Two play on the piano-forte, and one on the harp--and all sing--or would sing if they were taught--or sing all the better for not having been taught--or something like it."<sup>48</sup>

Mary, herself, plays the harp which is sometimes mentioned by critics who see a resemblance between Mary and Eliza de Feuillide as being a reflection in Austen's novel of Eliza who played this instrument from the time she was a child. Dr. Hancock also had thought that calligraphy and arithmetic were necessary skills for a "young lady of quality," and furthermore, he wrote to Philadelphia "neither languages nor exercises can be attained to any degree of perfection but in the earlier years of life, therefore time now lost will be hereafter [lost.]"<sup>49</sup> To improve her education Hancock proposed that Betsy be taken to France before she was "too old to risque her picking up the levity or follies of the French."<sup>50</sup> Little did the sober, overprotective father dream of the levities and follies which would characterize his daughter's life in France, beginning shortly after his death in India. There had been times when Hancock had felt himself a failure and thought to provide a less expensive education for Betsy, suitable to the humble lot his failure would oblige her to submit to, but her godfather persuaded him against this course. When he expressed to Hastings his concern that Betsy's education would make her dissatisfied with her lot in life--Hastings replied:

Make no Change in the Plan you have already laid down. Neither French nor Dancing will disqualify a woman for filling the Duties of any sphere of Life. Let her own Natural Understanding and gentle Disposition improved by the Precepts of such a Mother as few Children are blessed with fit her Mind to be satisfied with any Lot

she may meet with and to become it. But God forbid she should be disqualified for a Better Way of Life because it is possible she may not have a fortune equal to it. A frugal style of, & and early Practice in Economy will be a sufficient precaution [. . .] My own prospects and my Life are precarious, but if I live and meet with the success which I have a Right to hope for, she shall not be under the Necessity of marrying a Tradesman, or any Man for her Support. I would not say this much, but that I wish in every respect to dispel your Apprehensions.<sup>51</sup>

Of course Hastings did prosper and made it possible for his goddaughter not to be forced to marry any man for support and for Philadelphia to have an ample maintenance for the rest of her days. Upon Hancock's death, Hastings's trust fund became Philadelphia's means of support, yielding about 700 pounds a year. This was an ample sum, but it was difficult to live in London on such an income and the cost of living on the Continent was less expensive. Taking this into consideration, once Philadelphia learned of her husband's death and his estate was partially settled, she followed the plan she had discussed with Hancock over the years and moved with her daughter to Germany, then Belgium and eventually France. Hancock had wanted Betsy to learn French and acquire French culture, either by visiting France or having a French companion, as part of her education as a proper lady. Probably Hancock knew all along that Eliza was not his natural daughter, but he played along for her sake and for his own, and genuinely wanted the best for her. His concern that bringing Betsy up in India would risk her becoming promiscuous most probably came from his fear that she would emulate her mother's experience in Calcutta and to prevent this he gave up the opportunity to enjoy watching her grow up.

Now he was dead and twenty-five years after she had sailed to India to try her luck, probably to marry him by previous arrangement, Philadelphia once again picked up stakes and crossed the Channel to unknown lands where Eliza, a vivacious young woman by now, would begin to shape her own destiny, far away from the English family life she had enjoyed for eight years and now had left behind. From Eliza's letters to her Kentish cousin, Philadelphia Walter, we know that she and her mother "soon moved into higher circles than any to which her devoted father could ever have aspired on her behalf."<sup>52</sup> As for Philadelphia, becoming a widow was a role she probably assumed with comparative ease, as she had already been a "grass widow" for the many years that her husband had resided without her in India and it was her nature to be independent and adventurous.

## Notes

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters. A Family Record (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1913) 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, The Novels of Jane Austen, ed. R.W. Chapman, Volume I Sense and Sensibility, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia Hancock, "To Warren Hastings," 3 March 1786, qtd. in Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Cassandra Austen's note of the date of composition of her sister's novels, (reproduced in Minor Works, pl. facing 242) gives the date of Sense and Sensibility as 1797 followed by the following observation "I am sure that something of the same story and characters had been written earlier and called Elinor and Marianne."

<sup>5</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 51.

<sup>6</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 51.

<sup>7</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 378.

<sup>8</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 38.

<sup>9</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 379.

<sup>10</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 379.

<sup>11</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," quoted in Sydney C. Grier, "A Friend of Warren Hastings," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 500.

<sup>12</sup> Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 501.

- 13 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 501.
- 14 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 501.
- 15 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 502.
- 16 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 503.
- 17 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 503.
- 18 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 504-505.
- 19 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 504.
- 20 Blackwood's, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 504-505
- 21 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 23 September 1772,  
Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters 64-65.
- 22 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 23 September 1772,  
68.
- 23 Warren Hastings, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 31 January 1772, ed.  
R.A. Austen-Leigh, Austen Papers 1704-1856 (Spottiswoode: Ballantyne & Co.  
Ltd., 1942) 59-60.
- 24 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 13 March 1771, qtd.  
in Austen Papers 53.
- 25 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 22 June 1773, qtd.  
in Austen Papers 71.
- 26 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 22 June 1773,  
Austen Papers 70.
- 27 Blackwoods, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 506.
- 28 Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 3 September 1773,  
Austen Papers 73.

<sup>29</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 9 August 1773, Austen Papers 72.

<sup>30</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," Sydney C. Grier, "A God-Daughter of Warren Hastings," Temple Bar, Vol. 13, January-June 1905, (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd.) 202.

<sup>31</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 29 March 1773, Austen Papers 78.

<sup>32</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," quoted in Sydney C. Grier, "A Friend of Warren Hastings," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, No. MLXII, Vol. CLXXV, 510.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Dormer Stanhope, Genuine Memoirs of Asiaticus (London, 1784) qtd. in Sidney C. Grier, "A Friend of Warren Hastings," Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, MLXII, April 1904, Volume CLXXV, 510-511.

<sup>34</sup> Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 511.

<sup>35</sup> Robin Vick qtd. in Tomalin, 299.

<sup>36</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "Hancock's Will," quoted in Austen Papers 33.

<sup>37</sup> John Woodman, "To Warren Hastings," 11 June 1776, Austen Papers 821-823.

<sup>38</sup> Philadelphia Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 May 1789, Austen Papers 111.

<sup>39</sup> Mrs. George Austen, "To Philadelphia Walter," 26 August 1770, Austen Papers 24.

<sup>40</sup> Mrs. George Austen, "To Philadelphia Walter," 8 November 1772, Austen Papers 27.

<sup>41</sup> Deborah Kaplan, Jane Austen Among Women (Baltimore: The Johns

Hopkins University Press, 1992) 63-64.

<sup>42</sup> Kaplan 64.

<sup>43</sup> Mrs. George Austen, "To Susanna Walter," 8 November 1772, Austen Papers 28.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey. The Novels of Jane Austen, Volume V. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 19.

<sup>45</sup> Mrs. Anne Hastings Woodman, "To Warren Hastings," qtd. in Grier, "A God-Daughter of Warren Hastings," 565.

<sup>46</sup> T. Edward Carpenter. Extract from Chairman's Report of the Jane Austen Trust. Jane Austen Collected Reports 1949-1968. The Jane Austen Society, 88-89.

<sup>47</sup> Jane Austen Collected Reports 1949-1968 88-89.

<sup>48</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 288.

<sup>49</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 7 September 1770, Austen Papers 49.

<sup>50</sup> Austen Papers 49.

<sup>51</sup> Warren Hastings, "To Tysoe Saul Hancock," Jane Austen: A Family Record, ed. W. Austen-Leigh, R.A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye (London: The British Library) 1989, 32-33.

<sup>51</sup> Jane Austen: A Family Record 34.

### Chapter Three

#### Ten Years of Living it up on the Continent

Philadelphia's decision to take her daughter to Paris after Tysoe Saul Hancock's death in 1792 is that of a strong and confident woman prepared to take charge of her own life. Years later, around 1787, Jane Austen would write one of her playful juvenile pieces, Henry and Eliza, about a woman, recently widowed, who, having lived an extravagant life in France, takes off for England when she finds herself destitute after her husband's death. "Eliza, being perfectly conscious of the derangement in their affairs," Austen writes, "immediately on her Husband's death set sail for England, in a man of War of 55 Guns, which they had built in their more prosperous Days."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Eliza, she is imprisoned as soon as she gets to Dover, but she is undaunted by life's curves. She throws her children out of the window of the dungeon and escapes herself down a ladder of ropes. In this early story one detects Jane Austen's admiration for the spunky, independent woman whose life she spoofs. Rather than facing, like Elizabeth Elliot in Persuasion, "the sameness and the elegance, the prosperity and the nothingness, of her scene of life,"<sup>2</sup> the heroine of Austen's early work, like Jane's aunt and cousin, lived an unconventional and adventurous life which fascinated Jane Austen and caught her fancy.

The fifteen-year-old daughter who accompanied Philadelphia to the continent was no longer the impish Betsy who played on the rectory grounds when her mother helped Mrs. Austen through her confinements. Betsy, or rather Eliza, had already developed into the flirtatious young woman we know from her letters. Later she recalled having spent time in Tunbridge with her cousin James Walter, one of Philadelphia's brothers, when "he made verses on

me in which he compared me to Venus and I know not what other Divinity, and played off fireworks in the cellar in honour of my charms.”<sup>3</sup>

By her late husband’s standards it was already too late for Philadelphia to take Eliza to France, as she was clearly already susceptible to “picking up levities and follies of the French.”<sup>4</sup> Earlier, when Philadelphia had hired a French companion for Eliza to teach her French, Hancock had written, “I Can have no objection to it, till the Child may be old enough to imbibe the Spirit of Intrigue, without which no French Woman ever existed.”<sup>5</sup> Hancock would no doubt have objected to Eliza’s going to France at fifteen, but then he had come to disapprove of most of Philadelphia’s decisions and now that he was dead, and she and Eliza were living solely on the income from Hastings’ trust, there was nothing to stop them from leaving their elegant but expensive quarters in the West End of London and setting off to round out Eliza’s education on the continent. R.A. Austen-Leigh writes, in The Family Record, that the income from the 10,000 pound trust fund given to Philadelphia by Hastings was generous but “could not have been excessive, so that economy as well as inclination may have prompted Mrs. Hancock to fulfill her former wish, namely, to take her daughter abroad to complete her education.”<sup>6</sup>

In the winter of 1777 Philadelphia and Eliza, financed by Hastings’s funds, and accompanied by their Indian servant Clarinda, took off for the continent, stopping in Germany and Flanders. We have no news from the journey except that they were in Brussels by June 1778. By March of 1780 the two ladies were in Paris and Philadelphia wrote to Warren Hastings after what she described in her letter to him as “a silence of [. . .] many years on [your] part.”<sup>7</sup> Hastings had married Marian Imhoff three years previously, yet

Philadelphia writes:

I once thought to have confined this Letter to Business but knowing your Heart as I know it and being convinced that in spite of appearances it is not changed for your Friends, I cannot refuse you the satisfaction of knowing my Daughter, the only thing I take Comfort in, is in perfect Health, and joins me in every good wish for your Happiness--you may be surrounded by those who are happy in frequent opportunities of shewing their attachment to you, but I will venture to say not one among them who can boast a more disinterested steady and unshaken Friendship for you than that which for so many years has animated and will ever continue to animate the Breast of

Dear Sir

your obliged Friend

Phila: Hancock.<sup>8</sup>

Although Philadelphia had not heard from Hastings in many years, it was probably due to her connections to Hastings, who by this time was rich and famous as the Governor General of India, that she and Eliza were able to propel themselves into the highest aristocratic social circles in Paris. On May 16, 1780, Eliza wrote to Philadelphia Walter of their dining at Versailles where "they had the honour of seeing their majesties [Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette] and all the royal family--dine and sup."<sup>9</sup> India may have been like a tale out of the Arabian Nights, but dining with the King and Queen of France was the stuff of English, and French, fairy tales.

Eliza was as frivolous as the extravagant Queen of France she admired, and as uninterested as the Queen in matters political, except as they related to

her own life. From her letters to her Kentish cousin Philadelphia, we are made privy through Eliza's eyes to a fabulous first-hand account of court life in a France, on the very brink of revolution:

The Queen is a very fine woman, She has a most beautiful complexion, & is indeed exceedingly handsome; she was most elegantly dressed, she had on a corset & petticoat of pale green lute string covered over with a transparent silver gauze, the petticoat and sleeves puckered & confined in different places with large bunches of roses, & and amazing large bouquet of white & diamonds intermixed with her hair. Her neck was entirely uncovered & ornamented by a most beautiful chain of diamonds, of which she had likewise very fine bracelets; she was without gloves, I suppose to shew her hands & arms which are without exception the whitest & most beautiful I have ever beheld. The King was plainly dressed, he had likewise some fine diamonds. The rest of the royal family were very elegant, & indeed I may say the court of France is, I believe, upon the whole one of the most magnificent in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

It was said that Marie Antoinette preferred the title Queen of Fashion to that of Queen of France. Her own mother, Maria Theresa of Austria, upon receiving a painting of her daughter, reported coldly, "This is not the portrait of the Queen of France, there is some mistake. It is the portrait of an actress."<sup>11</sup> Eliza was an actress at heart and thoroughly enjoyed the queen's theatrics as well as her costumes.

Eliza has no idea, she writes her cousin, whether she is going to remain abroad or return to England. Like many young heroines of courtship novels,

she thoroughly enjoyed the role of a single young lady caught up in the flirtatious life of balls and elegant parties and hated the thought of giving up her "precious freedom." "All badinage, apart," she writes Philadelphia Walter, "I hope you will long preserve [your liberty] to tell you the truth I don't think either you or I very likely to lose either our gaiety or peace of mind for any male creature breathing [ . . . ]."<sup>12</sup> In another letter she tells her cousin that neither of them are likely to have their "peace disturbed by tender sentiments; as to me, I begin to be persuaded my heart is entirely insensible to any but those of friendship [ . . . ]."<sup>13</sup> (Austen echoes Eliza's sentiments in her own juvenilia. Marriage is so unimportant to the heroine of Austen's Henry and Eliza, as it seems to be to the young Eliza Hancock, that it is dismissed in a one-sentence letter to the Duchess of F: "Madam [--] We are married & gone.")<sup>14</sup>

In the year 1780, when Eliza was dancing at Versailles, France was helping the American colonists to win their revolution against the English and the second *vingtieme*, a costly tax, was renewed to help defray the costs of intervention. One would suppose that Philadelphia and Eliza might have felt uncomfortable in France when that country was financing a war against England, yet Eliza and her mother were undaunted by politics and unimpressed with nationalism. "I think," wrote Eliza to her cousin, "that worth is confined to no one country or nation, and equally to be found in Germany, Flanders or France."<sup>15</sup>

Marie Antoinette had urged the resignation of Jacques Necker, Director General of Finances under Louis XVI, who had advocated regulatory economic policies which would have interfered with the extravagant spending of the nobles and the French royalty. Eliza, like the queen, relished the luxury of the nobility and her letters reflect the fashions and elegant life style she so admired.

That her values were conservative, although her life was unconventional, is indisputable, but the middle class to which she and her mother belonged was driven by materialism, as Jane Austen's novels so clearly illustrate. Even Elizabeth Bennet, in many ways of an unconventional nature, fell in love with Pemberley before she gave her heart to Mr. Darcy: "and of this place I might have been mistress," she thought upon first viewing Mr. Darcy's estate, and she began to regret that she had turned down its owner's proposal of marriage."<sup>16</sup> Eliza Hancock's description of her life in Paris is one of materialism run wild as she and her mother settle in among the marquis and counts and countesses of eighteenth-century France, oblivious to the approaching revolution which is about to obliterate their glamorous, frivolous, conscienceless world.

The mother and daughter spent the summer of 1780 in Comblaville, twenty miles outside of Paris, at the home of the Comtesse de Tournon, whom Eliza describes as, "one of my best friends."<sup>17</sup> In the country, she amuses herself walking, reading, and playing the harpsichord and the harp, which she says is the "fashionable instrument."<sup>18</sup> Her letters from Comblaville irritated her cousin Philadelphia who wished her to return to England, as Eliza boasted that her elegant friends are trying to convince her to "accept offers which would attach me to this country."<sup>19</sup> Eliza twits her cousin Philadelphia by her inquiry, "How should you like it, my dear, was I to introduce *un cousin francais* to our acquaintance? Should you receive him cordially, or are you persuaded like most of our nation that nothing good can come from France?"<sup>20</sup> Francophobia was not an unfamiliar attitude among the British, given the intense rivalry between England and France in North America, India, the Caribbean and the Levant. "Between Britain and France," writes Edward Said,

in the late eighteenth century, there were two contests: the battle for strategic gains abroad—in India, the Nile delta, the Western Hemisphere—and the battle for a triumphant nationality. Both battles contrast “Englishness” with “the French,” and no matter how intimate and closeted the supposed English or French “essence” appears to be, it was almost always thought of as being (as opposed to already) made, and being fought out with the other great competitor. Thackeray’s Becky Sharp, for example, is as much an upstart as she is because of her half-French heritage.<sup>21</sup>

Eliza, at the behest of her aristocratic French friends, was now considering the prospect of marriage although she assures her cousin that she is not interested in having her peace disturbed by “tender sentiments.” In her protests against romantic love Eliza reveals something of her strengths and her limitations. She was capable of being a devoted daughter and cousin, and a warm, vivacious friend, but perhaps she may have experienced as abandonment her father’s absence from the time of her early childhood and she seems always to have remained in a sense aloof, or somewhat emotionally distanced, from the men she married. Once Hancock had written Philadelphia, “Pray endeavor to keep Betsy’s Recollection of me alive. I fear she will only remember me by the name of Father,”<sup>22</sup> and in another letter “Betsy has written me but one Letter this year. She must have forgotten me further than that of your reminding her of me: She may have some small Notion of a Father who went to India. I should be glad to receive yearly a letter from her to know what Improvement she may make on Her writing. Give her my Love and Blessing.”<sup>23</sup> And in fact, after a while, Betsy did only write the father she barely remembered a short note once a year. Eliza may well have been affected by her mother’s

attitude towards her petulant, absent husband. She grew up to be charming and flirtatious and when she was young, she never had a dearth of suitors, yet her deepest feelings as expressed in her letters are for her mother and for the intimacy they shared. In any event, although she had no trouble finding a husband, Eliza never seems to have fallen in love. She flirted outrageously and won the men to whom she was attracted, but Eliza loved best that they adored her and made her will their own.

Notwithstanding Eliza's desire to retain her "dear liberty" she became engaged in August of 1781 to a Frenchman ten years her senior (she was twenty.) Her fiancé, Jean François Capot de Feuillide, a self-styled French nobleman, called himself a count, although (as Abbé Michel Devert tells us in a 1970 essay in Bulletin de Société de Borda.) he was actually the son of a lawyer in Parlement and judge royal of Moncrabeau who in 1757 became "the perpetual mayor of Nérac" where Jean François had been born in 1751. Later Eliza was to discover that her husband's title was fraudulent and he was to discover that, although she was indeed, the goddaughter of Warren Hastings, she was not, as he had thought, "immensement riche." M. de Feuillide's grandfather Jehan Capot had been gatekeeper at the châteaux at Nérac. The family had prospered and his father had acquired the domain at Grezeau in 1758 and at his death owned a small estate in Nerac, in the province of Guienne in the southwest of France. His mother, Anne-Esther Bartouilh de Feuillide, was the daughter of the Consul of Nérac and besides Jean François she had a son Gabriel, a doctor who lived in Nérac, and a daughter, Dorothee. Monsieur de Feuillide was a Captain in the Queen's Regiment of Dragoons and was known as "one of the most handsome officers in the French army." Although Eliza's mother approved of the engagement, her trustees, Mr.

Woodman and Mr. Austen, strenuously objected to the match, as Mr. Woodman wrote to Mr. Hastings:

Mrs. and Miss Hancock are yet in France and likely to continue there, the young lady being of the point of Marriage with a French officer of good fortune but at present little. Her letter was wrote to Mr. Austen and Self on the Subject and she seems inclined to give up to them the Sum which was settled on her for Life and wants the money to be transferred into the French funds which we have thought prudent for her sake to decline and Mr. Austen is much concerned at the connection which he says is giving up all their Friends, their Country and he fears their Religion.<sup>24</sup>

Philadelphia's approval of her daughter's choice is strikingly similar to Mrs. Dashwood's approval of Marianne's choice of a husband in Sense and Sensibility, the book that Deirdre Le Faye sees as having a decided Hancock influence. "There can be no proof," writes Le Faye "that Jane herself ever read the letters exchanged by the previous generation, but the fact that these letters exist today implies that they were kept to be re-read and discussed, and the information they contained would thereby become part of a family tradition."<sup>25</sup> Something of Philadelphia Hancock seems to color the character of Mrs. Dashwood, especially in their respective endorsements of their daughters' prospective marriages, and it could be said of both women, as Austen says of Mrs. Dashwood, that, "Indeed a man could not very well be in love with [. . .] her [daughter,] without extending the passion to her."<sup>26</sup> Once, writing from India, Tysoe Saul Hancock had warned Philadelphia not to "judge of everyone by your own heart" and the fictional Mrs. Dashwood is prone to this same behaviour--she "valued and cherished" the excess of her daughter's sensibility.

"In her mind there was a sense of honour so keen, a generosity so romantic [. . .] [she] must always be carried away by her imagination on any interesting subject,"<sup>27</sup> writes Austen of Mrs. Dashwood. The same could be said of the real Philadelphia, who encouraged and supported Eliza's marriage to the Frenchman without reservation, even willing, against the advice of her English family and friends, to risk her own financial security in order to endorse her daughter's choice.

Mr. Austen's and Mr. Woodman's distrust of M. de Feuillide turned out to be justified and more prudent than the judgment of Philadelphia, for at Mrs. Hancock's death it was revealed that the "count's" estate owed her 6,500 pounds, money he had mostly spent on his reclamation project was which far more expensive than he had estimated. Both Mrs. Dashwood and Philadelphia Hancock were given to extravagant fantasies and were not always prudent, as their romantic sensibilities often drove their decisions. Both women, however, were endearing to all whom they met and particularly to their beloved daughters. Neither Philadelphia nor the fictional Mrs. Dashwood is troubled by the excess of sensibility in their children as they have something of the same quality themselves. "Elinor saw, with concern, the excess of her sister's sensibility;" observes the narrator of the novel, "but by Mrs. Dashwood it was valued and cherished. They encouraged each other now in the violence of their affliction."<sup>28</sup> What the real and fictional characters have in common is a sense of romance about their daughter's relationships and a basic kindness and warmth which they share with all around them. They are women motivated by sensibility and heart rather than women whose lives are dominated by sense and reason. When Mrs. Dashwood's daughters are invited to London she thinks to herself,

that such an excursion would be productive of much amusement to both her daughters, and perceiving through all the affectionate attention to herself, how much the heart of Marianne was in it, would not hear of their declining the offer upon *her* account; insisted in their both accepting it directly, and then began to foresee with her usual cheerfulness, a variety of advantages that would accrue to them all, from this separation.<sup>29</sup>

Jane Austen had no doubt been told of similar qualities in her own aunt, of whom her cousin Philadelphia Walter had written, "To begin with my Aunt, I do not know a fault she has--so strictly just & honorable in all her dealings, so kind and obliging to all her friends and acquaintances, so religious in all her actions, in short I do not know a person that has more the appearance of perfection."<sup>30</sup> Inflated praise, perhaps, but capturing something of the strong and nurturing spirit which seems to be reflected in Mrs. Dashwood, elsewhere described as person with a keen sense of honour--another woman and mother whose untimely widowhood forced her into a position of making important decisions for her and her daughter which would otherwise have been reserved for the man of the family.

Undaunted by the objections of her trustees and her Uncle Austen's concern that she and her fiancé "seemed already desirous of draining the mother of every shilling she has,"<sup>31</sup> Eliza married the "count" in December of 1781--"the effect," she wrote her cousin, "of mature deliberation as it was a step I took much less from my own judgment than that of those whose councils and opinions I am the most bound to follow [ . . . ]."<sup>32</sup> Apparently Eliza's attraction to rank and title as well as the advice of her mother and her French friends (who she writes "are so good as to desire to keep me with them, and who therefore

do everything in their power to prevail upon me to accept offers which would attach me to their country"<sup>33</sup>) convinced her to defy the judgment of her friends and family in England. Besides, neither she nor her mother were given to listening to the dictates or suggestions of male authority figures. These plucky Hancock women had shaped their own lives, taken risks of their own accord, walked paths less trodden, and had treated life as an adventure of their own creation. It was unlikely that Eliza would have given up her "count" to follow the advice of her Uncle Austen or Mr. Woodman. Writing to her cousin of her marriage, Eliza is chillingly self-aware, accepting her own materialism and admiration for social position and need for control, as a matter of course. She sees herself as the most fortunate of her sex, not because she has married the man she loves, but because her husband, she thinks is well-connected, and is willing to let her take the leading role in their relationship:

The man to whom I have given my hand is everyways amiable both in mind and person. It is too little to say he loves, since he literally adores me, is entirely devoted to me, and makes my inclinations the guide of all his actions, the whole study of his life seems to be to contribute to the happiness of mine. My situation is every ways agreeable, certain of never being separated from my dear Mama whose presence enhances every blessing I enjoy, equal sure of husband's affections, mistress of an easy fortune with the prospect of a very ample one, add to these the advantages of rank & title, and a numerous & brilliant acquaintance, amongst whom I can flatter myself I have some sincere friends, & you will unite with me in saying I have reason to be thankful to Providence for the lot fallen to my share, the only

thing which can make me uneasy is the distance I am from my relations [ . . . ] and country, but this is what I trust I shall not have always to complain of, as the *Compte* has the greatest desire to see England, & even to make it his residence a part of the year. We shall certainly make you a visit as soon as possible after the peace takes place.<sup>34</sup>

The peace to which Eliza refers did not take place until 1783, when the war between France and England, part of a larger European struggle for empire triggered by France's intervention against Britain in the American Revolutionary War, was terminated in the Treaty of Versailles. Of this Eliza writes, it was "little to the satisfaction of the political world, but much to mine. The evils of war are so numerous and so dreadful that in my opinion we can hardly pay too dear for their cessation."<sup>35</sup> After this we come to her more sincere response, that the peace will provide her the pleasure of hastening her return to England! At the signing of the treaty, the independence of the American colonies was formally announced, French finances were exhausted, partially because of French support of the colonists during their war against England and the Bourbon government was nearly bankrupt. Six years later, in 1789, the Estates-General would be called together, the Third Estate would demand a constitution, and the Bastille would be attacked. By 1790, the National Assembly would decree that, "hereditary nobility is forever abolished; in consequence, the titles of prince, duke, count, marquis, viscount, vidame, baron, noble and all similar titles shall neither be taken by anyone whomsoever nor given to anyone."<sup>36</sup> In 1783, the prologue to this revolution was being acted out before Eliza's eyes—Necker's *Compte Rendu*, published in 1781, the first public statement in French history of the financial affairs of the government, became a best-seller in France,

exposing the role played in the depletion of the country's finances by funds paid by the King to courtiers in gifts and pensions. But the ecstatic new Countess Eliza was unconcerned, except as the delay of the peace treaty would defer her visit to England to show off her newly acquired count!

Marriage "to someone young and reckoned handsome, in the military and a Frenchman besides,"<sup>37</sup> seems not to have interrupted Eliza's gay social whirl, nor did England's losing its American colonies disturb her peace of mind. "As for me," the new bride wrote in March 1782, "I have danced more this winter than in all the rest of my life put together. Indeed I am almost ashamed to say what a racketing life I have led, but it was almost unavoidable. Paris has been remarkably gay this year on account of the birth of the Dauphin."<sup>38</sup> Eliza is quite swept away by her new life and proudly signs her letter, "Eliza Hancock, Countesse de Feuilleide."

Philadelphia, Eliza, and her husband lived in an elegant house in Paris, with a large garden, supplying them with "a vast quantity of flowers, peaches, melons, etc."<sup>39</sup> Charming as the house was, however, Eliza found it too small and planned to move to larger quarters. Hopelessly impervious to political turbulence around her, Eliza is swept away by the Royal Festivities, the illuminations, the fireworks and the balls occasioned by the royal birth. "The court of France," she writes:

is at all times brilliant, but on this occasion the magnificence was beyond conception [. . .] Eight Thousand lights [. . .] shewed to advantage the richest & most elegant dresses, the most beautiful women [. . .] nothing but gold, silver and diamonds & jewels of all kinds were to be seen on every side [. . .] it answered exactly to the description given in the Arabian Nights entertainments of

enchanted palaces.<sup>40</sup>

If Philadelphia was at this celebration, and undoubtedly she was, it must have brought back memories of the glamorous balls of her Calcutta youth, although a royal festival would have been on a far grander scale than the Company's balls in India. In fact, Eliza's life in France did resemble her mother's gay Calcutta days. There were balls and theater and excursions to public places to show off one's elegant carriage and clothes—all the trappings of luxury and material well-being enjoyed by the few who were surrounded by the deprivation and poverty of the many.

It is unfair to judge a person from her correspondence with one of her cousins, but this is all that remains of Eliza's letters. Perhaps Eliza wrote only of the things which would interest Philadelphia Walter. In her letters from France she seems mostly concerned with her friends and relations, and most deeply her mother, and with the glamorous life of the French aristocracy. We know from her letters that she is a delightful correspondent with a flair for description and a dry wit. On several occasions, she alludes to time passed in reading, but we do not know what books she read. R.W. Chapman speaks of Eliza arriving at Steventon in 1786, "bringing with her a command of the French language, knowledge of the French court, and a talent for theatricals."<sup>41</sup> What would Eliza have written in her letters to her Aunt and Uncle Austen at Steventon or to her cousin James Austen whom she invited to visit her in France? His cousin, Jane Austen, was nine years old at the time. Was she amused when Eliza's glittering letters were read aloud?

Eliza was a natural performer and writes about performing in theatricals and playing the harpsichord for friends and family. The question of performance is an issue in the lives of women in several Austen novels.

Elizabeth Bennet plays the pianoforte but as Mr. Darcy says, "We neither of us perform to strangers."<sup>42</sup> Fanny resists performing in the family theatricals at Mansfield Park. Jane Austen probably knew that her cousin Philadelphia Walter refused, despite the continual urging of Eliza and Mrs. Austen, to perform at theatricals at the rectory barn at Steventon. Eliza wrote Philadelphia that unless she agreed to act in the family theatricals, there would be no room for her in the rectory for Mrs. Austen did not tolerate "idle young people."<sup>43</sup> Eliza, on the other hand, relished the role of performer. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet and Fanny, however, Eliza was just as willing to perform for an audience of strangers as for her family. In France she joined an amateur theatrical group that staged performances at the waterside retreat where she was a guest. Because of her interest in music, Eliza's letters inform us of the musical events in Paris during her stay there. She writes of her visit to the "grand new opera house" being built in the Tuilleries and remarks to her cousin Philadelphia,

you may judge of its extent when I tell you that I have been assured of its having had operas represented in it in which appeared a troop of five hundred horse, for this theatre had been built for some years by an Italian named Servandom in imitation of Italy [. . .] I have not seen it [. . .] but in my opinion the most agreeable circumstance is, being situated in the midst of so fine a garden as the Tuilleries, as by this means people will be able to take the air both between the acts and after the opera [. . .]."<sup>44</sup>

The new opera house had been built, she observes, to replace the one that had been destroyed by a "dreadful accident" two years before, but the public were not pleased with it, so a finer one was "fitting up at the Tuilleries. Eliza did attend the opera and writes of the "celebrated performers" who have sung that

season:

Madame St. Hubert, first singer at the opera, enchants everyone by her voice as well as by her talent for tragedy. On her performing the part of *Dido* before his Majesty, he immediately settled an annual pension of 2000 livres on her besides her usual appointments. There is likewise a Mademoiselle Paradies whose infinite skill appears to be more astonishing from her having been totally blind since infancy.<sup>45</sup>

Eliza saw all the performances at the opera and theatre that were in vogue when she was in Paris. Mozart's opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, had just been composed in May of 1786 and was an immediate success, even though the Beaumarchais play on which it was based was considered subversive and had been prevented from being shown for about a half-dozen years, as it mocked both the king and aristocratic society. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* was of interest to Eliza, as it was performed for the King. Eliza writes that Shakespeare's plays have been badly translated into French. "In my opinion," Eliza writes of these performances of Shakespeare's plays, "they make an uncouth figure in their foreign attire."<sup>46</sup> "It is still the fashion," she writes, "to translate or rather murder Shakespear [sic]; Macbeth and Coriolanus have successfully made their appearance on the French stage."<sup>47</sup> Jane Austen shared Eliza's love of theater and in her letters to Cassandra from London, when she was visiting her brother Henry, she wrote of going to theater two of three nights during one short visit and during another visit of seeing Edmund Kean as Shylock: "It appeared to me," she wrote, "as if there were no fault in him anywhere, & in his scene with Tubal there was exquisite acting."<sup>48</sup>

Even more, perhaps, than the theater, Eliza's abiding interest was in

fashion, an interest she would later share with Jane Austen who enjoyed shopping with Eliza when they were together in London. Her attentions to the details of Parisian costume give us a stunning picture of the voguish fashions of the rich and famous. The custom of powdering hair is also noted, not without humor, and one of the only two pictures which survive of Eliza, a miniature portrait which she sent in the summer of 1780 to her Uncle George Austen, and which is still owned by her Austen-Leigh descendants, shows her with a piquant little face and large dark eyes like her mother's, and with powdered curls entwined by a blue ribbon. (Shortly after the first portrait was painted, another miniature of Eliza was made at her mother's request, and is now owned by members of the Walter family. This second portrait has a lock of Eliza's natural dark-brown hair in the back, with the words, 'Amoris et Amicitiae'-- 'Of Love and Friendship.' In 1790 the fifteen-year-old Jane Austen would write her "novel in a series of Letters", "Love and Freindship", dedicating it to "Madame la Comtesse de Feuillide." Undoubtedly Jane had seen the miniature of her cousin at her own home and its inscription most probably is echoed in the title of the juvenile piece she dedicated to Eliza.

"Powder," Eliza writes, "is universally worn, & in very large quantities, no one would dare to appear in public without it. The heads in general look as if they had been dipped in a meal tub...."<sup>49</sup> Hats, too, do not escape Eliza's scrutiny. "Large yellow straw-hats as believe you may have been worn by the haymakers are universally adapted," she writes, and adds that they are referred to as "à la Marlborough" as everything else is this year. "This great general," Eliza writes, "certainly could never have imagined that so many years after his death his name would have been borrowed to set off all the frippery of dress, ribbands, silk."<sup>50</sup> Eliza gives an amusing explanation of the Marlborough craze:

The Dauphin's nurse was one day singing an old ballad to put him to sleep called the Death of Marlborough. The Queen happened to hear her, was pleased with it, & of course the whole court had it by heart the next day. The people who like to ape their betters followed their example. A pantomime appeared on the subject, verses without number were composed, & the fashion became general in a very short time.<sup>51</sup>

In actuality, the passion for the pastoral has taken over French fashion, and there was a decided public acceptance of informality, although the copies of haymakers' hats and the like were extremely expensive. The Marlborough hats to which Eliza refers were large-brimmed hats, usually trimmed with ribbons or with ostrich feathers.<sup>52</sup> They were named by the French after Sarah, the Duchess of Marlborough, the favorite of Queen Anne and the wife of the Duke of Marlborough. The Duchess had no doubt set fashion trends when she was Groom of the Stole and Mistress of the Robe to Queen Anne, selecting the Queen's clothes for state and ordinary occasions. The Marlborough hat was known in Britain as "the Gainsborough," as sitters for the English painter were often portrayed wearing one.<sup>53</sup> Hats were frequently named after newsworthy events and people, such as the Balloon bonnet named after the first balloon ascent. "With a close, competitive and bored, high society under constant challenge from an ambitious bourgeoisie, the key to success in the millinery business was novelty and topicality," writes one costume historian.<sup>54</sup> One presumes that Philadelphia would have had a particular interest in the hats and clothing of the day what with her earlier apprenticeship to a Covent Garden milliner (milliners made clothes as well as hats in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). The imitation of English style, which Eliza alludes to in saying that

everything was à la Marlborough, was fashionable in the Paris of the 1770s and 1780s, the *habit à la française* and the *habit à l'anglais* existed side by side.

Louis Sebastian Mercier, the popular French dramatist and author, described how "English folly" was the rage and argued for the return to French style. The Petit Dictionnaire de la Tour et de la Ville of 1778 commented caustically,

Soon Paris will be completely English. Dress, carriages, hair, jewelry, drinks, entertainment, gardens and morals, everything is the English style. We have taken from the wretched people le vauxhall, le club, les jocques, les fracs, le vistik, le punch, le spleen, & la fureur du suicide.<sup>55</sup>

One has to wonder whether Eliza's success in France had to do with the vogue for English things. This is particularly interesting at a time when the English, including Tysoe Saul Hancock, were known to have condemned things French. "The use of French words," writes Brian Southam when discussing this subject,

was enough in itself to suggest that artifice was afoot and Jane Austen herself exploits this device towards the end of Mansfield Park, where the odour of sexual scandal hangs in the air. Mary Crawford dismisses her brother's escapade with Maria Bertram as nothing more than 'a moment's *setourderie*' (thoughtlessness) and in a newspaper report it becomes "a matrimonial *fracas*.<sup>56</sup>

Eliza writes amusingly of fashionable outings to Longchamps which must have reminded her mother of her rides on the Corse while living in Calcutta.

"Longchamps," she writes,

is a monastery situated in the Bois de Bologne. It was formerly the custom to gather thither to hear vespers the three days of Passion week, but devotion has given way to vanity. Everybody now goes

to Longchamps not to say their prayers but to shew their fine  
cloathes & fine equipages.<sup>57</sup>

Other forms of amusement included watching the amazing balloon ascents. Eliza writes of a weird altercation when she was watching a balloonist, M. Blanchard, who had attached a rudder and wings to his balloon to direct its course. Blanchard had been scheduled to ascend, along with a Benedictine monk, but at the last minute a young man from the *École Militaire* insisted on joining them and the three got into such a scuffle that the wings and rudder of the flying machine were demolished. Then, to the astonishment of the gathered crowd, M. Blanchard took off alone in the damaged vehicle, ascended 1,500 fathoms and returned to earth unharmed. Eliza was a gifted raconteur and her letters describing her life in Paris often read like passages of a novel.

By May 1783, and for at least a year before that, a shadow was cast over Eliza's glittering life. Her mother had not been well, she reports, although by this time she seems better. Eliza notes that Philadelphia is "very thin and that sometimes makes me uneasy."<sup>58</sup> Philadelphia recovered from this illness, although references to other bouts with illness are scattered throughout the letters, but Eliza's concern reflects the anxiety she felt at the possibility of losing her mother as the two women were inseparable and had never lived apart. A close bond between mothers and daughters who enjoy each other's company rarely exists in Austen's novels, except for Mrs. Dashwood's relationship with Elinor and Marianne. A mother of daughters like Mrs. Bennet saw it as her duty in life to marry off her girls, but her foolish behaviour precluded bonding with any of her daughters, except perhaps the foolish Lydia. The Hancock ladies enjoyed life together as friends, as well as mother and daughter, engaged in a shared adventure, but an adventure Austen does not allow into her novels.

Curiously, the closest Jane Austen comes to writing of a mother-daughter bonding like theirs is between a daughter who has lost her mother and a governess who has been a mother-substitute. Emma Woodhouse's mother "had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection."<sup>59</sup>

Philadelphia's relationship to Eliza shifted from educator and caregiver to friend and equal, after the death of Tysoe Saul Hancock, when the two ladies set off for the Continent. Eliza's inseparable relationship with her mother did not even seem to interfere with her marriage. She writes her cousin,

My situation is everyways agreeable, certain never being separated from my dear Mama whose presence enhances every other blessing I enjoy, equal sure of my husband's affections and mistress of an easy fortune [. . .] plus the advantages of rank and title and numerous brilliant acquaintances [. . .] I have reason to be thankful to Providence for the lot fallen to my share [. . .]."<sup>60</sup>

In 1784 Eliza's husband was to take her to Guienne to meet his elderly mother for the first time and she looked forward to the excursion to southern France, with "Spain just a few days away from the count's estate."<sup>61</sup> Eliza was interested in meeting her husband's family, his brother Gabriel, a doctor, and sister Dorothee lived in Guienne as well, and she was of course eager to see his "possessions," his extensive land and his family château. As it turned out, Eliza spent a year in Guienne at the Château Jordan. M. de Feuille had received a royal grant of marshland at Gabarret which was his, free of taxes, for twenty years, if he reclaimed and cultivated the land. By the time of Eliza's arrival, the count had employed workers to drain the land and to build houses,

including a small house for Eliza and himself, to be called "Le Marais." During the summer of 1785, Eliza wrote her cousin of her husband's project, of her pride in his accomplishments, and of the respect he had won for his good works from the community:

I have without doubt already mentioned to you a donation made by the King to Mons. de Feuillide and his heirs for ever, of 5000 Acres of Land little distant from his Paternal Estate, at that time & for many preceding Ages entirely covered with water. Very considerable & expensive works carried on of eighteen months past, have entirely drained this large extent of Ground & nothing can equal the Public Surprise at the accomplishment of what seemed impracticable, at the same time I have the pleasure of seeing my Husband looked upon as the Benefactor of a whole Province, from the Salubrity its Air has acquired by being freed from the pernicious exhalations of such an extent of stagnant water, very advantageously replaced by a fertile plain not less agreeable to the view than I flatter myself it will be profitable to [its] owners.<sup>62</sup>

Eliza was surprised that her stay at the château had made her interested in: farming, a concern, which otherwise I confess I might chance never to Trouble my Head about, since I am far from having the same partiality for this kind of occupation which those of the nursery inspire you with. However, unworthy, & incapable as I am, of tasting the Pleasures which result from the Study of Agriculture. I cannot be indifferent [she adds grandiosely] to the Success of an undertaking which not only considerably adds to my Husband's

Fortune, but in a manner immortalizes himself [. . .] .<sup>63</sup>

The story of de Feuilleide's reclamation project is told by the Abbé Michel Devert in the 1970 issue of the Bulletin de la Société de Borda.<sup>64</sup> It seems that in the eighteenth century there was an agricultural movement in France to improve the land. In 1764 the King gave a permit to all land owners in the Marais of Gabbaret and Barbota in Southwest France to develop their lands, drain the marshes, and make their property more productive. In return the landowners would receive an exemption from taxes for twenty years. Although the Marais at the time was generally considered to be the general property of all who lived near by, as a place to hunt and fish, in actuality the seigneur held exclusive control of hunting and fishing rights which he could exercise when he cleared the forests or drained the swamps. The situation was complicated because the villagers had escaped the seigneur's control through conventions sanctioned by contracts and usage and many protested when M. de Feuilleide drove them off his land in order to drain the marsh. The issue raised was that of the peasants and their collective rights vs. the rights of the seigneurial class. M. de Feuilleide prevailed, however, as many agreed that the undrained marsh bred disease and fevers and the land it occupied was unproductive of crops. He drained the swamp, built a huge canal and erected fourteen buildings including a main house, the <sup>^</sup>château de Marais, and a house for his younger brother Gabriel. As Eliza would write, the whole region was impressed for with the drainage of the swamp, disease was nearly eradicated, the air was purified, and many peasants were provided with jobs on the reclamation project. The <sup>^</sup>Château de Marais attracted a "brilliant society." Women went in horse drawn carriages to the nearby <sup>^</sup>château de Seailles and important visitors were entertained. Unfortunately, however, M. de Feuilleide encountered financial

difficulties as the reclamation project ended up costing 400,000 livres and used up all his personal fortune. He was forced to borrow money from Eliza and even more from Philadelphia who loaned him 15,000 livres.<sup>65</sup> Creditors were at his door and he had to get a one year period of grace from the King in order to continue his reclamation project without going bankrupt. As it happened, no sooner were his financial problems over, than the Revolution started, which would be fatal to all the work he had done in the Marais and ultimately to himself as well.

In June of 1785, while Eliza was visiting the château, the count's mother died quite unexpectedly. Eliza writes of the severe shock her husband received from the loss of his mother and her own grief for one "who adored her son and whose affectionate behaviour to me entitle her to my sincerest regrets."<sup>66</sup> After his mother's death, M. de Feuillide's physicians recommended that he visit the waters of Bagneres, a beautiful watering spot at the foot of the Pyrenees. There he gradually recovered from the shock and the couple began to enjoy balls and theatre, happy amongst fifteen English families who were vacationing there. In a letter of January 7, 1776, Eliza writes of looking forward to the Carnival, "the gayest season of the Year" for which a group of friends have "erected an elegant theatre for the purpose of acting plays amongst ourselves and who intend having balls at least twice a week."<sup>67</sup> Eliza is torn between returning to England or remaining in France as now she is pregnant and worried about the journey. She is also ambivalent about leaving the continent as she is expecting a visit from James Austen in the Spring—a visit he would ultimately make to M. de Feuillide when Eliza was back in London. The Count was an Anglophile, or perhaps, for financial reasons, he wanted his son to be closely connected to Warren Hastings, who was now living in London. In any event, he expressed

his desire that his baby, particularly if it was a boy, be a native of England. When plans are finally made, Eliza writes Philadelphia Walter of her impending arrival in England, and shares with her cousin her anxiety over the prospect of motherhood. "I shall supplicate your aid for the brat I mean to introduce to you," she writes, "and which I am sure I shall be much at a loss what to do with, as never was a being less qualified, nor one who had less taste for the cares of the nursery than your humble servant."<sup>68</sup> The tone of this request is not as harsh as it seems as the word "brat" meant "child" and had not as yet assumed its negative connotation, but Eliza, no doubt, did feel threatened by the prospect of motherhood as she was so enjoying her carefree life. As it turned out, motherhood was to be a difficult and eventually heartbreaking experience for Eliza, as her child was sickly from a very early age.

Eliza gave birth, on June 25, 1786, in London, to a son whom she named Hastings for her godfather, whose generosity had made it possible for Eliza and Philadelphia to live an elegant, fashionable life in France, enjoying all "the dissipations of Paris" (notwithstanding the earlier precautionary warnings of Tysoe Saul Hancock) and to partake with pleasure of the frivolities and levity of eighteenth-century, pre-Revolutionary aristocratic French society. In Love and Freindship Austen mocks the fear, common in her time, of cities and their dissipation. "Beware, my Laura," the heroine's mother had written. "Beware of the insipid Vanities and the idle Dissipation of the Metropolis of England: Beware of the unmeaning Luxuries of Bath & the Stinking fish of Southampton." But little did Laura know that she was ordained so soon to quit that humble cottage for the Deceitful Pleasures of the World."<sup>69</sup> Eliza de Feuillide and her mother were associated, no doubt, in Jane Austen's mind with the deceitful pleasures of the world, as their letters are replete with such amusements.

**"Paris," Eliza wrote,**

**is the city in the world best suited to spend the whole year in; it is not like London, where the summer months are unsupportable.**

**The walks and rides here, the amusements which continue the whole year round, the almost continual residence of people of fashion, all these things render it at all times agreeable.<sup>70</sup>**

**When she returned to London, Eliza fully expected to return and make Paris her home. She had to leave her husband behind because of his work on the reclamation project in the Marais but hoped he would join her in England to meet the Austen family and perhaps even her godfather for whom their son had been named.**

## Notes

## Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, "Henry & Eliza," The Works of Jane Austen, Volume VI, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 36. (See also Jane Austen, Henry and Eliza, ed. Karen L. Hartnick [Edmonton: Juvenilia Press, 1996]. Note 39 elucidates "a man of War of 55 Guns" as follows: "By the early sixteenth century cannons were mounted on the gundecks of vessels known as men-of-war. Warships were classified according to the number of guns they carried: first rate--100 guns or more; second rate--84-100 guns, third rate--70-84 guns, etc. That Eliza's ship was not up to snuff would have been amusing to JA's brother James, who was in the Royal Naval Academy at the time.")

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, Persuasion. The Novels of Jane Austen. Volume V, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 2.

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia Austen, "To Philadelphia Walter," Austen Papers 101.

<sup>4</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Austen," 7 September 1770, Austen Papers 50.

<sup>5</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 26 August 1774, Austen Papers 76.

<sup>6</sup> R.A. Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library, 1989) 83.

<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia Hancock, "To Warren Hastings," 3 March 1780. Austen Papers, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Philadelphia Hancock, "To Warren Hastings," 3 March 1780, Austen Papers 87-88.

- <sup>9</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers 89.
- <sup>10</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers 90.
- <sup>11</sup> Valerie Steele, Paris Fashions: A Cultural History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 24.
- <sup>12</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers 92.
- <sup>13</sup> Austen Papers 92.
- <sup>14</sup> Austen, Henry & Eliza 36.
- <sup>15</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers 91.
- <sup>16</sup> Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, The Novels of Jane Austen Volume II, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 246.
- <sup>17</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 June 1780, Austen Papers 84.
- <sup>18</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 17 June 1780, Austen Papers 94.
- <sup>19</sup> Austen Papers 95.
- <sup>20</sup> Eliza Hancock, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 June 1780, Austen Papers 95.
- <sup>21</sup> Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 83.
- <sup>22</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 29 March 1772, Austen Papers, 70.

- <sup>23</sup> Tysoe Saul Hancock, "To Philadelphia Hancock," 27 March 1773, Austen Papers, 70.
- <sup>24</sup> John Woodman, "To Warren Hastings," 7 August 1781, Austen Papers 97.
- <sup>25</sup> Deirdre Le Faye, "Jane Austen and Her Hancock Relatives," The English Review of Studies Volume XXX, no. 117, February 1979, 22.
- <sup>26</sup> Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, The Novels of Jane Austen Volume I, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 22.
- <sup>27</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 336.
- <sup>28</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 155.
- <sup>29</sup> Austen, Sense and Sensibility 7.
- <sup>30</sup> Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 19 September 1787, Austen Papers 125.
- <sup>31</sup> John Woodman, "To Warren Hastings," 7 August 1781, Austen Papers 98.
- <sup>32</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 100.
- <sup>33</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 June 1780, Austen Papers 95.
- <sup>34</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 17 May 1783, Austen Papers 106.
- <sup>35</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 104.
- <sup>36</sup> Decree of National Assembly, 19 June 1790, qtd. in Carl Becker and Kenneth Cooper, Modern History (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Co., 1984)

147.

37 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 102.

38 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 1 May 1783, Austen Papers 109.

39 Austen Papers 109.

40 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 102.

41 R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen: Facts and Problems (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948) 32.

42 Austen, Pride and Prejudice 39.

43 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 3 November 1787, Austen Papers 128.

44 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 May 1784, Austen Papers 106.

45 Austen Papers 113.

46 Austen Papers 112.

47 Austen Papers 112.

48 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 5 March 1814, qtd. in W. Austen-Leigh, R.A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre LeFaye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library, 1989) 188.

49 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers, 90.

50 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 1 May 1783, Austen Papers 108.

- <sup>51</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780, Austen Papers 90.
- <sup>52</sup> Stephanie Davies, compiler, Costume Language: A Dictionary of Dress Terms (Cressrelles Publishing Company, 1994) 93.
- <sup>53</sup> Madeleine Ginsburg, The Hat: Trends and Traditions (Barrons Educational Series, 1990) 60.
- <sup>54</sup> Steele 39.
- <sup>55</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 1 May 1783, Austen Papers 107.
- <sup>56</sup> Brian Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy (London: Hambledon and London, 2000) 242.
- <sup>57</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 1 May 1783, Austen Papers 107.
- <sup>58</sup> Austen Papers 109.
- <sup>59</sup> Emma, Novels of Jane Austen, Volume IV, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 5.
- <sup>60</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 100.
- <sup>61</sup> Deirdre Le Faye, "Three Austen Family Letters," Notes and Queries, September 1985, Volume 32, No.3, 331.
- <sup>62</sup> Le Faye 331.
- <sup>63</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 25 June 1785, Notes and Queries September 1985, 331.
- <sup>64</sup> Abbé Michel Devert, "Le Marais de Gabarret et de Barbotan," Bulletin de Societe de Borda #340, 1970, 339.

<sup>65</sup> Devert 339.

<sup>66</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 25 July 1785, Notes and Queries, September 1985, 331.

<sup>67</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 17 January 1786 Austen Papers 115.

<sup>68</sup> Austen Papers 116.

<sup>69</sup> Jane Austen, Love and Freindship, The Works of Jane Austen: Volume VI: Minor Works, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 78-79.

<sup>70</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 May 1780. Austen Papers 89.

## Chapter Four

### The Return to England

Having returned to England in May of 1786, the count remaining in France, Philadelphia and Eliza moved to fashionable quarters at 3 Orchard Street, and once again, as in Eliza's childhood, mother and daughter were living alone together in London. Notwithstanding Eliza's fears concerning motherhood, Hastings's "two Mammias," as Eliza phrased it, helped each other care for the baby, with the assistance of household servants. We know that Philadelphia Walter did not come to Eliza's aid as Eliza had requested, nor was there any need to do so, nor did she visit her cousin and aunt or the new baby for a year, despite the fact that she had not seen them in the nine years since they had lived abroad.

When Eliza was still in France she had written to Philadelphia Walter that when she returned to England she meant "to spend a few days in London, and if my health allows me, immediately to pay a visit to Steventon. My Uncle informs us that Midsummer and Christmas are the only seasons when his mansion is sufficiently at liberty to admit of his receiving friends."<sup>1</sup> The word "mansion" sounds a bit arch to describe the Austen's house, but in the eighteenth century the word meant simply "a place of abode." The Steventon rectory was in fact quite a large house in which the Austens ran a small, informal boys' school to help defray expenses. The pupils slept on the top floor but ate their meals with the family. Mr. Austen was a farmer as well as a minister and teacher and had to worry about crops, laborers and the price of wheat and barley, sheep and pigs. Outside the house was a poultry yard, an extensive vegetable garden and dairy and a large barn which the children used

in the summer to put on family plays. "There were two parlours and a kitchen, a private study for the vicar and ten bedrooms above [. . .] Jane and Cassandra shared a bedroom."<sup>2</sup> The household at times amounted to fifteen people counting servants and pupils and the house was too crowded for company except when the live-in pupils went home for the holidays. For their first Christmas back in England, in December of 1786, when all the students were on holiday, Philadelphia and Eliza and six-month-old Hastings joined the Austen family at the Steventon rectory. This was the first time either woman was to meet their cousin Jane Austen, unless Philadelphia had been there at Jane's birth, and they brought her a gift for her eleventh birthday, a set of French children's books, Arnaud Berquin's L'Ami des Enfants, inscribed in Volume V by Eliza, "Pour dear Jane Austen." (This set of books is now in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.) The books are a series of moral stories and plays which encourage generosity, charity, and hard work. "The plays," writes Claire Tomalin,

were meant to be performed by parents and children together as 'domestic festivals' designed to drive home the moral lessons and give children courage, grace and ease in their address, deportment and conversation.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not Jane Austen's French was good enough for her to read the books we do not know. At the Abbey School from which Jane had just returned, having attended for two years, she probably learned little French, as the headmistress, Madame La Tournelle, nominally a French teacher, could not speak a word of French. (Even her French name turned out to be fictitious!)

Mrs. Austen wrote Philadelphia Walter, whom she referred to as her "third niece" (the other two nieces being Jane Cooper, daughter of her sister Jane

Cooper and Eliza, daughter of her husband's sister) inviting her to join this Christmas family reunion and commenting on her impression of Philadelphia and Eliza:

We are now happy in the company of our Sister Hancock, Madame de Feuillide and the little Boy, they came to us last Thursday sennet and will stay with us till the end of next Month. They all look and seem to be remarkably well. The little boy grows very fat, he is very fair and very pretty. I don't think your Aunt altered at all in any respect. Madame is grown quite lively, when a child we used to think her too grave. We have borrowed a Piano-forte and she plays to us every day, on Tuesday we are to have a snug little dance in our parlor, just our own children, nephew and nieces [. . .] quite a family party. I wish my third niece could be here also; but indeed, I begin to suspect your mother never intends to gratify that wish [. . .] five of my Children are now at home, Henry, Frank and Charles and my two Girls, who have now quite left school; Frank returns to Portsmouth in a few days [. . .] Edward is well and happy in Switzerland. James set out for Guienne on a visit to the Count de Feuillide near Eight weeks ago. I hope he got there by this time and am impatient for a letter; he was wind bound some weeks in the little island of Jersey or he would have got to the end of his long Journey by the beginning of this Month [. . .].<sup>4</sup>

Philadelphia Walter did not come to Steventon that Christmas and a journey she had hoped to make to visit her cousin and aunt in London was postponed because Henry Austen was passing through London and staying with

Philadelphia and Eliza on his way to Oxford. Perhaps she felt that her Hancock relatives would not have time to devote to her when they were busy entertaining a young student with interests very different from hers. It was not, therefore, until the following fall, September of 1787, that Philadelphia Walter finally reunited with her aunt and cousin, joining them for a vacation in Tunbridge Wells, from where she wrote her brother James a letter describing her impressions of her relatives, one of the few crucial bits of documentary evidence we have about the impressions other people had of Philadelphia and Eliza:

To begin with [Philadelphia writes] my Aunt, I do not know what fault she has--so strictly just and honorable in all her dealings, so kind and obliging to all her friends--and acquaintance, so religious in all her actions, in short I do not know a person that has more the appearance of perfection. The Countess has many amiable qualities, such as the highest duty, love and respect for her mother for whom there is not any sacrifice she would not make, & certainly contributes entirely to her happiness: for her husband she professes a large share of respect, esteem and the highest opinion of his merits, but confesses that Love is not the number on her side, tho' still very violent on his: her principles are strictly just...never to contract debts of any kind. Her dissipated life she was brought up to--therefore it cannot be wondered at, but her religion is not changed [. . .] . 5

Despite her criticism, however, Philadelphia was to partake with delight of the "dissipated life" she scoffed, and when she returned home she wrote her brother James Walter:

I lived a gayer life than I ever before experienced, enjoyments for

every hour, for a few first days, I was miserable, and would have given anything to have got away to any retired corner, but their very great kindness, affection and attention to me soon reconciled me to the dissipated life they led and put me in mind that every woman is at heart a rake!<sup>6</sup>

In Tunbridge Wells, Philadelphia Walter accompanied her Aunt and cousin to a crowded evening performance of two plays, Mrs. Cowley's Which is the Man? and Garrick's Bon Ton, which Eliza had asked the local theatre company to perform.<sup>7</sup> Her young thespian Austen cousins at Steventon were planning to perform these plays the following Christmas in the rectory barn which had been fitted up as a theater. For the past five years they had been performing theatricals there, including Matilda, a tragedy by Thomas Franklin, and Sheridan's The Rivals. Philadelphia and Eliza had made plans to be at Steventon again the following Christmas and Philadelphia Walter wrote her brother James that Eliza would be "Lady Bob Lardoon [sic] in Which is the Man? and Lady Tittup in Bon Ton."<sup>8</sup> Actually, Philadelphia was confusing her plays as Lady Bib Lardoon is the leading lady in The Maid of the Oaks, first performed at the Drury Lane November 5, 1774 and written by Lieutenant General J. Burgoyne, who as well as being a playwright had been the British general who lost to Benedict Arnold at the Battle of Saratoga. (He was later a Member of Parliament and on the Committee of Managers for conducting the impeachment of Warren Hastings.) Lady Bib Lardoon, "the princess of dissipation," is described in his play as "the epitome, or rather a caricature of what is call'd very fine life, and the first female gamester of the time." "For all that she is amiable," says one of the characters, "one cannot help discerning and admiring the natural excellence of her heart and understanding; though she is an example,

that neither is proof against a false education, and a rage for fashionable excess [. . .]."<sup>9</sup> Of British womankind as opposed to British men, Lady Bib declares,

we shew the world, that liberty is as well understood by our women as by our men; we have our Bill of Rights and our Constitution too, as well as they, we drop in at all hours, play at all parties, pay our own reckonings, and in every circumstance (petticoats excepted) are true, lively, jolly fellows.<sup>10</sup>

One can see how Philadelphia made the mistake of thinking that Eliza would want to play this part. In fact the parts that Eliza did choose were more often than not caricatures of her own flirtatious, fiercely independent, feisty personality, mocking marriage for love and all the romantic sentiments. She seemed to relish self-mockery, loving to play herself, or a satiric version thereof, as it was she who usually chose the parts she played. The leading lady of Which is the Man?, written by Hannah Cowley and acted at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden in 1783, is actually Lady Bell Bloomer, a seductive widow who seduces Lord Sparkles, the current man of fashion. Lady Bell is a Francophile, like Eliza, which is one of the reasons she may have wanted to play the part. "While we inwards copy the follies of the Parisians," she says to one of the ladies of the English court,

we absurdly omit the charming part of their character. Devoted to elegance, they catch their opinions and their wit and their *bon mots* from the mouths of the ladies--'tis in the drawing-room at Madame the Duchess, the Marquis learns his politics; whilst the sprightly Countess dispenses taste and philosophy to a circle of

Bishops, Generals and Abbess.<sup>11</sup>

After winning over Lord Sparkles, Lady Bell changes her mind and offers her hand to a poor soldier, Beauchamp, and in the interest of doing “a mad thing for the sake of the man my heart prefers” she persuades Beauchamp to refuse his inheritance and continue as “a soldier devoted to Love and his country,” a bizarre move for a scheming lady! The other play that Philadelphia Walter mentions as to be acted in the Austen barn that Christmas was Bon Ton, or High Life Above Stairs by David Garrick; the character Philadelphia calls Lady Tittup is actually Miss Tittup, who is running after the husband of Lady Minikin who tells her as the play opens, “It is not my dear, that I have the least regard for my Lord; I had no love for him before I married him, and you know, matrimony is no breeder of affection; but it hurts my pride, that he should neglect me, and run after other women.”<sup>12</sup> Miss Tittup allows that women “must marry, you know, because other people of fashion marry; but I should think very meanly of myself, if after I was married, I should feel the least concern about my husband.” As the play unfolds Tittup’s uncle, Sir John Trotley, warns her that if she keeps “whirling around in the vortex of pantheons, operas [and] coteries [. . .] in this town, your head will be giddy, down you will fall, lose the name of Lucretia, and be called nothing but Tittup ever after.”<sup>13</sup> Eliza must have relished the prospect of playing this part!

When, however, the Austens finally assembled at Steventon that Christmas the choice of plays was changed. Mrs. Centlivre’s comedy, The Wonder--A Woman Keeps a Secret was chosen; James Austen, recently back from France, would write an Epilogue for Violante, the character played by Eliza. The speech was tailor-made for Eliza’s personality and she must have

been as delighted in the part as she would have been had she played Miss Tittup, with lines that included, "But thank our happier stars, those days are o'er and woman holds a second place no more [. . .]." Philadelphia Walter was asked to join the company, but declined, stating that she was reluctant "to appear in publick."

The Countess de Feuillide was certainly the merry grass-widow, herself, that first year back in London, while her husband was in France reclaiming the marsh. Balls and assemblies, shopping sprees for hoop-skirted gowns, horse races and plays at local theaters are all interspersed with the fun of raising a baby, and surely kept Eliza's mind off her husband's absence. "As to me," she wrote quite outrageously for a married woman awaiting her husband's return from a country on the eve of revolution and sounding for all the world like one of the characters she loved to act in the family theatricals:

I have been for some time past the greatest rake imaginable and really wonder how such a meagre creature as I am can support so much fatigue, of which the history of one day will give you some idea, for I only stood from two to four in the Drawing Room & of course loaded with a great hoop of no inconsiderable weight, went to the Duchess of Cumberland's in the evening, & fro there to Almack's where I staid to five in the morning. All this I did not many days ago, and am yet alive to tell you of it. I believe tho' I should not be able to support London hours, & all the racketing of a London life for a year together [. . .] You are very good in inquiring after my little boy who is in perfect health, but has got no teeth yet which somewhat mortifies his two "Mamas."<sup>14</sup>

During Christmas holidays of 1787 Jane Austen had just turned twelve

(her birthday was December 16th). Whether or not she acted in the plays that Christmas is not known--probably she was too young--but undoubtedly she was a spectator. Later she would include similar family theatricals in Mansfield Park when the Bertram family prepares for a performance of Mrs. Inchbald's adaptation of Kotzebue's Lovers' Vows. Philadelphia Walter's refusal to act in the Austen family theatricals despite several letters from Eliza urging her to change her mind raises an issue about amateur theatricals which Austen will address in Mansfield Park and which critics have discussed. Lionel Trilling, for instance, in an essay on the novel in The Opposing Self, reads the decision to put on a play as a sin committed against the absent father, Sir Thomas Bertram. The argument against acting is not in the language or action of the plays, he says, but "In a traditional, almost primitive feeling about dramatic impersonation."<sup>15</sup> Joseph Litvak in "The Infection of Acting: Theatricals and Private Theatricality in Mansfield Park,"<sup>16</sup> discusses how the theatrical episode which occupies the last third of Volume II is abruptly terminated by Sir Thomas's return from Antigua. The novel as a whole, he writes, reflects the fact that people in the 18th -19th century were wary of the "theatre overstepping its institutional limits and invading private life, establishing in private theatricals the symbol of a irreversible contamination."<sup>17</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar comment that Fanny, in refusing to play a part in the Mansfield Park theatricals, is silently playing the role of the angel. She deems the theatrical improper in Sir Thomas' absence. At the same time Mary Crawford enters the rehearsals enthusiastically "because it gives her the opportunity to dramatize, under the cover of the written script, her own amorous feelings toward Edmund."<sup>18</sup> This use of art, comment Gilbert and Gubar "links Mary to Austen in a way further corroborated by biographical accounts of Austen's delight as a girl in such

home theatricals.”<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the authors see a shift in Austen’s feelings about the theater from the time of her youth to the period of composing Mansfield Park. “Since the rehearsals,” they wrote,

have brought nothing but restlessness, rivalry, pettiness, and sexual license, Lovers’ Vows illustrates Austen’s belief that self expression and artistry are dangerously attractive precisely because they liberate actors from the rules, roles, social obligations and familial bonds of every day life.<sup>20</sup>

The question of the propriety of the theatricals presents the characters in the novel with an occasion in which they must make choices concerning decorum and propriety. Lovers’ Vows, the play that the Bertram family decides to give, is the same play that was acted in the Steventon rectory the Christmas of 1787.

Eliza may have been delighted with her part in the play but Fanny Price is astonished in the Austen novel, “that it could be chosen in the present instance” (the absence of Sir Thomas Bertram and the fact that Maria is engaged).

Edmund strongly voices his objection to private theatricals even though he eventually succumbs to acting one of the parts in Lovers’ Vows. “In a *general* light,” he says,

private theatricals are open to some objections, but as *we* are circumstanced, I must think it would be highly injudicious, and more than injudicious, to attempt anything of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father’s account, absent as he is, and in some degree of constant danger; and it would be imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate.<sup>21</sup>

The characters of Amelia and Agatha in a private theater seem to Fanny “totally

improper for home representation."<sup>22</sup> Agatha has given birth to an illegitimate son, Frederick, after a brief affair with her patroness's son, who swore to marry her, but never did. The patroness's son, Baron Wildenhaim, eventually marries and has a daughter Amelia. Amelia becomes engaged to a womanizer, Count Cassel, and then to her tutor. (The real problem with Amelia, as a matter of fact, is that she proposes to her tutor.) In the end Amelia and Frederick meet as brother and sister and Agatha reconciles with the Baron. Even Julia agrees that Maria's situation requires "particular caution and delicacy."<sup>23</sup> Maria, however, who is engaged, without her father's having consented to the match, thinks that this raises her above the restraint of parental authority. Fanny's thoughts in solitude express the moral issue here--both Agatha and Amelia are parts that to her are improper for home representation, "the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty, that she could hardly suppose her cousins could be aware of what they were engaging in."<sup>24</sup> Edmund too, at this point in the novel speaks to the danger of impersonation. "To think only of the license which every rehearsal must tend to create. It is all very bad! Put yourself in Miss Crawford's place, Fanny. Consider what it would be to act Amelia with a stranger."<sup>25</sup> In the end of the novel the narrator says Maria has "destroyed her own character" and she goes into exile to another part of the country with Mrs. Norris. Surely there is some connection between her lack of restraint in acting in the family theatrical and the lack of restraint and observance of decorum which ruins her later life. Flirting with Henry Crawford during rehearsals, although engaged to Mr. Rushworth, represented a kind of social license which is carried over into Maria's marriage with Mr. Rushworth during which she runs off with Henry Crawford and disgraces herself and her family.

Lionel Trilling raises the underlying issues concerning acting in his essay on Mansfield Park in The Opposing Self:

The great fuss that is made over the amateur theatricals can seem to us a mere travesty on virtue, and the more so because it is never made clear why it is so very wrong for young people in a dull country house to put on a play. The mystery deepens, as does our sense that Mansfield Park represents an unusual state of the author's mind when we know that amateur theatricals were favorite amusement in Jane Austen's home.<sup>26</sup>

It is not, says Trilling, that Jane Austen was a prude objecting to the themes of illicit love and a character who is a bastard in Lovers' Vows. What is decisively objectionable, as Trilling sees it, is a "traditional, almost primitive feeling about dramatic impersonation."<sup>27</sup> It is the fear that the "impersonation of a bad or inferior character will have a harmful effect upon the impersonator, that, indeed, the impersonation of another self will diminish the integrity of the real self."<sup>28</sup> It is unlikely that the character of Eliza de Feuillide was diminished by her portraying indecorous characters, but perhaps her relish in these parts and the fun that took place among the family cast during rehearsals when they stepped into their roles might have carried over into real life and been responsible in part for both James and Henry's great attraction to Eliza. In Mansfield Park too, we see characters, Mary and Henry Crawford, who represent the chic of the metropolis of London, coming to the rural setting of Mansfield Park and causing havoc. Perhaps Jane Austen thought of her cosmopolitan relatives, Philadelphia and Eliza, somewhat in this vein, representing the threat of the metropolis to the ideal of English traditional country life when they brought London and Paris to

the Austen household and when the dazzling Eliza starred in theatricals in the rectory barn. Austen used the familiar social convention of staging private theatricals to elaborate moral questions such as whether acting a role weakens the true self and whether indeed there is a true self.

From a family record we know that Jane remembered 1787 as the year she began "to devote her spare time to writing."<sup>29</sup> The stories she wrote were for the amusement of friends and family and later she would transcribe them into three small volumes. It is possible that it was after this Christmas holiday, which Eliza, Philadelphia, and Hastings spent at Steventon, that Jane Austen wrote her childhood burlesque entitled Henry and Eliza. The heroine was most likely inspired by her lively cousin, freshly back from France with tales amusing and outrageous of her Gallic gaieties. Jane Austen's favorite brother Henry had visited Eliza in London that fall. He was fifteen at the time and was waiting for a vacancy as a founder's kin at St. John's College, Oxford, a fellowship which would entitle him, because of family connections, to go to Oxford tuition-free.

It is likely that her brother Henry was the inspiration for the Henry of Jane Austen's story. Although he was ten years younger than his married cousin, the countess, they may have engaged in a flirtation during rehearsals. Jane must have sensed, in any case, that her brother and her cousin Eliza found each other attractive—a notion that proved to be prophetic. The scandalous heroine of Henry and Eliza, like Eliza de Feuillide, has a personality brimming with vitality and is at once shrewd, self-confident, self-serving, flirtatious, determined and outrageously unrestrained. Then too, she spends her married life in France. Although she is not born in India, she shares with the Countess an unusual birth story, having been found in a haycock when she was "not more than three months old."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps there is a pun intended to amuse family

members in the connection between "haycock" and "Hay stings!"

Eliza was a frequent visitor at Steventon when Jane Austen was writing the earliest of her juvenilia and in the summer of 1790 Jane finished her "novel in a series of letters," called Love and Freindship, and dedicated it to her cousin "La Comtesse de Feuillide." An early work, Love and Freindship has a cosmopolitan background. Rather than being born in an English country town like the heroines of the later novels, the heroine is exotic as Eliza de Feuillide was exotic. Her father was a native of Ireland and an inhabitant of Wales, her mother the natural daughter of a Scotch peer by an Italian Opera girl. Laura, the heroine, herself was born in Spain and educated in a French convent. Laura describes herself as having experienced the "Deceitful Pleasures of the World." In the end she admits having always had "a turn for the stage," and she briefly joins an acting company which is touring England performing Macbeth. The youthful story is a parody of the heroine of the contemporary novels Jane Austen had been reading. As the work is dedicated to Eliza de Feuillide one must suppose that the exotic family background of Eliza and her mother and Eliza's passion for the stage were suggestive to Austen of unconventional women's lives which she may have been thinking about when parodying the conventional heroine of the sentimental novel. Love and Freindship is not a realistic portrayal of eighteenth-century women, but a burlesque of the heroines of sentimental novels. However, the unconventional quality of the real lives of Austen's aunt and cousin may well have contributed to the feisty, independent personality of Laura. Eliza de Feuillide, to whom the book is dedicated, defied conventions as the merry grass-widow of London, and she must have been amused, when her young cousin's novel was read aloud, to hear a character described who is as unconventional as herself.

When Eliza was not visiting the Steventon rectory, she and her mother were living in style on Orchard Street and driving around London in a coach with a coronet, flaunting Eliza's title. But there were aspects of Eliza's life of a more sober cast. Her godfather, Warren Hastings, had been impeached in 1787, charged with cruelty and extortion during his term as Governor General of Bengal. The trial was to drag on for years until at last Hastings was acquitted in 1795, but his family, including his god-daughter, stood behind him loyally. Eliza spent time with Mrs. Hastings at her house in St. James Place and made it a point to attend sessions of the trial. In a letter of April 1788, written when she was staying with Eliza and her mother on Orchard Street, Philadelphia Walter writes to her brother that they:

went to trial one day [ . . . ] and sat from ten to four, completely tired; but I had the satisfaction of hearing all the celebrated orations- Sheridan, Burke, and Fox. The first was so low we could not hear him the second so hot and hasty we could not understand, the third was highly superior to either, as we could distinguish every word, but not to our satisfaction, as he is so much against Mr. Hastings whom we all wish so well.<sup>31</sup>

We do not know whether Philadelphia accompanied Eliza and her cousin to any sessions of the trial or how she felt when Eliza visited Hastings's wife. We know that Hastings had stopped communicating with her a long time before. In 1780 she had written him from Paris, beginning her letter:

Dear Sir, after a silence of so many years on your part, nothing should have prevailed on me to have troubled you with another Letter but my earnest desire to have some information concerning Mr. Hancock's affairs, and to whom can I apply but you? Let me

therefore conjure you by your friendship for his memory and by those uncommon marks you have given of it to his family not to refuse this request the last perhaps I shall ever make you & by the very first opportunity let me know how far Mr. Hancock's affairs have been collected in and how far his Creditors are satisfied or likely to be so.<sup>32</sup>

This is the last known letter Philadelphia writes to Hastings. It seems clear that Hastings, now a happily married man, no longer wished to perpetuate his friendship with Philadelphia and felt that he had discharged his responsibility to her and to Eliza by the generous financial gifts he had provided to support them for life.

By July of 1788, Eliza's glittering life was interrupted by serious problems of her own. Her little boy Hastings, now two years old, had begun to show signs of debilitating illness. He suffered from seizures and was still not able to walk or talk properly. Family members wondered whether he might have been suffering from a condition similar to that of his cousin George Austen, Jane Austen's brother, who had been sent away from home in infancy because of physical and mental deficiencies. It was time, Eliza thought, to return to France and to her husband, as she had intended to do after visiting her relatives in England. "You mention the troubles in France," Eliza writes to Philadelphia Walter, August 1788, "but you will easily imagine from what I have said concerning my approaching journey that things are in a quieter state than they were some months ago."<sup>33</sup>

When Philadelphia, Eliza, and Hastings finally returned to France in September of 1788 they were to find that there was an epidemic of a "malignant fever" at the Marais, their home in southern France, and they were obliged to

remain in Paris for several months until the count joined them. This was Monsieur de Feuilleide's first introduction to his son, whose health temporarily improved that fall. He was an even-tempered child and during his visit made faltering attempts to speak both English and French. The reunion was short-lived, however, as the count was called back to join his regiment. By the following summer, June of 1789, Philadelphia, Eliza, and Hastings were back in England. The plan was to remain there only a month. Philadelphia had written ahead proposing a visit to the Woodmans, Warren Hastings's sister and brother-in-law, to settle her husband's estate. In her letter she makes no mention of Warren Hastings even though his trial is in progress, or of French politics, although it was the year before the fall of the Bastille. After their return to England, her son's health deteriorated and doctors advised Eliza to treat him with sea-bathing and sea air. In January 1791 she took her ailing son to Margate for sea-bathing "not withstanding the severity of the weather and frost and snow."<sup>34</sup> She describes this venture as "somewhat courageous" under the circumstances. Margate was a seaside resort in Kent, known for its fine sands, tidal bathing pools and healthy sea air, but tourists usually came in the warm weather.

The count had hoped to return to England during the winter of 1789, but after Eliza departed he officially joined the Royalist Party and journeyed to Turin where the French aristocrats who had emigrated had gathered to try to devise a plan to reinstate themselves. "My spouse," Eliza wrote her cousin,

who is a strong Aristocrat and Royalist in his Heart, has joined the latest party who have taken refuge in Piedmont and is now at Turin where the French princes of the Blood are assembled, watching at some favorite opportunity to reinstate themselves in the country

they have quitted.<sup>35</sup>

It happens sometimes that one turns a corner in life and the frivolity and carefreeness of youth are over in a jolt. Eliza took that turn at Margate that summer. Her son's health was failing, she was forced by political and personal circumstances to live apart from her husband and she was concerned about her future destiny, with France in the throes of Revolution. Furthermore, her beloved mother, who had been her ballast, was found to be suffering from breast cancer. "Never," she writes in June 1791, "will the year 1791 be effaced from my memory for from the first few months of its commencement to the present period my feelings have constantly been exposed to some fresh trial."<sup>36</sup> Later that summer she writes from London, where she is nursing her mother, that although her husband promised to visit in September she is afraid that by that time he will be engaged in a war. Philadelphia's illness worsens and Eliza begins to describe her as the "dear patient" coping with her grave illness with "courage and resignation."<sup>37</sup> Eliza tried to amuse Philadelphia but the disease was horribly painful and she was anguished watching her mother suffer. A curious detail of this period is that the doctor treating Philadelphia appears to have been a woman. "My mother's doctress," Eliza writes her cousin in 1791, is steady in her declaration of the certainty of time and perseverance accomplishing a perfect cure and fortunately my mother is persuaded of it so that her spirits continue good, indeed her courage and resignation under all the pain, inconvenience and confinement which she suffers is wonderful and a fresh proof of the happy disposition and excellent way of thinking which all who know her must long since have been convinced she was endowed with.<sup>38</sup>

Philadelphia's "doctress" could not have been a doctor of medicine as the first documented attempt by a woman to enter the medical profession in Britain was in May 1856 when Jessie Merriton White applied to fourteen London hospitals and was refused by all. Not until 1854 did the University of Edinburgh open medical degrees to women, and not until 1878 did the University of London open its facilities to women. In 1812, as a matter of fact, the first English speaking woman in the world did secure a diploma from a recognized medical school but she accomplished this feat by cross-dressing and entering medical school at fifteen years old under the assumed name of James Barry. Her real name or origins are not known. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh Medical faculty, Dr. Barry joined the army as a surgeon and later became the inspector-general of hospitals for the British army. She was a proponent of preventative medicine, was willing to treat the poor and tried to teach the general public about the nature of disease. Aside from her work in medicine, Dr. Barry took a public stand against slavery and campaigned for better conditions for insane asylums. She died in 1865 and it was discovered during a postmortem, much to the embarrassment of the War Office and the British Medical Association, that Dr. James Barry was a woman.<sup>39</sup> The only medical training a woman could have had at the time would have been private medical courses given by recognized male lecturers of acknowledged medical schools. Women, however, had long practiced medicine as village healers, although they had no formal training. Rather, their skills and knowledge were passed down from mother to daughter and from one to another. Philadelphia's "doctress" was likely one of the many irregular women practitioners who treated women, especially for "female complaints," and children in the eighteenth century.

In September of 1791 Eliza was hoping that her husband would visit so that they could both go to Bath with her ailing mother--“a journey from which I promise myself much pleasure.” While awaiting the count’s return she visited with various members of the Austen family on whom she had come to depend for support. In November she wrote her cousin of Edward Austen’s engagement and of hearsay about Jane and Cassandra:

Edward A. I believe will...in another month or two take himself a spouse. He shewed me the lady’s picture, which is that of a very pretty woman; as to Cassandra, it is very probably, as you observe, that some young Neptune may have obtained her approbation as she probably experienced much homage from these gallant gentlemen during her aquatic excursions. I hear her sister and herself are two of the prettiest girls in England.<sup>40</sup>

Although family news temporarily distracted Eliza’s attention, she knew her mother was dying and her heart was broken. “I do not mix much with the world at present,”<sup>41</sup> she wrote Philadelphia Walter. There was little that could be done in the eighteenth century to cure or effectively treat breast cancer, although occasionally it was treated with surgery and without anesthetics. In 1811 Fanny Burney had a mastectomy in France and lived a long and healthy life in relatively good health until she died at eighty-eight years old in 1840.<sup>42</sup> Philadelphia, however, was less fortunate in her treatment and by the fall of 1791 it had become apparent that her disease was terminal. On October 9, 1791, reflecting upon the plight of her aunt and cousin, Philadelphia Walter wrote a mean-spirited letter to her brother James, venting her hostility to Eliza:

Poor Eliza must be left at last friendless & alone. The gay and dissipated life she has long had so plentiful a share of has not

ensur'd her friends among the worthy, on the contrary many who otherwise have regarded her have blamed her conduct and will now resign her acquaintance. I always felt concerned and pitied her thoughtlessness. I have frequently looked forward to the approaching period, and regretted her manner of life, & the mistaken results of my poor aunt's intended, well-meaning kindness: she will soon feel the loss & her want of domestic knowledge... I have just wrote to assure her she may command my services.<sup>43</sup>

M. de Feuillide returned to England, probably just before Philadelphia's death on February 26, 1792. He seems to have been there, although briefly, to comfort his wife and to pay his last respects to her mother and dearest friend. Although living, at the time of her death, at Marylebone, an expanding urban area which had opened up to a new urban gentry of merchants, lawyers and other professionals, Philadelphia was buried in the churchyard of St. John-at Hampstead on March 6, 1792. There were many resident doctors practicing in Hampstead and Deirdre Le Faye speculates that perhaps "at the last moment Eliza took her mother there for further treatment."<sup>44</sup> The inscription of her ledger stone, probably composed by Eliza, read:

In memory of Philadelphia, wife of Tysoe Saul Hancock whose moral excellence united the practice of every Christian virtue she bore with pious resignation the severest trials of a tedious and painful malady and expired on the 26th February 1792 aged 61.

The ledger stone is so worn by now that it cannot be read but Deirdre Le Faye observes that "in 1811 a record was made of the tombstone inscriptions

surviving in the churchyard of St. John-at-Hampstead” and using this record it is possible to locate Philadelphia Hancock’s ledger stone and to know what the inscription once read.<sup>45</sup>

Philadelphia was a woman of enormous independence and drive and a model for Eliza of female capability. Perhaps she was such a model for Jane Austen as well, for there is something in the heroines of Jane Austen’s major novels that, although their lives conform to the requirements of the courtship novel and the comedy of manners tradition, is reminiscent of this strong willed woman, struggling to know herself, to control her life and to make for herself those judgments that would shape her identity and destiny. Although Austen chose not to write about female characters whose lives resembled those of her unconventional aunt and cousin, the lives and personalities of these remarkable women in her own family had to have informed her understanding of and interest in women of her time whose independent spirit led them to unconventional lives. Heroines such as Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse undergo a course of training in decorum and morality administered by the hero who rewards them in the end by offering his hand in marriage. Even though Philadelphia and Eliza were married, Jane Austen had seen in their life stories two women undaunted by male authority, who married for convenience or economic reasons or comfort but were fully capable of living their lives independently of their spouses and even enjoying widowhood. Elizabeth Bennet is not unlike Elizabeth de Feuillide in her vivacity and intelligence and strength of character and her understanding that her life is in her own hands. But in the end she is a novel heroine. Marriage is the happy ending of a comedy of manners and a novel heroine’s life is a lesson, often taught by a man, in self-knowledge and conformity to prescribed standards of

decorum. We expect, says Rachel Brownstein, that a novel published as the work of a Lady, as Austen's novels were, will "observe the overriding of idiosyncrasy by convention, which will be conceived of as a power that organizes."<sup>46</sup> Austen perfected the conventional courtship novel in which the heroine's life is "hermetically sealed off from the wider world," writes Brownstein, and adds, "The main thing about the heroine is that it is always the same old story."<sup>47</sup> The life of the heroine of the domestic novels is "over determined:" she must "stick to the social code and then some. She is governed by constraints as rigid as the ones that make a sonnet."<sup>48</sup> The lives of Philadelphia and Eliza, a historical reality intimately familiar to Austen, serve to emphasize that her novels are artifacts, even though they revised the convention that they worked within. Austen's heroines certainly operate in a narrower arena than Philadelphia and Eliza, but their choices are decisive to the moral world the novel creates. This distinguishes them from the novels Austen had read as well as from Philadelphia and Eliza, whose choices were not determined by questions of morality and who were only of interest to themselves.

After Philadelphia's death, M. de Feuillide remained in Bath with his wife for two weeks and then for several months in London and was intending to remain longer when his visit came to an abrupt end. In June 1792 a letter arrived informing him that he had to return to France or be considered an émigré, thereby forfeiting his land and other properties to the French nation. Having been presented with such an ultimatum, he left his wife and Hastings while they were still in mourning and returned to France. Eliza was never to see him again.

The Abbé Michel Devert fills us in on the story of Capot de Feuillide and

the Marais.<sup>49</sup> It seems that in 1796 he had been forced to flee from his château when one of the guards was shot. Even before the Revolution he had become unpopular with his neighbors as he had been severe in exercising his rights, depriving them of their land for hunting and fishing. The advantages they had received by his good works were not sufficient to abate their resentment. Once he abandoned the château, the property was pillaged, buildings were destroyed, the enclosure walls were torn down, the harvest plundered and the land returned to its former uncultivated state. Capot de Feuillide was placed on the list of émigrés from the Departments of Gers and Landes. His possessions were confiscated and his furniture was sold for 2,858 livres by order of the Commissaire de Délégué Lafontan. In the end the land was not sold because a certificate of proof was procured stating that Capot de Feuillide had gone to Paris and was living at his own residence at 15 rue Grenelle-Honoré. Troubles trailed him, however, as no sooner did he arrive in Paris than he was accused of having bribed an agent of the "force publique" not to give evidence against the wife of the Marquis de Marbeuf who was on trial for conspiring against the "surety" of the people of France by trying to create a famine by planting lucerne on her extensive lands instead of wheat. The "count" tried to help her avoid arrest, resulting in he himself getting arrested as an accomplice, found guilty by the Tribunal Criminal Revolutionnaire and executed, at 43 years old, on 22 February 1794.

For a long time Eliza did not know her husband's whereabouts or his fate. She lived in a state of suspense for about two years, spending most of her time visiting relatives, and especially receiving hospitality from the Austens at the Steventon rectory. Eliza was not one to deny herself pleasures while awaiting news of her husband, especially as they had spent so much time living

apart. She visited with friends for months at a time and enjoyed their company and hospitality. From here on, however, Eliza's life will turn inward toward her family, once Capot de Feuillide's death is confirmed. Her greater loss by far was the death of her mother who had been by her side throughout her life and who was the person she loved best and considered her most dear and intimate friend.

## Notes

## Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 23 May 1786, William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1913) 39.

<sup>2</sup> Nigel Nicolson, The World of Jane Austen (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin, 2000) 47.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. George Austen, "To Philadelphia Walter," Christmas 1786, Deirdre le Faye, "Three Austen Family Letters," Notes and Queries, Volume 32, no. 3, September 1985, 333-334.

<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 19 September 1787, W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library) 57.

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 19 September 1787, R. A. Austen-Leigh, ed. Austen Papers 1704-1856 (Spottiswoode: Ballantyne and Co. Ltd, 1942) 122.

<sup>7</sup> W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre LeFaye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library) 57.

<sup>8</sup> Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 10 September 1789, Austen Papers 126.

<sup>9</sup> Burgoyne, J. "The Maid of the Oaks", Act I, Scene i, 47 The Dramatic and Poetical Works of the Late Lieut. Gen. J. Burgoyne (1808) (Delmar, New York: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Act II, Scene i, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Cowley, "Which is the Man?," The Plays Of Hannah Cowley, Vol. I, ed. Frederick M. Link (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1979).

<sup>12</sup> David Garrick, "Bon Ton, or High Life Above Stairs," Act I, Scene i, 135, The Dramatic Works of David Garrick, Volume III (London: A Millard and Strand, 1798, repub. by Gregg International Publishers, Ltd. 1969).

<sup>13</sup> Garrick, Act I, Scene i, 137.

<sup>14</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "to Philadelphia Walter," 9 April 1787, Austen Papers 122.

<sup>15</sup> Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park," The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovitch, 1955).

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Litvak, "The Infection of Acting: Theatricals and Private Theatricality in Mansfield Park," ELH (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press) Vol. 53, no. 2, Summer 1986.

<sup>17</sup> Litvak 335. (See also Rousseau's Letter to M. D'Alembert On the Theatre. He denounces the theatre to prove its incompatibility with any moral community. He distinguishes the actor from orators or preachers who represent only themselves, whereas actors display sentiments other than their own, often annihilating themselves or degrading themselves to play characters whom they would be distressed to resemble.)

<sup>18</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 164.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert and Gubar 164.

<sup>20</sup> Gilbert and Gubar 166.

- 21 Jane Austen, Mansfield Park. The Novels of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman, Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 125.
- 22 Austen, Mansfield Park 137.
- 23 Austen, Mansfield Park 128.
- 24 Austen, Mansfield Park 137.
- 25 Austen, Mansfield Park 154.
- 26 Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park," The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955) 191.
- 27 Trilling 192
- 28 Trilling 192.
- 29 Caroline Austen, My Aunt Jane Austen (Jane Austen Society, 1952) 10.
- 30 Jane Austen, Henry and Eliza The Works of Jane Austen. Minor Works, Volume VI, ed. R. W. Chapman. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 33.
- 31 Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 21 April 1788 Austen Papers, 129.
- 32 Philadelphia Hancock, "To Warren Hastings," 3 March 1780, Austen Papers 86.
- 33 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 22 August 1788, Austen Papers 132.
- 34 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 January 1791, Austen Papers 138.
- 35 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 January 1791, Austen Papers 139-140.
- 36 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 23 June 1791, Austen

Papers, 140-141.

37 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 11 August 1791, Austen Papers 191.

38 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 11 August 1791, Austen Papers 141.

39 Catriona Blake, The Charge of the Parasols: Women's Entry to the Medical Profession (London: The Women's Press, Ltd. 1990) 89-90.

40 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 14 November 1798, Austen Papers 144.

41 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 14 November 1791, Austen Papers 149.

42 Tomalin, 308, note 7 (information on Burney's breast surgery).

43 Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 9 October 1791, Austen Papers 143-144.

44 Deirdre Le Faye, "Jane Austen and Her Hancock Relatives," The Review of English Studies Volume XXX, no. 117, February, 1973, 14.

45 LeFaye 12.

46 Rachel M. Brownstein, Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 85.

47 Brownstein, 82.

48 Brownstein, 82.

49 Abbé Michel Devert, "Le Marrais de Gabarett et de Barbotan," Bulletin de la Société de Borda No. 340, Quatrieme Trimestre, Landes, 1970.

## Chapter Five

### The Rhythm of Life

The summer after M. de Feuillide returned to France from England, where he had been able to come for a short time to comfort his wife, Louis XVI was deposed and the royal family imprisoned. By the fall, the September massacres began in Paris and on September 21, 1792 a Republic was declared. Philadelphia was dead and the modern world was born.

The Austen family nurtured young Hastings. Eliza reported to Philadelphia Walter that, "he is the plaything of the whole family."<sup>1</sup> Born that summer was a strange and enduring friendship between two women, cousins, one thirty-one, the other seventeen, related by blood and attracted to each other's temperaments. One woman was characterized by her cosmopolitan charm and her vitality, exuberance, and sense of adventure. The other was never to marry nor to leave her home in England, yet she created characters who have been part of most of our lives, in the same way that Samuel Richardson's characters were part of hers. "All that was ever said or done in the cedar parlor of Sir Charles Grandison," was familiar to her, wrote James Edward Austen-Leigh, "and the wedding days of Lady L. and Lady G. were as well remembered as if they had been living friends."<sup>2</sup> For many readers her own Elizabeth Bennet was equally familiar. She would not fade into obscurity, nor would the woman who created her.

On October 26, 1792, Eliza wrote to her cousin Philadelphia,

Cassandra and Jane are very much grown (the latter is now taller than myself) and greatly improved as well in Manners as in Person, both of which are now much more formed than when you

saw them. They are I think equally sensible, and both so to a degree seldom met with, but still my Heart gives the preference to Jane, whose kind partiality to me, indeed requires a return of the same nature.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after Eliza's arrival in Steventon, the Austens provided hospitality to Jane Cooper, another orphaned niece, whose father had died that summer. Jane Cooper was engaged at the time to Captain Thomas Williams of the Royal Navy and Commander of HMS Lizard. She remained at Steventon until December, when she and Captain Williams were married. The service was performed by Tom Fowle, Mr. Austens's former pupil, who shortly thereafter became engaged to Cassandra, and Edward Cooper, her brother. Jane and Cassandra were witnesses. If she was still at Steventon that winter, Eliza would have been there for the wedding.

James Austen had been married at Laverstoke that Spring, March 27, 1792, and was living as a curate near by at the Deane Parsonage. Henry was home that summer. He was twenty-one years old and had been graduated from Oxford, but was not yet old enough for ordination, the course his parents had in mind for him. It was in the year 1792, the year of Henry's graduation, that Jane Austen dedicated Lesley Castle to him. "Sir," she wrote,

I am now availing myself of the Liberty you have frequently humoured me with of dedicating one of my Novels to you. That it is unfinished I grieve; yet feel that from me it will always remain so; that as far as it is carried it should be so trifling and so unworthy of you is another concern. Your obliged humble

Servant

The Author<sup>4</sup>

David Nokes observes that it became a habit with Jane Austen "to insist on the superior literary talents of her brothers and her sisters while diminishing her own. "She told Cassandra," Nokes continues,

‘You are indeed the first comic writer of the present age! [. . . ]’

This fantasy that Henry, James, and Cassandra were the real writers and she herself was merely an inferior imitator became an instinctive defense against any consciousness of pre-eminence.<sup>5</sup>

Nokes's point may be well taken, but it is also entirely possible that Jane was joking!

Eliza, though grieving for her mother and awaiting news of her husband, was not above resuming her mild flirtation. "Henry is now rather more than six feet high, I believe," she wrote her cousin Phylly, who may well have been appalled at her cousin's indecorous levity at a time like this. "He is much improved, and is certainly endowed with uncommon abilities, which seem to have been bestowed, tho' in a different way, upon each member of his family."<sup>6</sup> These words of cousinly praise are followed by comments suggestive of a previous relationship with Henry that may have been other than cousinly. "As to the Coolness which you know had taken place between H and myself," Eliza continues, "it has now ceased, in consequence of due acknowledgments on his part, and we are at present on very proper relationlike terms; you know that his Family design him for the Church."<sup>7</sup> Henry was in the Oxford Militia at the time while retaining his fellowship at St. John's College. In Mansfield Park, Mary Crawford expresses sentiments similar to those of Eliza, who disapproved of Henry's choosing the clergy as a career. "I believe," wrote Eliza to her cousin, "he has given up all thoughts of the church, and he is right for he certainly is not

so fit for a parson as a soldier [. . .].”<sup>8</sup> Eliza might have been thinking of what was best for Henry, but most probably she was interested too in his making a good income. In the novel Mary objects to Edmund becoming a minister. “A clergymen,” she says, “has nothing to do but to be slovenly and selfish—read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine.”<sup>9</sup> Earlier she had asked Edmund, “For what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines [a lawyer or soldier or sailor] distinctions may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing.”<sup>10</sup> Edmund protests that clergymen play an important role as a model of conduct, but Mary retorts “You really are fit for something better. Come, do change your mind. It is not too late. Go into the law.”<sup>11</sup> Edmund would only be forgiven his choice of the ministry if he were wealthy. One of the places in the novel in which a character may well be expressing Austen's own way of thinking is when Edmund speaks of the religion of the ministers of country parishes:

We do not look in great cities, [he says to Mary] for our best morality. It is not there, that respectable people of any denomination can do most good; and it certainly is not there, that the influence of the clergy can be most felt. A fine preacher is followed and admired; but it is not in fine preaching only that a good clergyman will be useful in his parish and his neighborhood, where the parish and neighborhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct, which in London can rarely be the case. The clergy are lost there in the crowds of their parishioners. They are known to the largest part only as preachers. And with regard to their influencing public

manners, Miss Crawford must not misunderstand me, or suppose I mean to call them the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and courtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life.

The *manners* I speak of, might rather be called *conduct*, perhaps, the result of good principles; the effect, in short, of those doctrines, which it is their duty to teach and recommend; and, it will, I believe, be every where found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation.<sup>12</sup>

In the end Edmund becomes a clergyman and marries Fanny, who approves of his profession. Yet Jane Austen, always one to consider the many aspects of an issue, does not leave the couple living in poverty but sees to it that Edmund acquires the Mansfield living by the death of Doctor Grant, "just after they had been married long enough to begin to want an increase of income, and feel their distance from the paternal abode an inconvenience."<sup>13</sup> Henry Austen would not become a clergyman until after Eliza's death.

If she counseled Henry at all that summer Eliza would no doubt have tried to dissuade him from becoming a minister, as she would later advise him not to follow his parents' plans because she saw him more suited to the military than to the ministry. The conflict between becoming a soldier or choosing a career in the Church is a choice that Jane Austen will give to several characters in her mature novels. Edward Ferrars in Sense and Sensibility prefers the Church although his family wants him to join the army. Wickham, in Pride and Prejudice, who was slated for the Church, says, "A military life is not what I was intended for, but circumstances have now made it eligible."<sup>14</sup> Henry Austen himself later wrote to the Bishop of Winchester in 1816 justifying his earlier decision not to be ordained. "Soon after taking my degree of A.B. I, not being

old enough for ordination, and the political circumstances of the times 1793 calling on everyone not otherwise employed to offer his services in the general defense of the Country, I accepted a Commission in the Oxfordshire Militia."<sup>15</sup> Wickham accused Darcy of disregarding his father's death-bed wish that he, Wickham, become a minister when a living became available. He said that Darcy gave the living to someone else maintaining that he [Wickham] had forfeited his claim because of his extravagance and imprudence. This, Wickham, alleges, is why he now finds himself in the military even though he was "brought up for the church." Nowhere in Wickham's thoughts is there a trace of the passionate patriotism, (a patriotism shared by the Austen family,) that was sweeping the country during the British war against France which had begun in 1793. Implicit in Wickham's lack of a patriotic motive for his military career is Austen's criticism of his character which can be compared to Henry Austen's choice to abandon a clerical career at this time in order to become a soldier. Henry had received his BA in June 1792 when he was twenty-one and would have been ordained deacon and then clergymen after three more years of residence at Oxford to earn his MA. These "cozy expectatiions," Clive Caplan tells us, in an article in Persuasions on Henry's military career,

were upset by the outbreak of war in February 1793. The King had already called out the militia in the previous December, and among those regiments mobilized was the Oxfordshire. Patriotic enthusiasm was intense [. . .] Now Thomas Paine was burned in effigy, and the town corporation voted that 'kingly Power, wisely limited, was the surest safeguard of the nation.'<sup>16</sup>

On February 21 the Oxfordshire militia was "almost in Jane Austen's back yard" and this "recent arrival of a militia in the neighborhood" mentioned in

Pride and Prejudice "might have been," writes Caplan "the stimulus for Jane to first think of a novel of the militia."<sup>17</sup> It might also have contributed to Henry Austen's decision "to abandon his clerical career and become a soldier."<sup>18</sup>

Eliza was still at Steventon in October of 1792 and thinking not only of Henry but of her husband, separated from her by "the tragical Events of which France has of late been the theatre."<sup>19</sup> Her "private letters" as she terms them, from her husband, no doubt, and most likely too from her friends in France, "confirm the Intelligence afforded by the public Prints and assure me that nothing we read is exaggerated. M. de F. is at present in Paris. He had determined on coming to England, but finds it impossible to get away."<sup>20</sup> Capot de Feuillide never did return to England and whether or not Eliza returned to France in March 1793, directly before the onset of the Reign of Terror, is uncertain. There are no letters from Eliza to document such a visit. What we are left with are reports of the accepted ideas passed down by James Austen's granddaughter, Fanny-Caroline Lefroy, in her unpublished Family History (written c. 1880-1885) and a traditional report accepted in the Nerac region of France where M. de Feuillide was engaged in his reclamation project. In the Family History, Eliza is described as being with the count in France until he was arrested, after which she managed to flee to safety. Fanny Le Froy, in her Family History, writes of Eliza:

Her difficulties en route were increased by the companionship of a lady who could only speak English, but her own address in French was so perfect that she managed to escape arrest and to reach Calais--here they were detained by the birth of her little boy, but the danger of her position was so great that one or two days only

could be allowed for her recovery, and on the third they crossed to Dover.<sup>21</sup>

The local Nérac version recounts the same story. This version of the story is highly suspicious. In the first place, there is no other reference to Eliza having another child after Hastings. Also, she never mentions her husband's arrest in any extant letter and it is unclear whether she even knew of it at the time. Some time after hearing the news of her husband's death on February 22, 1794, Eliza seems to have gone to see friends in Durham where she, and most probably Hastings as well, stayed for several months.

The next letter we have, September 19, 1794, is written to Warren Hastings from Durham where Eliza has been since July, enjoying "the Northern air," at the home of the Reverend Charles Egerton, the incumbent of Washington County. The letter is in response to one her godfather had sent her enclosing a foreign letter and she had hoped, in vain, that the letter contained some important information from France. There is a two-year hiatus in her correspondence before this letter to Hastings, so it is not certain where Eliza was at the time, except that she had been spending several months with the Egertons. When Eliza received the news about her husband is unknown; what seems quite certain is that her husband was arrested in Paris in February of 1794 and guillotined that same month.

What happened to cause this shocking event is unclear. As in many stories there are parts of it that are fact and parts we have to guess--or try to. What we know is that a fifty-six-year-old woman, Henriette-Françoise Michelle, the Marquise de Marbeuf, widow of Jacques Auger, Marquis de Marbeuf, général du roi, was accused of conspiring against the security of the people of France in 1793. The chief offenses of which she was accused were that she

destroyed the produce of the land in the Commune de Champs by planting lucerne, saintoin, and clover, plants used for fodder, rather than wheat, potatoes or other food crops, and that she did this deliberately to cause a famine. She was also accused of instigating trouble in her commune by awaiting the arrival of Prussians and Austrians for whom she had stored considerable provisions in her home in Champs, Seine-et-Marne. The Marquise was accused of having two accomplices, Capot de Feuillide and Louis-Dominique-Auguste Predicant, a notary in Paris. The Marquise denied the charges and maintained that even had she done what she was accused of, it was her land and she had the right to plant what she chose. Capot de Feuillide, presumably a friend of hers, and surely a fellow Royalist, tried to bribe Morel, one of the secretaries of the Committee of Public Safety, "to do away with evidence likely to incriminate the Marquise [before the Tribunal] and even to give evidence in her favour."<sup>22</sup>

Capot de Feuillide tried to seize the material against the widow and then offered 24,000 livres to Morel in return for his silence and for his burning all relevant material. (He actually gave him 18,000 livres of the money promised.)<sup>23</sup> Morel, however, after receiving the bribe money, brought to him by Predicant, then proceeded to report M. de Feuillide and Predicant to the Committee of Public Safety, which arrested them and sent them to prison. The Marquise and both her accomplices were condemned to death by the Tribunal. The Marquise was guillotined on February 22, 1794; M. de Feuillide and Predicant were guillotined the same day.

We do not know why the count risked his life to protect the Marquise, or anything about the nature of their relationship. Whether he was protecting her for political reasons or whether she was his mistress, he gave up his life in her

behalf. Eliza had joked with her cousin Philadelphia about the likelihood of her husband's flirting with her should he ever meet her--perhaps she had cause to question his constancy. "Cousin, my dear," she wrote in 1782, " you are young & pretty he is young and reckoned handsome, in the Military & a Frenchman besides--how many reasons to doubt his constancy: be that as it will. I assure you I shall take the matter very patiently. I am not of a jealous disposition, & you and I are too good friends ever to quarrel about our conquests."<sup>24</sup>

The Capot de Feuillide papers in the National Archives of Paris give us some facts that do not explain the count's motivation or behavior, but do tell us more of his story. His father, Le Sieur de Feuillide, was not of nobility, although his son was known as Jean-Gabriel Capot, Comte de Feuillide. The papers show that the "count" was Captain of Dragoons in the Queen's regiment and had an estate at Gaboret in the district of Nogeret in the department of Gers. One wonders whether this man who posed as a count would not have been tempted into a relationship with a real marquise. The papers reveal that he had accrued substantial debts in both his own name and that of his wife, Dame Elizabeth Hancock. The two witnesses who gave evidence at his trial were his housekeeper, "la citoyenne Joubert," who turned against her employer as many servants did during the Revolution, and "la citoyenne Grandville, l'ancienne maitresse de Feuillide."<sup>25</sup> David Nokes, Claire Tomalin, and others interpret this appellation as indicating that la citoyenne Grandville was de Feuillide's former mistress. "Maitresse" can also mean "housekeeper," however, as the term is ambivalent. Servants did turn against their employers at this time and one of the stories passed down about M. de Feuillide's testimony is that he said he was actually the valet of the Count de Feuillide and that he had murdered the Count. The hoax backfired, if true, because, as it is reported by Park Honan and

others, as he was considered to be a murderer, he was guillotined. "Eliza's husband, writes Honan, "appears to have sworn that he was only a poor, scheming, patriotic valet who had murdered the real Count de Feuillide. As a consequence of this foolish lie "on the 4th Ventuse, or 22 February 1794, a falling blade severed his head."<sup>26</sup>

Eliza was not to learn about her husband's death for several months, but as there is a gap in her letters to Phylly from October 1792 to September 1796 we are uncertain when she learned the news. David Nokes and Claire Tomalin think that she seems to have known by September 1794 when Warren Hastings wrote what Nokes thinks of as a condolence letter, inquiring of her health when she was in Durham, where Claire Tomalin says she retreated when news of her husband's death reached England. Actually, as we have no letters from Eliza during 1794, it is unclear why she was in Durham and the fact that Hastings inquired of her health could have meant that she had written to him of her health problems. In any event, although she must have suspected it for some time, the news of her husband's death must have been ultimately confirmed by a letter from France. To someone other than Eliza, the Capot de Feuillide's death, after twelve years of marriage, might have been devastating. Their son was now eight years old and not well, and they had rarely had the chance to live together as a family. But as she had confessed to her cousin in 1787, "Love [. . .] [was] not the number on her side, tho' still very violent on his."<sup>27</sup> This and the years of separation might not have induced constancy in the handsome French captain, living without his wife and child, in the south of France, but her lack of passion would have made it easier for Eliza to move on--and move on she did. The autumn of 1795 Henry Austen, now a lieutenant, offered Eliza his first proposal of marriage, which she refused. "Perhaps," writes Tomalin, " she thought they

knew each other too well; perhaps she cherished her independence."<sup>28</sup> And perhaps it was Henry's disappointment which provoked him to consider enlisting in the regular army, which would have entailed going abroad for years at a time. Henry, however, was given to vacillating, and at the same time as he was considering the regular army he was also considering becoming a clergyman at Chawton, as there was a possibility that the Chawton living would be offered to him. In February 1796 he repaid a debt to his father and the following day borrowed 156 pounds from Eliza. Eliza had reason to worry about Henry's becoming a reliable husband.

By 1796, Eliza seems to have recovered from the count's death and become something of the merry widow in London. "I have, however, been found out by many," she writes, "and have a fairly considerable Levee every morning & a reasonable quantity of Beaux the present hard times considered."<sup>29</sup> By this time Henry had turned his attention elsewhere and had become engaged to marry a Mary Pearson, the daughter of Sir Richard Pearson of the Greenwich Hospital, of whose appearance, Jane Austen wrote her sister Cassandra, "If Miss Pearson should return with me, pray be careful not to expect much Beauty."<sup>30</sup> While Henry was engaged, Eliza actually considered marrying his brother James, whose wife Anne had died suddenly, leaving behind their two-year-old daughter Anna. This relationship was brief, however, as Eliza was ambivalent, and James impatient, and before long he became engaged to Mary Lloyd. "I am glad," Eliza writes Phyllis, December 13, 1796, who is curious about whether or not Eliza and James will marry, "to find you have made up your mind to visit the Rectory, but at the same time...I do not believe the parties will come together, not however that they have quarreled, but one of them cannot bring her mind to give up dear liberty, and yet dearer

flirtation—after a few months in the country she sometimes thinks it possible to undertake *sobre* matrimony, but a few weeks stay in London convinces her how little the state suits her taste—Lord S's card has this moment been brought me which I think very ominous considering I was talking of matrimony, but it does not signify, I shall certainly escape both Peer and Parsonage....”<sup>31</sup> Eliza was delighted when James announced his engagement, as was Jane Austen, who, Eliza wrote, “seems much pleased with the match, and it is natural she should, having long known, and liked the Lady.”<sup>32</sup> Marriage was an impediment to Eliza's enjoyment of freedom. “My impulse,” she writes her cousin, “in favor of liberty & disfavor of a lord and master is ... irresistible.”<sup>33</sup>

While James Austen was courting Eliza, Henry thought of becoming an officer in the regular army, rather than serving in the Oxford militia, by getting a lieutenancy and adjutancy in the 86th regiment. “He fancies he will be ordered to the Cape of Good Hope,” Jane Austen wrote. “I heartily hope that he will, as usual, be disappointed in this scheme....”<sup>34</sup> Whether it was because Austen felt that the Church was a higher calling than the army, or that Henry was more suited to this profession, or perhaps that she was resistant to Henry's being abroad for the years that he served in the regular army, Austen did not support Henry's desire to become a “regular.” The idea was short lived, however, and Henry did become disappointed in the scheme. The 86th regiment, then stationed at Portsmouth, embarked for the Cape without him and then went on to India. Had Henry gone to India, he might well have married an English lady who had traveled to India to find a husband. Instead he was to marry the daughter of such a woman!

Britain had gone to war with France in February of 1793 and the king had called the militia. As Jane Austen observed in her History of England, “the

inhabitants of Oxford...were always loyal to their King, and faithful to his interests."<sup>35</sup> Henry accordingly, abandoned thoughts of his clerical career and was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Oxfordshire Regiment of the Militia in April of 1793. The regiments were to guard the British coast against invasion. The Oxfords were sent to Brighton that summer, the camp where Jane Austen would make Lieutenant Wickham begin his notorious relationship with Lydia Bennet. By November they were in Hertfordshire, "Unwittingly gaining immortality by becoming Jane Austen's model for the regiment in Pride and Prejudice, in which she never mentions the occasion for why they were there."<sup>36</sup> Eventually Henry was promoted to the responsible post of Acting Paymaster, a post he held until the end of his military service in 1801.

Mary Pearson broke her engagement to Henry; there are no extant letters explaining why. Henry visited London shortly after this with the Colonel and his regiment and when there he visited Eliza who characteristically reported on the visit to her cousin Philadelphia. "Our cousin Henry Austen has been in Town: he looks thin & ill. I hear his late intended is a most intolerable flirt, and reckoned to give herself Airs--The person who mentioned this to me says she is a pretty wicked looking Girl with bright Black eyes which pierce through and through. No wonder this poor young man's heart could not withstand them."<sup>37</sup> Eliza had Henry on her mind that year and in November 7, 1796, wrote her cousin, "Captain Austen has just spent a few days in town. I suppose you know that our cousin Henry is now Captain, Paymaster and Adjutant. He is a very lucky man and bids fair to possess a considerable share of riches and honours. I believe he has given up thoughts of the Church, and he is right for he certainly is not so fit for a parson as a soldier...."<sup>38</sup> In this same letter Eliza writes compassionately to Philadelphia about the death of Cassandra's fiancé in St.

Domingo. "This is a very severe stroke to the whole family," she writes, "and particularly to poor Cassandra for whom I feel more than I can express. Indeed I am most sincerely grieved at this event and the pain which it must occasion our worthy relations."<sup>39</sup>

On July 3, 1797 Eliza wrote that she intended to go to Brighton for the summer, adding that "Henry is in Norwich." By August we hear that she decided to change her plans and go to Lowestoffe near Norwich, ostensibly because the doctors suggested this for her son Hastings. That November Eliza, like Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Elliot, and Harriet Smith in Austen's novels, had the good fortune of a second proposal from the man she at first turned down—and this time she accepted, but not without first writing of her hesitancy to her cousin Phyllis. "For my own part," she writes, "I think the young man ill-used but the lady [referring to herself] is so well pleased with her present situation that she cannot find it in her heart to change it, and says in her giddy way that independence and the homage of half a dozen are preferable to subjection and the attachment of a single individual [. . .]. I am more and more convinced that she is not at all calculated for sober matrimony."<sup>40</sup>

In Cheltenham, where she had vacationed that summer with her cousin Miss Payne, near the home of Warren Hastings and his wife, she had attended plays three times a week, danced every dance at the balls and "gathered hearts by the dozens."<sup>41</sup> "Seriously," she added in her most outrageous fashion, "I have made one conquest who has between thirty and forty thousand per annum, but unfortunately he also has a wife, so that I cannot even indulge myself in a little flirtation."<sup>42</sup> She jests with her cousin Philadelphia about the boredom she anticipates in marriage. "When I am quietly settled in that said domestic retreat which you have talked of, you must charitably come and

prevent my spouse and self from going to sleep or quarreling for want of other amusement ...."<sup>43</sup> During that summer Eliza finally removed her funds from her trustees, Mr. Austen and Mr. Woodman, and determined to manage her own money, putting it in trust for Hastings, in an eighteenth-century version of a prenuptial agreement. The trust was a sum of 10,000 pounds "vested in Mr. Woodman and Mr. Austen by Mr. Hastings."<sup>44</sup> In December 1797 Eliza wrote to her godfather Warren Hastings to announce her engagement:

As I flatter myself you still take an interest in my welfare, I think it incumbent on me to acquaint you with a circumstance by which it must be materially influenced. I have consented to an Union with my Cousin Captn Austen who has the honor of being known to you. He has been for some time in Possession of a comfortable Income, and the excellence of his Heart, Temper, and Understanding, together with steady attachment to me, his Affection for my little Boy, and disinterested concurrence in the disposal of my Property in favor of this latter, have at length induced me to an acquiescence which I have withheld for more than two years. Need I say, my dear Sir, that I most earnestly wish for your approbation on this occasion, & that it is with the sincerest attachment I shall ever remain Your much obliged and affectionate God-daughter, Elizabeth de Feuillide.<sup>45</sup>

Eliza's reasons for consenting to marry Henry were complex. That same December Hastings had been so ill with seizures and fever that she thought she might lose him and she could not leave him with his nurse Madame Bigeon. Taxes in London had so escalated that she felt she was going to be driven out of the city, unable to pay house rent and forced to give up her carriage. Another

circumstance was Eliza's own health; in October of 1796 she was ill. Having developed a tumor, she wrote to her cousin from Brighton that she had consulted a Sir Walter Farquhar, a fashionable doctor of the day, who became Physician Ordinary to the Prince of Wales. The doctor, she wrote, applied leeches and poultices and, Eliza wrote, "made little doubt of curing me."<sup>46</sup> "The idea of the leeches was very terrible to me," she continued, "but I mustered up what courage I could and the odious beasts were stuck on [. . .] followed by bread and milk poultices."<sup>47</sup> She is thankful that her general health is not affected. "Indeed from my looks no one would suppose that anything ailed me."<sup>48</sup> Unable to leave London in December because of her health, she moved to Number 33 Manchester Street in Manchester Square where the doctor confined her to the house. "All my poultices proved ineffectual in breaking the tumor," she writes and she has to have the tumor opened. So much was she suffering that she writes in her own characteristic mode that she had "some difficulty giving up a brilliant music party."<sup>49</sup> During this stressful period she vacillated about marrying Henry but ultimately it seemed prudent to trade her freedom for security. Did she fear she had breast cancer like her mother before her? We do not know. Did she transfer her funds to Hastings to be sure that he would be provided for should she die? Was she marrying Henry to have someone to care for her ailing son? Perhaps this is what impelled Eliza to give up her coveted freedom. Of course, Henry was tall and handsome and amusing at twenty-five, and remarkably intelligent; and she had long been attracted to him. In Family History, Fanny Caroline Le Froy remarked,

My Uncle Henry Thomas Austen was the handsomest of his family, and, in the opinion of his own father, also the most talented. There were others who formed a different estimate, and considered his

abilities greater in shew than in reality, but for the most part he was greatly admired. [He was] brilliant in conversation, and like his father blessed with a hopefulness of temper, which in adapting itself to all circumstances, even the most adverse, seemed to create a perpetual sunshine of the mind.<sup>50</sup>

Before she married him, Eliza felt that besides his being appealing (and she did believe that for "two Beings" suited to each other "there is an attractive force which must ultimately bring them together,")<sup>51</sup> Henry had good prospects, provided she could steer him away from the church.

Eliza married Henry on December 31, 1797, at the Marylebone Parish Church in London. Mr. Austen sent forty pounds to the regiment for the celebration. Henry was twenty-six and Eliza thirty-six years old. The extant letters show no reference to anyone objecting to the discrepancy between their ages, but the fact that no member of the Austen family attended the wedding might indicate that they were less than enthusiastic about the match. When James Austen had married Mary Lloyd after Eliza turned him down Mrs. Austen was ecstatic and wrote to Mary, "Had the choice been mine, you, my dear Mary, are the person I should have chosen for James' wife, Anna's mother, and my Daughter."<sup>52</sup> She certainly felt no regret that her son did not marry Eliza and probably felt equally concerned about her son Henry marrying her shortly thereafter. Claire Tomalin, on the other hand, thinks that though taken by surprise, "Mr. Austen was delighted enough with the marriage between his favorite son and his niece to send the considerable sum of 40 pounds to the regiment for celebration [ . . . ] the money was enough for some considerable feasting [ . . . ]."<sup>53</sup> The couple settled into married life in Ipswich where Henry was Captain of the Oxfordshire militia. In her first letter to Philadelphia Walter

after her marriage Eliza sends kind regards from "my cousin", adding, "I have an aversion to the word husband and never make use of it." 54

An amusing story is told of George Austen at the time of Henry's marriage to Eliza. He had purchased a carriage for the first time he felt he could afford one and on its panels had had affixed the family crest, a stag on a crown, of which his neighbor is said to have remarked, "Mr. Austen has put a coronet on his carriage because of his son's being married to a French Countess." (The crest was probably that of Mrs. Austen's family as she was related to several members of the aristocracy including Sir Thomas Leigh, former Lord Mayor of London, who became Baron Leigh of Stoneleigh in 1643. Jane Austen's great-grandfather, Theophilis Leigh, had "married Mary Brydges, sister of the first Duke of Chandos. The Duke was married to a woman named Cassandra and Mary Bridges and Theophilis Leigh named their daughter after her and the name was passed on through the Austen family for generations.)"55 One of the appealing aspects of this first militia post for Eliza was, in her own words, "the fashionable people acquainted with my having been a *Comptesse*, politely [giving me the] precedence which courtesy grants to title in England."56

Life amongst the officers was definitely to Eliza's taste as it was to that of Lydia Bennet when she flirted with the regiment in Pride and Prejudice. Jane had written First Impressions by this time. Parties, weekly balls, drives with Henry's coachman, took up most of Eliza's time as she accommodated herself to married life.

I shall probably meet with many unpleasant & untoward circumstances, [she wrote Philadelphia] but all the comfort which can result from the [. . .] affection & society of a being who is possessed of an excellent heart & understanding & temper I have

at least ensured--to say nothing of the pleasure of having my own way in everything, for Henry well knows that I have not been much accustomed to control & should probably behave rather awkward under it, therefore like a wise man he has no will but mine, which to be sure some people would call spoiling me, but I know it is the best way of managing me [. . .] .<sup>57</sup>

Eliza's life at Ipswich was a mixture of flirtation and anxiety. She was concerned that the French might attack the coast with cannons and soldiers, understandably, as this threat is why the King had called out the militia. At the same time she was distracted from her anxiety by the "brother officers." "There are some with whom I think you would not dislike a flirtation," she writes her cousin, adding:

I have of course entirely left off trade but I can however discover that Captn. Tilson is remarkably handsome and the Messrs. Perrot & Edwards may be chatted with very satisfactorily, but as to my Colonel Charles Spencer, If I was married to my third husband instead of my second I should still be in love with him. He is a most charming creature, so mild, so well bred, so good, but alas! as well as myself he is married and what is worse he is absent and will not return to us in less than a month [. . .] .<sup>58</sup>

Eliza's referring to her flirtations as "trade" is suggestive of an exchange of commodities for money, as in prostitution. There is something verging on the unseemly about her penchant for flirtation that is revealed by her saying that she has "left off trade." Ironically, Eliza wrote her cousin that it was this same very good friend of Henry's, Lord Charles Spencer, who introduced Henry to the "Lord Lieutenant" in Dublin, an important contact for Henry who later wrote how

pleased he was that the Lord Lieutenant paid particular attention to him. Eliza was undoubtedly being flippant, but her flirtatious interest in Lord Spencer along with Spencer's helping Henry professionally could suggest a triangle such as the Philadelphia, Hancock, Hastings triangle in her mother's history. There is certainly not enough evidence to support such a speculation, but it comes to mind.

It was not only Lord Spencer who was absent but Henry too. By October 29, 1799 Eliza had been living in Dorking, near Box Hill in Surrey, for six months with Hastings, whose epilepsy had begun to affect his mind and threaten his life, while Henry had spent the last seven months in Dublin with the army. The regiment guarded the public buildings and prisoners and tried to keep peace between the Loyalists and the disaffected. "The safety of Ireland," wrote the Secretary of War, "continues unfortunately to require the utmost exertion and vigilance to maintain internal tranquilly and guard against foreign invasion."<sup>59</sup> The situation in Dublin kept Henry far from home and Eliza writes to her cousin describing her life in Dorking without Henry and her inability to follow her resolve, based on her ill-health, to have a quiet reclusive life in his absence; "I have not found it possible to persevere in my plan of shunning all society. I greatly prefer my books, my harp and pianoforte."<sup>60</sup> She alludes also to her health problems, "being far from well these last two years," as well as those of Hastings.

By June 1801, Henry had resigned his commission in the Oxfordshire militia and Henry, Eliza, and Hastings moved back to London to a house at Upper Berkeley Street, Portman Square. In London, Henry began a dual career as army agent and banker. "As regimental paymaster [. . .] Henry had acquired an intimate knowledge of army finance. He had also made contact

with many influential men in the army, in banking, and among the nobility.”<sup>61</sup>

Besides, the government was making efforts to cut costs and encouraged officers to return to private affairs by offering them pay for six months after retirement.

During Henry and Eliza’s first winter at Upper Berkeley Street the George Austens moved from Steventon to Bath. Many biographers have said that this was a traumatic move for Jane Austen ,who is said in the Life and Letters and by many critics thereafter to have fainted when she heard the news. David Nokes, however, disputes this detail about the “fainting fit” which is based on a letter from Caroline Austen who only said that, “my aunt was greatly distressed” and never mentioned her fainting. In fact, writes Nokes, Jane had quite different feelings about the move than the fainting incident suggests, and he quotes from a letter of January 5, 1801 from Jane to Cassandra, “It must not be generally known,” Jane writes,

that I am not sacrificing a great deal in quitting the country, or I can expect it to inspire no tenderness in those we leave behind [ . . . ] we have lived a long time in this neighborhood, the Basingstoke balls are certainly on the decline, there is something interesting in the bustle of going away, and the prospect of spending future summers by the sea or in Wales is very delightful!<sup>62</sup>

Cassandra spent some time with Henry and Eliza in London, and James Austen moved into the rectory after his parents departed, to act as his father’s curate. “Their eldest son,” Eliza wrote of the Austens, “is in possession of Steventon where he has made such alterations & embellishments that it is almost a pretty place.”<sup>63</sup> This comment is telling. Steventon had been a place of solace and pleasure for Eliza, yet she acknowledges no sadness when her

aunt and uncle move out and no nostalgia when the house is redecorated and the familiar furnishings are replaced. The context of the comment about the redecoration is also disconcerting as it is tucked into a letter of October 1801 thanking Philadelphia for her condolences upon the death of Hastings, who had died that autumn at fifteen years old. It was not that Eliza did not mourn her son. She had loved him in her own way and had been saddened by the years of suffering he had endured. "So awful a dissolution of a near & tender tie," she wrote:

must ever be a severe shock, and my mind was already weakened by witnessing the sad variety and long series of pain which the dear sufferer underwent—but deeply impressed as I am with the heart-rending scenes I have beheld I am most thankful for their termination and the exchange which I humbly hope my dear child has made of a most painful existence for a blissful immortality.<sup>64</sup>

The letter seems couched in conventions, except for Eliza admitting that she was relieved when this very sickly child finally died. Hastings had become increasingly debilitated and Eliza had sent him for months at a time to sea bath treatments accompanied by Madam Bigeon, her French housekeeper, or "confidential maid," of whom she once wrote, "I consider [her] as more than myself in everything that relates to [Hastings.]"<sup>65</sup>

Madame Bigeon would continue as Henry's housekeeper after Eliza's death. She cared for him through all his financial troubles until his bankruptcy in 1816. Jane Austen thought so much of her that she bequeathed her fifty pounds in her will, as Madame Bigeon had been one of the casualties of Henry's misfortunes, losing her position and her home at Hans Place.<sup>66</sup> Once when Hastings had sunk into a state of "extreme debility" Eliza had sent him

with Madame Bigeon to Lowestoffe for its high altitude and sea-bathing while she attended to "business" in Cheltenham and, as she wrote, "instead of joining my invalid in three weeks, seven elapsed before I could get to him." It seems that Eliza was a better daughter than a mother as she had been by Philadelphia's side during her long illness whereas she turned the care of her invalid son over to her housekeeper.<sup>67</sup> Eliza closed the letter announcing Hastings' death to Philadelphia Walter with characteristic levity, declaring her astonishment at hearing that her brother Edward's wife had just given birth to her seventh child "If I were in spirits," she wrote, "I should make some observations on the premium to which your cousin is entitled for such an addition to the number of his Majesty's subjects [ . . . ]."<sup>68</sup> Hastings was buried in Hampstead beside his grandmother Philadelphia. The tombstone is inscribed "also in memory of her grandson Hastings only child of Jean Capot Comt. de Feuillide and Elizabeth his wife born 25th June 1786 died 9th October 1801."<sup>69</sup>

By June, 1801, Philadelphia wrote her brother James Walter that she had spent the day with the Henry Austens and comments of Eliza, who is clearly not well, that "she is much the same, but talks of retiring into Wales and resigning the world, in which he seems perfectly to agree. He has given up the army. They live in quiet style in Upper Berkeley Street, Portman Square."<sup>70</sup>

The fears Eliza had entertained about the French attacking the English coast were temporarily assuaged in March of 1801, when the Peace of Amiens created a truce between the two countries. Eliza and Henry journeyed to France to attempt to recover some of the de Feuillide property. In one version of the story Eliza was informed that her late husband had died "a confessed murderer and a thief, [and] as such, his property was confiscated by the state."<sup>71</sup>

This version of the de Feuilleide story is doubtful, but it is true that Henry and Eliza never could get possession of the Marais. It was Eliza and Henry's bad luck that the peace ended in May 1803, and Napoleon ordered that all the English travelers would be detained. Henry and Eliza were able to escape because Eliza's French was so perfect that she passed as a native. Henry remained silent as the two fled back safely to England. After Eliza's death Henry returned to France to begin a motion against the de Feuilleide family to obtain some of Eliza's property but his claim to part of the estate was dismissed by the French courts in 1825.<sup>72</sup> As the Abbé Michel Devert tells the story, Jean-Gabriel Capot de Feuilleide, the younger brother of Jean-François, was the successor to the land upon his brother's death. Jean-Gabriel did not take possession of the land until the Revolution was over and he was able to reclaim the property through processes of law. By this time the Marais estate had been devastated. It was discovered that Antoine Fourquette, a man living on the property, was the accomplice of many others who destroyed the buildings and the land itself. The siblings of Jean-François could not afford to restore the property and sold the land to Hammelin and Latour-Saint-Igest. When Henry presented himself as the legitimate heir of Eliza and her son he was informed that the only legitimate heir would have been his son Hastings, who had died, and his suit was denied. Capot de Feuilleide's brothers and sisters were named the rightful heirs and it was ruled that their sale of the property to Hammelin and Latour-Saint Igest was legal.<sup>73</sup>

When Eliza visited her husband's family in Guienne she must have realized that his pretensions to nobility were bogus and unfounded. On her son's tombstone she did not give Hastings the title his father claimed, but simply had his name inscribed as Hastings, only child of Jean Capot Comt, de

Feuillide and Elizabeth. It appears that she did not believe that he had inherited a title from his father. Nevertheless, she had had her twelve year fling living as a countess and a French one at that, and for a long time had thoroughly enjoyed acting the part with all its advantages of rank and title. After all, Eliza was the consummate performer and assuming the airs of nobility must have given her untold pleasure.

## Notes

## Chapter Five

- <sup>1</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 147.
- <sup>2</sup> James Edward Austen-Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen, 2nd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926, rep. 1951) 89.
- <sup>3</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 148.
- <sup>4</sup> Jane Austen, Lesley Castle. The Works of Jane Austen. Minor Works, ed. R. W. Chapman, Volume VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 109.
- <sup>5</sup> David Nokes, Jane Austen: A Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 108.
- <sup>6</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 148.
- <sup>7</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 148.
- <sup>8</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 3 May 1797, Austen Papers 159.
- <sup>9</sup> Jane Austen, Mansfield Park. The Works of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman, Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 110.
- <sup>10</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 92.
- <sup>11</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 93.
- <sup>12</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 93.
- <sup>13</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 473.

- <sup>14</sup> Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice. The Works of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 79.
- <sup>15</sup> Clive Caplan, "Jane Austen's Soldier Brother: The Military Career of Captain Henry Thomas Austen of the Oxfordshire Regiment of the Militia 1793-1801," Persuasions 18, 1996, 124.
- <sup>16</sup> Caplan 123.
- <sup>17</sup> Caplan 123.
- <sup>18</sup> Caplan 123.
- <sup>19</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 149.
- <sup>20</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 26 October 1792, Austen Papers 149.
- <sup>21</sup> Fanny Caroline Le Froy, Family History, written c. 1880-1885, qtd. in W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record 73.
- <sup>22</sup> Austen Papers 321-323.
- <sup>23</sup> Austen Papers 323.
- <sup>24</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 27 March 1782, Austen Papers 104.
- <sup>25</sup> Austen Papers 323.
- <sup>26</sup> Park Honan, Jane Austen: Her Life (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1987).
- <sup>27</sup> Philadelphia Walter quoted this remark of Eliza's to her brother James Walter in a letter of September 19, 1787. Austen Papers 123.
- <sup>28</sup> Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin Books, 2000)

197.

<sup>29</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 November 1796, Austen Papers 155.

<sup>30</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," letter 7, 18 September 1796, Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 11.

<sup>31</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," qtd. in Jane Austen: A Family Record 89.

<sup>32</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," qtd. in Jane Austen: A Family Record 92.

<sup>33</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 30 December 1796, Austen Papers 157.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 9 January 1776, letter 1, Jane Austen's Letters 1.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Austen, The History of England. Minor Works. The Works of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman, Volume VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> Caplan 128.

<sup>37</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 November 1716, Austen Papers 155.

<sup>38</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 31 May 1797, Austen Papers 158-159.

<sup>39</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 3 May 1797, Austen Papers 159.

<sup>40</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 4 August 1797, Austen Papers 163.

- 41 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 4 August 1797, Austen Papers 162.
- 42 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 7 November 1796, Austen Papers 164.
- 43 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 4 August 1787, Austen Papers 164-165.
- 44 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 7 November 1796, Austen Papers 155.
- 45 37. Eliza de Feuillide, "To John Woodman," 12 June 1797, Austen Papers 164-165.
- 46 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Warren Hastings," 28 December 1797, Austen Papers 168.
- 47 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walters," 9 November 1796, Hampshire Record Office.
- 48 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walters," 9 November 1796.
- 49 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walters," 9 November 1796.
- 50 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 17 January 1797. Hampshire Record Office.
- 51 Fanny Caroline Le Froy, Family History c. 1880-85, unpublished.
- 52 Mrs. George Austen, "To Mary Lloyd," letter 5, 30 November 1796, Austen Papers 228.
53. W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: British Library, 1989) 92.
- 54 Tomalin 129.
- 55 Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 February 1798.

Partially published in Austen Papers 168-172.

<sup>56</sup> Family Record 7.

<sup>57</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 16 February 1798, Austen Papers 171.

<sup>58</sup> Austen Papers 169.

<sup>59</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 16 February 1798, Austen Papers 169.

<sup>60</sup> Caplan 122.

<sup>61</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 29 October 1799, Austen Papers 173.

<sup>62</sup> Caplan 142.

<sup>63</sup> Jane Austen's Letters, letter 29, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 68.

<sup>64</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 29 October 1801, Austen Papers 175.

<sup>65</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Austen," 29 October 1801, 174-175.

<sup>66</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," Austen Papers 165.

<sup>67</sup> Nokes 513-514.

<sup>68</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," Austen Papers 166.

<sup>69</sup> Eliza de Feuillide, "To Philadelphia Walter," 29 October 1801, Austen Papers 75-76.

<sup>70</sup> Tomalin 188.

<sup>71</sup> Philadelphia Walter, "To James Walter," 4 June 1801, Austen Papers 174.

**72 Nokes 260.**

**73 Family Record 237.**

**74 Abbé Michel Devert 347.**

## Chapter Six: Finale

What was the nature of Eliza's marriage to Henry Austen? It is hard to say. They had been attracted to each other when he was a teenage youth and she a married woman in her mid-twenties. "Uncousinly" feelings had caused Henry to apologize. Their flirtations during family theatricals were noticeable enough to Henry's young sister Jane that she anticipated their marriage in her childhood tale, Henry and Eliza, about a couple who bore their names. Later, in Mansfield Park, Jane might have still been thinking of her brother and Eliza when she wrote of the flirtations that took place during rehearsals of Lovers' Vows.

By the time that Eliza married Henry, she had lost her mother, her husband had been guillotined, and her son was suffering from a frightening illness. Then too, she had been very ill the year before she married Henry. "We are extremely sorry for poor Eliza's illness," wrote Jane Austen from Steventon in January 1796 to Cassandra, who was visiting Reverend Fulwar Fowle and his family in Kintbury to bid farewell to her fiancé, Reverend Fowle's brother Tom, who was leaving for St. Domingo. "I trust, however, that she has continued to recover since you wrote and that you will none of you be the worse for your attendance to her."<sup>1</sup> We have no letters from Eliza during this period, but it seems as if Cassandra and the Fowles had cared for her during one of her bouts with illness that summer. Kintbury was sixty-four miles west of London, a long trip at that time, and it is unclear whether Eliza had come to the Fowles' to recuperate or that Cassandra had journeyed with members of the Fowle family to Eliza's home in London.

Henry's nature was mercurial and for many years he drifted from one

career to another, never firmly anchored in any one and often engaged in several occupations at once. At one time he even had a scheme for a brewery which was dissolved at a committee of subscribers. Jane Austen was to say of him that he was “too Busy, too active, too sanguine” to suffer affliction <sup>2</sup>—and these characteristics influenced his professional life as well. It was not until after Eliza's death and his own business reverses that Henry finally settled into the career to which he seemed suited, that of the ministry. In the end he may have been happier composing his sermons while living as a clergyman on fifty-two guineas a year, than he was as the wealthy banker-husband of Eliza.

What must it have been like for Eliza to marry into her own family? Marrying one's first cousin was not illegal in eighteenth-century England. Legislation enacted by Henry VIII [. . .] permitted marriage between first cousins.”<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, “feeling against such marriage did not die out.”<sup>4</sup> “Its ‘legality’ from a scriptural point of view,” writes Ellen Pollak, “was hotly debated all through the eighteenth century.”<sup>5</sup> There seemed also to be a difference in the viewpoint on this issue between London and provincial society and an even more important difference in opinion between classes. “Writers for middle-class audiences,” observes Randolph Trumbach, continued to take for granted that there was no possibility of sexual feeling even between second cousins. They might admit the legality of cousin marriage and still discourage it on the grounds of discretion and “deference to so common an opinion that cousins ‘never live happily and prosperously together’.”<sup>6</sup> Jane Austen reflects upon first-cousin marriage in Mansfield Park, published in 1814, seventeen years after Henry and Eliza's wedding in 1797. When Fanny Price is about to be invited to Mansfield Park to live, Sir Thomas hesitates to give his consent to her coming to live with his family. “He thought of his own four children—of his two sons—of

cousins in love...."7 Mrs. Norris tries to convince him that the best way to avoid cousins falling in love is to have them live together as brothers and sisters. "It is morally impossible," she says. "I never knew an instance of it. It is, in fact, the only sure way of providing against the connection."8 What is assumed, at this point in the novel, by both Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris, is that love between male and female first cousins is imprudent. Yet at the end of the novel, of course, Fanny does marry Edmund, and with Sir Thomas's blessing. The transformation in Sir Thomas's opinion concerning the marriage of cousins is, in fact, an index of his personal growth in the course of the novel:

Sick of ambitious and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper, and chiefly anxious to bind by the strongest securities all that remained to him of domestic felicity, he had pondered with genuine satisfaction on the more than possibility of the two young friends finding their mutual consolation in each other for all that had occurred of disappointment to either; and the joyful consent which met Edmund's application, the high sense of having realized a great acquisition on the promise of Fanny for a daughter, formed just such a contrast with his early opinion on the subject when the poor little girl's coming had been first agitated, as time is forever producing between the plans and decisions of mortals, for their own instruction, and their neighbours' entertainment.<sup>9</sup>

The novel ends with a further affirmation of the marriage of Fanny and Edmund, who are deliberately described as "the married cousins": "With so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune or friends, the happiness of the married cousins must appear as secure as earthly happiness can be."<sup>10</sup> In

using Sir Thomas's acceptance of the marriage as a symbol of his moral growth as well as ending the novel with a celebration of the marriage of these cousins as being "as secure as earthly happiness can be,"<sup>11</sup> Austen appears to have approved of a marriage of first cousins.

The issue is interesting because, within a book that itself is constrained by novelistic conventions, Austen interrogates an eighteenth-century marriage convention which had been an issue in her own family and ends up validating the unconventional position. Whether or not she came to this position when thinking about her brother's marriage to Eliza, certainly the unconventionality of that marriage must have made her think about the validity of conventions and the times it might be permissible to break out of the conventional. Randolph Trumbach, in his discussion of the marriage prohibitions controversy, argues that one's class politics determined whether one defended cousin marriage.<sup>12</sup> Austen, writing primarily for a middle-class audience, might have approved of cousin marriage, but taken it for granted that there well might be no sexual feeling between cousins. Margaret Kirkham in Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction observes that Mansfield Park is "pointedly concerned with fraternity," and that the "paradigm of equal, affectionate relationships between men and women, is always held up as ideal, having implications beyond the literal meaning of 'brother' and 'sister'."<sup>13</sup> In Mansfield Park, says Kirkham, Austen shows that such an ideal is more readily to be found in contemporary society, between brothers and sisters than husbands and wives, though she seeks a transference to the marriage relationship of the ideal. With William, Fanny experiences a 'felicity' which she had never known before in an 'unchecked, equal, fearless, intercourse.' Her marriage to

Edmund allows the reader to hope that she will know such felicity in her adult married life.<sup>13</sup>

Tony Tanner has a different take on the meaning of Fanny and Edmund's marriage which he observes, is:

as far from the realm of the sexual as is compatible with their getting married. They are after all cousins, and prior to their marriage their relationship is more like that of brother and sister than that of potential lovers [. . .] but a marriage it is and a celebratory one, symbolizing [. . .] more far reaching reconciliations and restorations: a paradigmatic marriage for society in a larger sense which transcends personal gratifications.<sup>15</sup>

Fanny, according to Tanner, suffers for the sake of Righteousness and gets her reward "in the shape of marriage to Edmund and effectively Mansfield Park itself." She is the true "inheritor."<sup>16</sup> When Edmund puts his relationship with Mary Crawford behind him and moves his marital thoughts to Fanny he seems to turn from a relationship based on sexual passions to companionate love, thinking, "whether it might not be a possible, an helpful undertaking, to persuade [Fanny] [. . .] that the warmth of sisterly regard for him would be a foundation enough for wedded love."<sup>17</sup> The marriage of Henry and Eliza raised the issue of first cousin marriage in her family life, but, as was her way, Austen interrogated the subject from many different angles in her fiction.

Eliza saw her Austen relations more than ever after marrying her cousin Henry, and this must have pleased her strong sense of family. What then was the marriage like for Henry? Undoubtedly he had always been attracted to his somewhat outlandish older cousin and her exuberant personality, and maybe

even to her unconventional life style, so unlike his sister's or his cousin Philadelphia Walter's. Then, too, Eliza had money, thanks to the trust fund her godfather had set up for her. And what of her godfather? Was this not a lure for Henry? We know that Henry revered Warren Hastings, as had his father before him. He probably felt elevated by marrying Hastings's goddaughter and looked forward to having a man he so admired as part of his extended family. Two years before his marriage, when Hastings had been acquitted in his long trial before the House of Lords, Henry had written him a letter of congratulations in his characteristically pompous and formal tone: "Dear Sir," Henry had written from St. John's College, Oxford, April 26, 1795:

As humble, and hitherto a silent spectator of national concerns, permit me at the present interesting moment [. . .] to offer you the warmth & respectful congratulations of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of all you have done & suffered. Permit me to congratulate my country & myself as an Englishman; for right dear to every Englishman must it be to behold the issue of a contest where forms of judicature threatened to annihilate the essence of justice [. . .].<sup>18</sup>

It had to have meant a lot to Henry to marry the goddaughter, and possibly the daughter, of a man he so venerated. Five years after he married Eliza, Henry again wrote to Hastings, June 5, 1802, expressing his admiration:

You will perhaps allow me to indulge in the expression of my sentiments, [Henry wrote Hastings], which have often trembled on my lips, but never yet escaped, lest the effusion of the heart should have been mistaken for the cant of adulation--Suffer me then to say that among the earliest lessons of my infancy I was taught by

precept & example to love & venerate your name. I cannot remember the time when I did not associate you with your character the idea of everything great, durable and good [. . .] . Your works of taste were continually offered to my notice as objects of imitation & spurs to exertion. I shall never forget the delight which I experienced when on producing a translation of a well-known ode of Horace to my father's criticism, he favored me with a perusal of your manuscript and as a high mark of commendation said that he was sure Mr. Hastings would have been pleased with the perusal of my humble essay. On the acts of your public life I would not presume to touch, but to say that my judgment ever echoed back the dictates of my heart in pronouncing you the friend of mankind, the preserver of India & the special savior of the British Empire.<sup>19</sup>

Henry may have been entranced not only by Eliza's not insignificant charms, but also by her very special relationship with Warren Hastings who had assumed heroic proportions to him--and who had been held up to him as a model since childhood. "Although," writes Brian Southam, "Hastings had occupied no public office since his Governor-Generalship of Bengal ended in 1785, although he had been on trial since 1787 in charges of corruption, nevertheless he continued to wield considerable influence."<sup>20</sup> His power base was the East India Company "with its immense field of patronage."<sup>21</sup> Mr. Austen approached Hastings for help when his son Francis wished to transfer from Lieutenant on the Lark, a sloop patrolling the Downes and the North Sea, to a frigate or a flagship to give him the chance to distinguish himself in action, with the hope of promotion. Hastings forwarded the request to Vice Admiral Philip

Afflick, a member of the Admiralty Board. In fact, "the early postings of both Francis and Charles Austen and their search for promotion owed much to Mr. Austen's resourcefulness and the friendship with Warren Hastings [. . .]."22

After Eliza's son Hastings died, she and Henry accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Austen and Jane and Cassandra on several family trips, and, in 1804, they joined them for a three-month excursion to the seaside resorts of Devon and Dorset, which may have inspired Jane Austen to set her last novel, Sanditon, at a seaside resort. This is the last trip they would take with Mr. Austen. During a New Year's visit in 1805 to Edward and his family in Godmersham, Henry learned of his father's death. Eliza was now an intimate part of the Austen family, sharing their joys and sorrows with Henry and far removed from the foreign world of counts and would-be-counts of her first marriage. She always, however, retained something of her French persona, expressed with amusement by Henry's niece Fanny who wrote in her diary after Henry and Eliza had left her home, "Uncle and Aunt Henry Austen went away early ce matin. Quel horreur."<sup>23</sup> Later, in 1809, when Eliza and Henry visited Edward and his family at Godmersham, Fanny wrote in her diary that she took a walk with Eliza and "Mrs. HA and I had a tête-à-tête, how agreeable!"<sup>24</sup> Then in 1811 she wrote again, "Mrs. HA and I get on a little, but we never shall be intimate."<sup>25</sup> "Something about Eliza jarred with many of the Austens," writes Claire Tomalin:

whether it was simply her style they mistrusted--too clever, foreign, frivolous--or some suggestion of a deeper dereliction. 'A clever woman, and highly accomplished, after the French rather than the English mode'--the description of her in the first Memoir of her Cousin Jane--is distinctly cautious. Eliza was as British as they were by blood and had been educated in England, but 'French'

was well understood to mean something different and not quite up to the standards prevailing in England, and conveniently expressed what they felt about her.<sup>26</sup>

In London Eliza surrounded herself with French friends from the circle of French émigrés living there and even her trusted servants, Madame Bigeon and her daughter, were French. Although she was a family member, Eliza had a cosmopolitan air that set her apart from the rest of the Austen family.

By 1804, Henry had established a banking partnership with Henry Maunde, a friend from the Oxfordshire militia, and he and Eliza had moved out of London to Brompton, on the outskirts of the city. In June of 1808 Jane Austen visited Henry and Eliza in what was then the village of Brompton. They lived at Michael's Place, "a row of forty-five houses which stood next to Yeoman's Row in the left hand-side of the main road from London."<sup>27</sup> Michael's Place was named for its designer, Michael Novosielski, the son of a Polish count who was born in Rome in 1750. Novosielski was famous at the time for rebuilding the opera house in the Haymarket which Jane Austen advised Cassandra to see when she was in London. "I hope," she wrote, "you will see everything worthy of notice from the Opera House to Henry's office in Cleveland Court."<sup>28</sup> "The ground on which Michael's Place was built was formerly know as 'flounder's fields' because it was so damp and muddy."<sup>29</sup> This may explain why when it was pulled down in 1886 many of the houses had never been completed. "It may also explain why Henry and Eliza moved from this house in 1811."<sup>30</sup>

Although we do not have letters from Eliza mentioning Jane Austen's novels, we know that Henry was intensely interested in his sister's writing and,

after his father died, assumed the role of Jane's business manager. Later, in 1817, when he was to make the arrangements for the joint publication of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion (giving them their titles), Henry included his own "Biographical Notice" in Volume One of the four-volume set. This is probably his only published work aside from the unsigned pieces in The Loiterer which he wrote at Oxford.

Even before Mr. Austen's death, it was Henry's business associate, Mr. Seymour who sold the manuscript of Jane's novel Susan for ten pounds to a London publisher, Richard Crosby & Son of Stationer's Hall Court. Crosby agreed to an "early publication." An advertisement for Susan was even included in Crosby's Flowers of Literature later that year.<sup>31</sup> Crosby never did publish Susan and in April 1808 Jane wrote Crosby a letter offering to supply a copy of the book should he have lost it and demanding that he publish it without delay or she would take it to another publisher. Crosby replied that there was no stipulation in their agreement as to when he would publish the book and he offered to sell Jane back the manuscript for the same ten pounds she had sold it to him. Unfortunately Jane could not raise the money and it was not until 1816, when four other novels had appeared, that she bought back the manuscript for the same ten pounds and changed the heroine's name to "Catherine."<sup>32</sup> When Henry published it, the book was yet unnamed and he chose Northanger Abbey as its title. Margaret Kirkham sees the history of the transaction with Crosby as an act of suppression, particularly because, before Austen paid the ten pounds for the manuscript's return, Crosby informed her that he would prosecute her if she tried to get the book published by another publisher, notwithstanding the fact that he had held on to it for thirteen years without publishing it.<sup>33</sup>

Jane Austen herself wrote the advertisement for Susan, which Henry

printed as a preface to the posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. In this document Austen writes that she could never learn why the book was not published and that why “any bookseller should think it worth while to purchase what he did not think it worthwhile to publish seems extraordinary.”<sup>34</sup> She observes the fact that the thirteen years that have elapsed while Crosby held the book had made some parts of it obsolete as “during that period, place, manners, books and opinions have undergone considerable changes.”<sup>35</sup> Kirkham observes that “despite [Austen's] assertion that Crosby's suppression of the novel concerned neither the author or the public, she makes rather a point of including it and of saying that no rational explanation has come her way.”<sup>36</sup> Northanger Abbey, Kirkham continues, was not outmoded in so far as it was a burlesque of a Gothic Romance, but in so far as it attempts a more penetrating criticism of literature and life than is common in the burlesque genre, and does so from a feminist point of view, it had less chance of being read with understanding in 1816 than in the late 1790s when it was begun, or in 1803, when it was ready for publication. It is but one of the many ironies in the history of Jane Austen's eventual success that when Northanger Abbey at last appeared it was prefaced by an account of her life and character which effectively inhibited readers from seeing how strongly and overtly it displayed that “sparkle of confident intelligence” which Margaret Kirkham observes, had once made it “a work worth suppressing.”<sup>37</sup>

Eliza shared something of Jane's “sparkle of confident intelligence” and her marriage to Henry brought the two women closer together. Jane wrote delightful letters to her sister Cassandra describing some of her enjoyable visits to the elegant residence at 64 Sloane Street to which Henry and Eliza had moved after they left Michael's Place. Such visits exposed Austen to the

fashionable world of London that never makes its way into her novels, but which she seemed to relish during her stays there. Winifred Watson, in an article in the 1955 Report of the Jane Austen Society, tells of visiting this imposing house, "complete and beautiful, inside a cumbrous late-Victorian shell." Watson comments on the handsome old paneling, classical reliefs, fireplaces and doorways.<sup>38</sup> A small oak-panelled room is still extant, she writes in 1955, its window overlooking Cadogan Place to a row of Georgian houses opposite. This was most probably Henry's study.<sup>39</sup> On one visit to Sloane Street in April of 1811, Jane Austen corrected the proof sheets of Sense and Sensibility so that Henry could rush the printing, the hope being, Jane wrote, "of its being out by June." "I am never too busy to think of S&S," Jane wrote from Henry and Eliza's house, "I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her suckling child."<sup>40</sup> Henry was often out of town on business, as he had duties both as an army agent and a banker, but Jane did not have to concern herself about his absence detaining the publication of Sense and Sensibility. "It will not stand still during his absence," she wrote Cassandra. "It will be sent to Eliza."<sup>41</sup>

We do not know of Eliza's response to her cousin's novels. Presumably she read the novels that Jane Austen was working on at Sloane Street that April of 1811, when she was correcting proofs of Sense and Sensibility and planning how to revise First Impressions into Pride and Prejudice. We know that Jane took time away from her work to enjoy a party that Eliza gave for sixty-six people. She viewed it from the wide landing at the top of the sweeping Georgian staircase where she placed herself the night of the party having, as she wrote, "all the advantage of the Music at a pleasant distance, as well as that of the first view of every new comer."<sup>42</sup> After the party Jane was to write of it in

detail to Cassandra:

Including everybody we were 66--which was considerably more than Eliza had expected, & quite enough to fill the Back Draw[in]g room, and leave a few to be scattered about in the other, & in the passage.--The Music was extremely good. It opened (tell Fanny) with "Prike Pe Parp pin praise pof Prapela [here Jane uses the nonsense language she and Fanny used, placing a "p" before each word] & of the other Glees I remember. "In peace Love tunes," "Rosabelle," "The red cross Knight," & "Poor Insect." Between the Songs were Lessons on the Harp, or Harp and Piano Forte together--& the Harp Player was Wiepart, whose name seems famous, tho' new to me--There was one female singer, a short Miss Davis all in blue, bringing up for the Public Line, whose voice was said to be very fine indeed; & all the Performers gave great satisfaction by doing what they were paid for, & giving themselves no airs.--No amateur could be persuaded to do anything. The House was not clear till after 12 [. . .] . Eliza enjoyed her even[in]g very much & means to cultivate the acquaintance--& I see nothing to dislike in them, but their taking quantities of snuff.--Monsieur the old Count is a very fine looking man. With quiet manners, good enough for an Englishman--and I believe is a Man of great Information and Taste. He has some fine Paintings, which delighted Henry as much as the Son's music gratified Eliza, & among them, a Miniature of Philip V of Spain, Louis 14's Grandson, which exactly suited my capacity.--Count Julien's performance is very wonderful. We met only Mrs Latouche & Miss

East--& we are just now engaged to spend next Sunday Even[ing]  
at Mrs. L's & to meet the D'Entraigues;--but M. le Comte must do  
without Henry. If he wd but speak english, / would take to him [. . .]

.43

Despite her exposure, through Eliza, to the French émigré society, Jane Austen never expanded her range of characters to include characters from a foreign country. Nevertheless she was intrigued by Eliza's cosmopolitan coterie, writing in anticipation of the soirée, "It will be amusing to see the ways of the French circle." After the evening, she wrote Cassandra, "I find these parties very pleasant."<sup>44</sup> The Comte d' Entraigues mentioned in her letter was a French emigre living in London with his wife, an opera singer, and their son Julien. In A Family Record the count is described as a "political intriguer and professional secret agent, working--sometimes simultaneously--for the French Royalists, Russia and Prussia, and possibly even against England as well."<sup>45</sup> In July 1812, a little over a year after Eliza's party, the count and his wife were murdered in London by a deranged Italian manservant, who then committed suicide. The material Austen might have gleaned from these adventures would have more appropriately fit into her juvenile plots than into her major novels about the English gentry in their country towns.

One of the guests at Eliza's party had been a Mr. Wyndham Knatchbull, who later reported to Cassandra his response to seeing her sister Jane at the party. We do not know his precise words, but Jane, then thirty years old, was pleased with Cassandra's recounting of them:

I depended, [Jane wrote] upon learning something of the Evening  
from Mr. W.K.--and am very well satisfied with his notice of me. 'A  
pleasing young woman,'--that must do--and cannot pretend to

anything better now--thankful to have it continued a few years longer!<sup>46</sup>

Notice of Eliza's party appeared in the London Morning Post the following day, but no one could have known that Jane Austen would preserve the memory of it through the centuries for readers of her published letters.

That summer of 1811, Eliza left London to spend a rare country fortnight with Mrs. Austen, Cassandra, and Jane, who had by this time moved to Chawton, a house by a pond on the estate of Edward Austen. Cassandra wrote about Eliza's visit to her cousin Philadelphia Walter Whitaker. "Mrs. H. Austen," Cassandra wrote, "has been spending a fortnight with us lately and I think I never saw her in such good health before."<sup>47</sup> During this same visit Jane was to see her youngest brother Charles, who had been absent from England with the navy for seven years, and to meet his Bermudian wife and two daughters.

Either Cassandra's appraisal was erroneous, or she must have seen Eliza before her cousin's health began to decline precipitously. In April of 1812, when Jane Austen was working on Mansfield Park, Edward "went to town with Aunt Jane," his niece Fanny remarked in her diary, "as we had a very bad account of poor Mrs. Henry Austen."<sup>48</sup> This is all we know about Eliza's illness. Claire Tomalin thinks that Eliza, like her mother, died of breast cancer from which she had suffered for a long time.<sup>49</sup> Whether her final illness was connected to the tumor she had before she married Henry is unclear, as there are no letters providing information as to the nature of her last sickness. On February 13, 1813, Jane Austen wrote to Martha Lloyd, the sister of James's wife Mary who had lived with Mrs. Austen and her daughters since 1805, "We have no late account from Sloane St. & therefore conclude that everything is

going on in one regular process, without any striking change."<sup>50</sup> By April, it was clear that Eliza's illness was terminal and that she was, in fact, dying. Henry asked Jane to come, as her close friend and his, to be by her side during her last days. On April 25, 1813, Eliza died. She would be buried in the same grave as her mother and son. Jane Austen remained in London for several days and then returned to Chawton with Madam Perigord whom she invited to stay with her at the cottage in thanks for her kind nursing of Eliza, but also, Tomalin suggests, as a sign of Austen's "particular sympathy for working women with hard lives."<sup>51</sup> Curiously, Eliza's graveside funeral in Hampstead did not take place until after Jane and Madam Perigord left London and none of her relatives were present except for Henry. We only know of it from the diary of Mrs. James Austen which reads: "Saturday May 1 Tyger [the Steventon cat] had young ones. Mrs. H Austen was buried. Sunday May 2 Put on mourning."<sup>52</sup> Eliza's ledger stone in the churchyard at St. John-at-Hampstead, in London, has been worn illegible by time, but from the record of tombstone inscriptions we can read the words that Henry composed which were once there to read beneath the inscriptions for Philadelphia and Hastings:

Also in memory of Elizabeth wife of H.T. Austen, Esq. formerly widow of the Comt. Feuillide a woman of brilliant generous and cultivated mind just disinterested and charitable she died after long and severe suffering on the 25th of April 1813 aged 50 much regretted by the wise and good and deeply lamented by the poor.<sup>53</sup>

Henry's words are conventional, (except that he does not mention Eliza's Christian faith,) but his feelings, three months after Eliza's death, if we can believe the appraisal of his sister Jane, were even more dispassionate than his

tombstone eulogy. In July of 1813, in a letter to her brother Frank, Jane Austen described with chilling candor Henry's response to the death of his wife:

Upon the whole, his Spirits are very much recovered.--If I may so express myself, his Mind is not a Mind for affliction. He is too Busy, too active, too sanguine,--Sincerely as he was attached to poor Eliza moreover, & excellently as he behaved to her, he was always so used to be away from her at times, that her Loss is not felt as that of many a beloved Wife might be, especially when all the circumstances of her long & dreadful Illness are taken into the account.--He very long knew that she must die, & it was indeed a release at last.--Our mourning for her is not over [. . .] .<sup>54</sup>

Henry may have taken Eliza's death in stride and moved on but Jane's feelings ran deeper and, as one can see from the last sentence, she still mourned for Eliza, who had been part of her life since her childhood as a first cousin, a sister-in-law and wife of her favorite brother, and most importantly, as a friend whose company she had always enjoyed.

## Notes

## Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 15 January 1796, letter 2 of Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, "To Francis Austen," 6 July 1813, letter 85 of Jane Austen's Letters 214.

<sup>3</sup> Sybil Wolfram, In-laws and Outlaws in Marriages and Kinship (London: Croom Helm, 1987) 21.

<sup>4</sup> Randolph Trumbach, The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Academic Press, 1978) 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Pollak, letter to author, 9 July 2001. (Pollak lectured at Fordham University in New York City on Mansfield Park in the spring of 2001. She touched on the subject of first cousin marriage and eighteenth-century incest laws. Her work in progress focuses on gender politics in the eighteenth century that, as Pollak wrote in an e-mail to the author [12 February 2002], "subtend both cousin marriage and wife-sister marriage and establish a certain continuity between them.")

<sup>6</sup> Trumbach 21.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Austen, Mansfield Park. The Novels of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman, Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 6.

<sup>8</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 6.

<sup>9</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 471-472.

<sup>10</sup> Austen, Mansfield Park 473.

- 11 Austen, Mansfield Park 473.
- 12 Trumbach 21.
- 13 Margaret Kirkham, Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1983) 119.
- 14 Kirkham 119.
- 15 Tony Tanner, Jane Austen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 173.
- 16 Tanner 172.
- 17 Jane Austen, Mansfield Park 475.
- 18 Henry Thomas Austen, "To Warren Hastings," 26 April 1795, Austen Papers 1704-1856, ed. R. A. Austen-Leigh (London: 1942) 153-154.
- 19 Henry Thomas Austen, "To Warren Hastings," 5 June 1802, Austen Papers 1704-1856, ed. R. A. Austen-Leigh (London, 1942) 176-177.
- 20 Brian Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy (New York: Hambledon and London, 2000) 80.
- 21 Southam 80.
- 22 Southam 182.
- 23 Fanny Catherine Austen, Diary, 15 July 1809, from Lady Knatchbull (Fanny Knight) Diaries 1804-72. Kent Archives Office (U951 F24/1-69) unpublished, qtd. in Jane Austen: A Family Record, W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, 153.
- 24 Diary of Lady Knatchbull, (Fanny Austen, later Knight). July 1809, qtd. in Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 237.
- 25 Tomalin 237.
- 26 Tomalin 237.

27 Winifred Watson, "Jane Austen's London Homes," The Jane Austen Society Report for the Year 1955. Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949-1965 (Hampshire: Jane Austen Society, reprinted in 1990) 74.

28 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 25 January 1801, letter 33 in Jane Austen's Letters, 78.

29 "Jane Austen's London Homes," 74.

30 "Jane Austen's London Homes," 74.

31 David Nokes, Jane Austen: A Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 263.

32 Nokes 262-263.

33 Kirkham 70.

34 Jane Austen "advertisement" for Susan printed as Preface to posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey, qtd. in Kirkham, 71-72.

35 Jane Austen "advertisement" for Susan printed as Preface to posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey, qtd. in Kirkham, 72.

36 Jane Austen "advertisement" for Susan printed as Preface to posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey, qtd. in Kirkham, 72.

37 Jane Austen "advertisement" for Susan printed as Preface to posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey, qtd. in Kirkham, 72.

38 "Jane Austen's London Homes," 74-75.

39 "Jane Austen's London Homes," 74.

40 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 25 April 1811, letter 71 of The Letters of Jane Austen 182.

41 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 25 April 1811, letter 71 of The Letters of Jane Austen 182.

42 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 25 April 1811, letter 71 of The Letters of Jane Austen 182.

43 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 25 April 1811, letter 71 of The Letters of Jane Austen 183-184.

44 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 20 April 1811, letter 70 of The Letters of Jane Austen 181.

45 Jane Austen: A Family Record, ed. W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye (London: The British Library, 1989) 165.

46 Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 30 April 1811, letter 72 of The Letters of Jane Austen 186.

47 Cassandra Elizabeth Austen, "To Mrs. Whitaker (nee Philadelphia Walter)," 18 August 1811, Austen Papers 248.

48 Fanny Austen Diary, 23 April 1811, qtd. in A Family Record 178.

49 Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 236.

50 Jane Austen, "To Martha Lloyd," 16 February 1813, letter 82 of Letters of Jane Austen 207.

51 Tomalin 238.

52 Mrs. James Austen, Diary, Saturday, 1 May 1813, (Hampshire Record Office) qtd. by Tomalin, 238.

53 The epitaph can no longer be seen but text is in "Hancock Family Grave," by Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen Society Report, 1981, 183.

54 Jane Austen, "To Francis Austen," 6 July 1813, letter 86 of The Letters of Jane Austen 215.

### Afterward

Eliza's death was but one of several items of news that Jane Austen related to her brother Frank in her letter of July 1813. Life had already gone on, passing swiftly by the parenthesis that framed the life of Eliza. The letter ends with a postscript relating to Frank joyful news of her own:

You will be glad to hear that every Copy of S. & S. [Sense and Sensibility] is sold & that it has brought me 140 [pounds] [. . .] besides the Copyright, if that sh'd ever be of any value.--I have now therefore written myself into 250 [pounds]--which only makes me long for more.--I have something in hand--which I hope on the credit of P. & P. will sell well, tho' not half so entertaining.<sup>1</sup>

Three months after Eliza's death Pride and Prejudice was published, anonymously. Reviews were highly favorable and the novel was so popular that spring that a second edition was to be published. By New Years' Day, Jane was halfway finished writing Mansfield Park, the novel she described as "not half so entertaining." It was a year to rejoice as well as to mourn. Surely she must have had Eliza on her mind, and Henry, as she wrote about the flirtations that took place during the family theatricals at Mansfield Park when Sir Thomas was in Antigua.

In that same letter of July 1813, Jane tells her brother Frank that she is expecting a visit from Henry who has been promoted to Receiver General of Taxes for Oxfordshire, and adds:

He is quite well I am happy to say, & does not leave it to *my* pen I am sure to communicate to you the joyful news of his being Deputy Receiver no longer.--It is a promotion which he thoroughly

enjoys;--as well he may--the work of his own mind.--He sends you all his own plans of course.--The scheme for Scotland we think an excellent one both for himself & his nephew.--Upon the whole his Spirits are very much recovered.<sup>2</sup>

His spirits recovered, Henry soon moved from the 64 Sloane Street house to rooms over his bank at 10 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, taking with him Eliza's French servants, including the faithful Madam Bigeon, to cook and care for him, and settled into a life as a handsome, eligible widower of forty-two. On May 24, 1813, shortly after he moved, Jane Austen describes this abode, "which is all dirt & confusion, but in a very promising way."<sup>3</sup> On September 25, 1813 she writes her brother Frank, "No. 10 is made very comfortable with Cleaning, & Painting & the Sloane furniture."<sup>4</sup> In one of the rooms Jane Austen may have "read The Corsair and mended [her] petticoat," and torn through the volume of E.S. Barrett's The Heroine, while Henry sat beside her and read the manuscript for Mansfield Park. By midsummer of 1814 Henry had moved to No.23 Hans Place near the house at 64 Sloane Street which he had shared with Eliza. "I am extremely pleased," Jane Austen wrote to Martha Lloyd on September 2, 1814, "with this new house of Henry's it is everything that could be wished for him, & I have only to hope he will continue to like it as well as he does now, and not look for anything better. He is in very comfortable health;--he has not been so well, he says, for a twelvemonth."<sup>5</sup> She called the garden at the back "quite a love." This was the last of Henry's London houses Jane would visit. Henry would later face bankruptcy and become a country minister.

Henry courted several London ladies, went pheasant shooting and assumed his new position as Receiver General for Taxes. He took the tour of Scotland, which Jane mentioned in her letter, with her nephew Edward Knight,

Jr., and sent, after a visit to Daylesford House, the volumes of Pride and Prejudice to Warren Hastings who had been not only Eliza's godfather but a friend and neighbor of his mother's Leigh family during his childhood. To Jane's delight, Hastings wrote to her after receiving the novel expressing his praise. "I am quite delighted," Jane wrote Cassandra, September 16, 1813, "with what such a Man writes about it," and later added, "I long to have you hear Mr. H's opinion of P & P. His admiring my Elizabeth so much is particularly welcome to me."<sup>6</sup> In the same letter Jane remarked, "Mr. Hastings never *hinted* at Eliza in the smallest degree,"<sup>7</sup> and indeed we know nothing of Hastings feelings about Eliza's death or the emotions it evoked.

Henry helped his sister negotiate the publishing contracts for Mansfield Park. Time passed--Jane finished Emma and started Persuasion in 1815 and Napoleon escaped from Elba, rose from his ashes, to be defeated again at Waterloo and exiled to St. Helena. Once, during a bout with illness, Henry consulted a physician, used also by the Prince Regent, who informed him that the Prince greatly admired Jane Austen's novels and planned to send his Royal Librarian and personal chaplain to call on her. The gentleman came and declared that "if Miss Austen had any other novel forthcoming, she was quite at liberty to dedicate it to the Prince."<sup>8</sup> Henry and Cassandra, quite correctly, interpreted the invitation as a command and Emma was dedicated to the Regent, despite the fact that Jane Austen disliked him. A set of Emma bound in red Morocco gilt was delivered to the Regent a few days before general publication.

Three years after Eliza's death, Henry's banking business and army agency collapsed, causing his family, including Jane, untold expense, as they had stood sureties for him when he became the Receiver of Taxes. He gave up

his London residence and lived with relations for a time and in 1816 went to France to sue the family of Capot de Feuillide for a share of Eliza's estate, a claim which would be dismissed by the French court in 1825. By December 1816, Henry took Holy Orders, at last choosing the profession which had met with Eliza's adamant disapproval. Ordained at Salisbury, he was appointed to a curacy at Chawton at fifty-two guineas a year. Just before his ordination, Jane's health began to fail. She was working on Persuasion, which she completed in August of 1816. By the following January, she began her last novel, Sanditon, which, like Catharine, or the Bower, was never finished, but for different reasons. On July 18, 1817 Jane Austen died at forty-one years of age, having survived Eliza by only four years.

Henry was to become a zealous preacher, eventually combining his curacy with a Mastership of a Grammar School--and, yes, he did remarry. On April 11, 1820, he married Eleanor Jackson, niece of the Reverend John Papillon of Chawton, and lived with his second wife on his meagre curate's wage until his retirement in 1829. He died and was buried in Tunbridge Wells in March 1850, having had no children, and Eleanor survived him by many years.

Warren Hastings died on August 22, 1818, five years after his goddaughter, and was buried behind the chapel of his parish church. He went down in history as the first Governor of Bengal and then the most famous of the Governor-Generals of British India, a post he assumed in 1774, the year he gave an additional 10,000 pounds to Eliza Hancock. Marian Hastings lived on at Daylesford until her death in 1837 at the age of ninety.

With the death of Eliza, a parenthesis was closed in the narrative of Jane Austen's life. Philadelphia was most probably there at the beginning, at her

birth, and she, Jane Austen, was there at the death of Eliza. The major story is that of Jane Austen and the legacy she has left us, but within the parentheses is a story, not minor to its two heroines whose little lives embraced the worlds of British India at the beginning of Empire, the Versailles Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror--and touched the lives of Clive of India, Warren Hastings, and Jane Austen. When we place the story of Philadelphia and Eliza in the center, however, Jane Austen's life takes on a different perspective from that of the spinster lady living secluded in a country village, removed from the historical events of her time and her country. The very presence of Philadelphia and Eliza brought a cosmopolitan air to the Austen home and their tales of life in India and France, their marriages far away from England, their exotic friends and daring adventures became part of family lore and the subject of family conversation. That lives such as Philadelphia's and Eliza's are not reflected in Austen's novels tells us much about the conventions within which she chose to write and her sense of social as well as artistic decorum which would prohibit her from writing about people she knew intimately.

It is the juvenilia, written before Austen made the aesthetic choices of her mature writing, that comes closest to the sensibilities of Philadelphia and Eliza--their sense of adventure, their impulsivity, their flaunting of conventions, their exuberance, their pluck. A similar spirit, suppressed but never extinguished, animates Austen's mature works. It is a spirit which energizes the novels. One has to feel that Austen's attraction to strong, independent, women who are given to asserting their thoughts and desires, an attraction which is reflected in the heroines of her novels, is influenced by her aunt Philadelphia and cousin and friend Eliza. Unlike the heroines of the novels, Philadelphia

and Eliza broke many conventions to create lives independent of male authority, at a time when women were raised to please their husbands. These women designed their lives to realize their own pleasures and to indulge their lust for adventure, as well as to bring comfort and offer and receive hospitality within the circle of their extended family. The spirited intelligence which drives Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, and makes them forces for their men to reckon with, is unmistakably akin to these strong and feisty women in Jane Austen's own family who would not be suppressed, as Jane knew well from her own observation of the personality of her cousin "the Countess de Feuillide" who undoubtedly told her the fascinating and outlandish story of her beloved mother Philadelphia Austen Hancock from whom she had been inseparable--so much so that the two women, mother and daughter, share this biography.

## Notes

## Afterward

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, "To Francis Austen," 6 July 1813, letter 86 of Jane Austen's Letters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 217.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, "To Francis Austen," 6 July 1813, letter 86 of Jane Austen's Letters 215.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 24 May 1813, letter 85 of Jane Austen's Letters 212.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Austen, "To Francis Austen," 25 September 1813, letter 90 of Jane Austen's Letters 229.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Austen, "To Martha Lloyd," 2 September 1814, letter 106 of Jane Austen's Letters 273.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 16 September 1813, letter 87 of Jane Austen's Letters 221.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Austen, "To Cassandra Austen," 16 September 1813, letter 87 of Jane Austen's Letters 221.

<sup>8</sup> Reverend James Clarke qtd. in W. Austen-Leigh, R. A. Austen-Leigh, and Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen: A Family Record (London: The British Library, 1953) 203.

## Illustrations

| Ship Bombay Castle from Engl. towards India        |     |   |   |                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|---|---|--------------------------|
| Weather                                            | H   | K | F | Course Wind              |
| Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan <sup>y</sup> 1752      |     |   |   |                          |
| Clear Wind                                         | 1   |   |   | 8.18                     |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> | 2   |   |   |                          |
| Drizzle 10 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup>          | 3   |   |   |                          |
| 6.10 <sup>th</sup>                                 | 4   |   |   |                          |
| Cloudy                                             | 5   |   |   | W. 11 <sup>th</sup> 13.1 |
|                                                    | 6   |   |   | W. 11 <sup>th</sup>      |
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Fig. 4. Page from Log of Bombay Castle.

18 December 1751

*Resolved by the Ballot* That *Paul Philip Miller de Billons*  
be appointed Captain, and

*John Conrad Fagter* Captain of  
the Company of Ships raised for the Company's Service in Bengal and they  
being separately called in were acquainted therewith and took their Oaths  
accordingly.

*Ordered* That the Secretary do in the Court's Name apply to the Publisher  
of the London Gazetteer N<sup>o</sup> 920. of this day and insist on knowing in  
what manner and from whom he received an Article therein printed as this  
Company's Motion to His Majesty: the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1750 in relation to the  
Conduct of the Dutch in the East Indies.

The Substance of a Communication or Declaration made verbally  
by Mr. Michel the Russian Secretary to the Duke of Newcastle and  
transmitted by His Grace notifying the Establishment of the Asiatick  
Company at Canton for carrying on a Trade to the East Indies being read

*Ordered* That an Humble Representation be presented to His Majesty  
in relation to the said Company most humbly hoping His Majesty will  
give any particular Orders for the Admission of that Company's Ships  
into the English Ports in the East Indies, but that His Majesty will  
be graciously pleased to use such Methods for preventing His Subjects  
Navigating and Trading in the said Asiatick Company's Service as  
several Acts of Parliament prescribe and the Law of Nations will justify  
or to grant this Company such other Protection as His Majesty shall think fit  
And a Representation being prepared accordingly and Engrosed  
was signed by the whole Court, and the Chairman and Deputy were  
desired to present the same.

Captain Thomas Browne... of the Bombay Castle  
Samuel Cooke... Admiral Vernon  
Cavendish... Chestonfield  
Roger Mainwaring... Colchester, and  
William Hutchinson... Godolphin

advising the Arrival of those Ships at Gravesend

*Ordered* That Warrants be made out to the Owners of each of the said  
Ships for £1247. 10. in full for Imprest, and to the said Commanders  
for £37. 8 6 each in full for Primage and Tonnage.

Two Reports from the Committee of Shipping dated the 12<sup>th</sup> Instant  
and this day being read.

*Ordered* That Mr. Philadelphia Austen and Mary Elliot have leave to  
go to their Friends at Fort St. David on their giving the usual Security.

Fig. 5. Court Order giving leave to Philadelphia Austen and Mary Elliot to visit friends in Fort St. David.

That the said Mr. Thomas Godfrey be appointed for Fort St. George be-  
 ne Liberty to take his wife with him, the Company being at no charge thereby.  
 (In several instances)  
 Resolved by the Ballot That Mr. Charles Saunders be appointed  
 as Factor for Fort St. George and he being called in, and acquainted by the  
 Chairman therewith took his oath as such, And:  
 That Mr. Alexander Poyer be appointed  
 First Lieutenant of the Company of Ships raised for the Company's service  
 in Bengal Commanded by Captain Elliot, he was thereupon called in  
 and sworn accordingly.  
 James Adams of London. } Merchants  
 John Lardner of Newcastle }  
 were approved of as security for Mr. Philadelphia Austen and Mr. Mary  
 Elliot. Pysenger for Fort St. David in £200. each, also  
 John Lardner of London } of London Merchants  
 Henry Pysenger }  
 for Mr. Henry Hill of London Warehouse-keeper of the East and West  
 India Warehouses in £1500.  
 Letter from Charles Joy dated this day being read relating to the  
 Piece Published in the Gazetteer of the 18<sup>th</sup> Instant mentioned in the  
 last Court, shewing them that the Gentleman who put it into his hands  
 did not receive it from any Person concerned in the Office of the Secretary  
 to the Company but that it came from a different Quarter.  
 Order'd That the Chairman and Deputy or either of them be desired  
 to impart the same to the Duke of Newcastle and deliver His Grace a  
 Copy of the said Letter.  
 On reading a Report from the Committee of Shipping dated the  
 19<sup>th</sup> Instant,  
 Order'd That Warrants be made out to Mr. Henry Bratt Boulton for  
 £300. to pay River pay and other Disbursements on the Company's  
 Ship-Protector, and for £120. to pay the several Commanders who  
 carry Ships Commission Officers for their Fresh Provisions in the  
 outward bound Voyages and to Account.  
 Order'd That a Warrant be made out to Messrs. Samuel and John  
 Morrall for £500. on further Account of the Warehouses building  
 by them agreeable to their Contract with the Company, according  
 to a Report from the Committee of Warehouses dated the 19<sup>th</sup> Instant.  
 The

Fig. 6. Court approval of James Adams and John Lardner as security for Philadelphia Austen and Mary Elliot—passengers for Fort St. David.

That M<sup>rs</sup> Mary Elliot and M<sup>rs</sup> Philadelphia Austen be each  
discharged paying the Company the usual Sum of money for the Liberty of  
going to the East Indies, and

That they be permitted to take with them a Black Woman  
Servant that came home with M<sup>rs</sup> Bonner, also -

That M<sup>rs</sup> Miltone Jewell have Liberty to return a Black Servant  
of M<sup>rs</sup> Mademoiselle back to M<sup>rs</sup> Mademoiselle. - Both free of charge to the Company

And that the Bond given by M<sup>rs</sup> Joseph and Stephen Jackson  
the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1751. to indemnify the Company for Delivering them a  
New Bond N<sup>o</sup> 17243 for £100. - dated the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1752 in lieu of  
One N<sup>o</sup> 1526902 said to be lost, be delivered up to them on its appearing  
they have paid the Principal and Interest due on the said last mentioned  
Bond.

**Ordered** That a Warrant be made out to the Secretary for £200. - to  
be disbursed and to Account.

The Request of M<sup>rs</sup> John Blows, Anthony Bouch, and  
William Church survivors in a Joint Account with William Hall who is  
deceased both Intestate and Insolvent desiring Liberty for Transferring  
£250. - Three and a half and £125. - Three pence Annually Transferable  
in this House, they having produced a Certificate of the said Hall's Death  
was read.

The Request of M<sup>rs</sup> Henry and Peter Miltman and Joseph  
Salomons being read that £1200. - value in Coral and Amber Beads  
shipped for India on the Company's usual Terms (the greatest part of  
which is the Property of M<sup>rs</sup> Andrew Rags Free Merchant for Port St.  
George) may not be Obligated to have the Produce of it returned in Three  
years, and that the Bond given by them for so doing may be  
cancelled, also

The Request of the said M<sup>rs</sup> Rags that £1000. - value in  
Coral may on its arrival here be shipped on his account for India -  
without entering into the usual Obligation for returning the value of  
it within Three years, or such Orders be given that he may use the  
Produce of it there for his own account.

**Ordered** That the said Requests be Rejected.

Humphrey Bellamy of Walthamstow in Essex Esq<sup>r</sup>

Matthew Binley of the Exchequer Office London Gentleman

were now approved of as Security for M<sup>rs</sup> Richard Binley Free Merchant  
at Bengal in £1000. -

Fig. 7. Letter excusing Philadelphia Austen and Mary Elliot from paying British East India Company for permission to go to East Indies.

*Order'd* That a Warrant be made out to Captain John McVinnam for £792.2.7 in full for Goods sold at the Company's Land's according to the Report from the Committee of Private Trade dated this day now read.

The Request of Mr James Adams Attorney to Mr Edward Lee Chief Clerk of the Royal Duke that he may send back to Canton Two Rhoads brought home by him on his Ship as Nipson Sea which were filled with Ready and also to return thither on the Houghson One Chest belonging to Captain Cumming of the Royal Duke in the like Circumstances was read.

The Right Honble Lord Mansfield's Motion was now Appointed of as Security for Mr Thomas Goulard Fifth Lyras Cargo of the Rhoda and Houghson in the name of Mr Hugh Ryle.

On reading a Report dated this day from the Committee of Law Suits made in pursuance of a Reference of this Court of the 27<sup>th</sup> June last to consider of Proper Measures for carrying into Execution the Resolution of the General Court of the 26<sup>th</sup> June last in relation to the Bonds given by the late President and Council at Fort George.

*Order'd* That the Secretary do send copies of the Interrogatories mentioned in the said Report to the several Persons therein mentioned and that he do desire they will return their Answers upon Oath to this Court - that may be enabled to make a Report to the General Court pursuant to their Resolution of the 26<sup>th</sup> June last.

*Order'd* That a Warrant be made out to Mr Thomas Hawker for £30. as a Gratuity for his past Services in the Accountants Office that he have a Salary of £30. for the first Year to commence from the 25<sup>th</sup> Instant and £30. Annually afterwards and that he do succeed in the said Office in case of Death or otherwise (if deserving) according to his Station.

On reading a Report from the Committee of Warehouses dated this day.

*Order'd* That the five Bids of Tea therein mentioned bought by Thomas Farrow a Broker at the present Sale who is since dead for Mr John Butcher be cleared by Mr Butcher (or Samuel Smith and)

That Mr Jonathan Johnson have a Bid of Single Tea of 10000 @ 1002 bought by the said Farrow waight off to him?

The Petition of Hugh M'Kee being read setting forth his services in the Majesty's Navy and Army and praying to be appointed a Lieutenant as any of the Company's Gentlemen in the East Indies, also

The several Petitions of Mary Elliot and Philadelphia Austen each praying leave to take Passage to their Friends at Fort St David on the Bombay Coast.

Fig. 8. Order mentioning petition of Philadelphia Austen to take passage to friends at Fort St. David.



# Honourable United Company

| Married Women                                                                                                                                                             | Unmarried Women                                                                                                                                                                             | Widows                                                                                                                                                                                 | Children                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sophia Wapcho<br>Ann B. B. B. B.<br>Mary Munro<br>Mary Smith<br>Elizabeth Edwards<br>Ann De Moor<br>Catherine de la Motte<br>Mary Taylor<br>Christiana Shaw<br>Mary P. P. | Honoria B. B. B. B.<br>Ann B. B. B. B.<br>Margaret B. B. B. B.<br>Sarah B. B. B. B.<br>Philadelphia Austen<br>Mary B. B. B. B.<br>Elizabeth B. B. B. B.<br>Martha B. B. B. B.<br>Ann Morgan | Hannah B. B. B. B.<br>Mary B. B. B. B.<br>Ann B. B. B. B.<br>Elizabeth B. B. B. B.<br>Ann B. B. B. B.<br>George B. B. B. B.<br>Ann B. B. B. B.<br>Mary B. B. B. B.<br>Mary B. B. B. B. | William B. B. B. B.<br>Alexander B. B. B. B.<br>Robert B. B. B. B.<br>Hugh B. B. B. B.<br>James B. B. B. B.<br>John B. B. B. B.<br>Louis B. B. B. B.<br>Francis B. B. B. B.<br>Daniel B. B. B. B.<br>William B. B. B. B.<br>Nathaniel B. B. B. B.<br>Benjamin B. B. B. B.<br>Thomas B. B. B. B.<br>Nathaniel B. B. B. B.<br>John B. B. B. B.<br>Francis B. B. B. B.<br>Elizabeth B. B. B. B.<br>Maria B. B. B. B. |

Port St. George 21<sup>st</sup> January 1753.  
 [Signature]

Fig. 10. Continued: List of inhabitants not in the service of the Honourable United Company including Philadelphia Austen among unmarried women.

Comblanc 27 June 1780

My dear Cousin

I received your kind & entertaining letter a few days ago. I cannot but confess the justice of the gentle rebuke, if you give me for having suffered so much time to pass before I answered yours. I am myself without blame but hope to behave better in future. As to seeing you by my country, my sincere intentions of amendment. Your account of Ball gave me much pleasure, as I was happy to find you had been so well amused. I doubt not my dear cousin being distinguished character. She goes & therefore am not at all amazed at her attracting the notice of the smartest men in the room. I am not much acquainted with my countrymen, but your account gives me a good opinion of their taste. Upon the whole your ball must have been a very agreeable one. The circumstance however of not being able to dance with the person whom wishes must have lessened your amusement. It is a vacation you would not have had in the country as it is the custom to change your partner every dance, by which means you have an opportunity of accepting or refusing as you please, of dancing with every one to the comfort if you are engaged to a person disagreeable to

Fig. 11. Page of a letter from Eliza de Feuillide to Philadelphia Walter,

27 June 1780.

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