

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Southampton
Unit of Assessment: 29 English
Title of case study: 29-01 Early Women Writers as Innovators
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research demonstrating the innovative contributions of early women writers to the cultural, socio-political, and economic life of their period has enhanced and broadened understanding of British and European literary traditions. It has contributed intellectually and economically to the heritage industry through Chawton House Library (CHL), a registered charity promoting early women's writing, and a range of other public organisations. Key findings of the research have been used to reinvigorate secondary school teaching and inspire those who occupy leadership roles in education, inform television documentary makers, and enthuse old and new readers internationally.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Jane Austen is one of Britain's most popular literary exports but to think of her in isolation, or simply as a writer of romantic fiction, is to neglect how her writings and that of other female authors of the period 1680-1820 contributed to political, cultural, and economic thought. Research at the University of Southampton by Emma Clery, Professor of 18th-Century Literature (2005-present), and Gillian Dow, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (2005) now Senior Lecturer (2013-present), combines research on Austen with the study of less well-known women writers.</p> <p>Since her appointment, Clery has researched the ways in which 18th-century women writers responded to contemporary debates on economics and moral philosophy (e.g. the work of Kames, North, and Shaftesbury). In 'Austen and Masculinity' [3.1], she demonstrates the changing nature of masculine identity under pressure in a period of war and rapid commercial development. She shows how each of Austen's novels contains a story of male vocation (the sailor, cleric, or land-owner), which works in conjunction with the romantic plot, even while male points of view are elided. This offers a new way of understanding the historical nature of Austen's fiction. In 'Luxury' [3.3], she surveys the complete works of two early 18th-century female authors: Mary Astell and Eliza Haywood. The key insight is that these women writers, in part through their distinctive perspectives as women, changed the terms of mainstream controversy over the effects of modern consumerism in ways that anticipate present-day critiques of capitalism. The work has led to the award of a major Leverhulme Research Fellowship 'Romantic Women Writers and the Question of Economic Progress' (Sept. 2013-Aug. 2016, £120,000).</p> <p>Dow's research (2005-12) concentrates on the cross-channel migration of women's writing in the period 1780-1830. Her study of French women's life writing, and particularly the works of Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis [3.6, 3.4] uses a wide range of period sources in French and English. She rejects dominant scholarly opinion that these works were nothing more than politically conservative potboilers, and demonstrates that Genlis's work engaged directly with Romantic gender politics, influencing female readers and writers across Europe. She demonstrates a hitherto unrecognised but extensive cross-channel exchange between British and French women's fiction.</p> <p>Dow also compares translations of Austen's <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> and <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>. She charts the changes in characterisation, plot, and tone that are evident in successive French translations from 1815 to 2008 to demonstrate the continued cultural significance of Austen in later writing, and in languages other than English. Placing this alongside the rise of global English and the 20th-century dominance of the Anglo-American novel as 'world classic', she shows how Austen's revisions of the standard courtship plot, and her sharp observation of socio-economic change—particularly with regard to gender—speak to modern audiences worldwide [3.5].</p>

3. References to the research

Publications

1. Clery, Emma. 'Austen and Masculinity', *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L Johnson and Clara Tuite (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 332-42.
2. Clery, Emma. 'Women's Writing and the Luxury Debate', *A History of British Women's Writing*, vol., 1690-1750, ed. Ros Ballaster (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 40-60.
3. Clery, Emma. "'To dazzle let the Vain design": Alexander Pope's Portrait Gallery and the Impossibility of Brilliant Women', in *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 39-59.
4. Dow, Gillian. 'Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis and the French Historical Novel in Romantic Britain', *Women's Writing*, 19:3 (2012), 273-92.
5. Dow, Gillian (co-ed.). *Uses of Jane: Austen's Afterlives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 256pp. Includes Dow's essay 'Uses of Translation: The Global Jane Austen', 154-74, and co-written 'Introduction', 1-18.
6. Dow, Gillian. "'A Model for the British Fair?" French Women's Life-Writing in Britain, 1680-1830', in Daniel Cook and Amy Culley (eds.), *Women's Life Writing in Britain, 1700-1830* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 86-102.

Grants

CI: Gillian Dow, with the Huygens Instituut, the Hague, 'Women Writers in History: Toward a New Understanding of European Literary Culture', COST (European Co-operation in Science and Technology) Network Grant, 2009-13, 48 months, 600,000 E. (This funding did not go through Southampton accounts).

4. Details of the impact

Working with Chawton House Library (CHL), Clery and Dow have actively engaged with intense public interest in the works of Austen. They have brought the importance of a wide group of 18th-century women writers to the attention of teachers, students, TV and filmmakers, and to the officers and members of international historical and literary societies. As a result, work at the University of Southampton has made a distinct contribution to public education and understanding of 18th-century women's writing, providing publishers and institutions with significant economic benefit.

In February 2012 Dow was appointed Director of Research at CHL. As Director, she plays the key role in designing CHL's public programme of evening lectures, exhibitions, events, and conferences, drawing on the research strengths of colleagues in the interdisciplinary Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies, based in the Faculty of Humanities. E.g. In Feb. 2013, 80 enthusiastic Austen readers enjoyed a varied evening of research-led talks by contributors to Dow's collection *Uses of Austen* [3.5] celebrating the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* [5.1]. Public exhibitions curated by Dow and drawing directly from her research into Austen's letters and novels include the touring show *Jane Austen's Reading* (Chawton 2009; Godmersham Park 2010; Denver, Colorado 2013). This attracted in excess of 600 visitors across the 3 venues [5.2]. Dow has also played a key part in organising CHL's Austen-themed school visits for over 800 primary and secondary students and their teachers every year.

Further Public Engagement includes contributions to The British Library's *Jane Austen and Performance* conference for 140 A-level students and teachers (21 June 2010). Dow's lecture 'Jane Austen and Plays for Young People' drew on her research to tell how Austen's reading of Genlis's work contributed to her own novels, notably *Mansfield Park*. Feedback from participants included 'the whole day was informative, interesting, and inspiring' [5.3].

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Clery has had repeat invitations to lecture to A-level teachers at continuing professional development events organised by Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR; July 2011; Nov. 2012). Clery's lecture on Mary Shelley and Frankenstein used her insights about the economics of publishing—particularly the success of eighteenth-century teenage female authors in the Gothic genre—to offer teachers a new way of engaging students. Evidencing teacher feedback, OCR wrote '...your talk was often felt to be the best part of the day' [5.4].

As part of our strategy to combine research insights with creative writing, novelist Rebecca Smith (Fellow in Creative Writing at Southampton since 2008) published *Miss Jane Austen's Guide to Modern Life's Dilemmas* (2012). This popular self-help book drew on Dow's and Clery's research into Austen's novels, letters, and unpublished writings to supply advice to young 21st-century women. The book includes advice on: managing a budget; how to become independent; and balancing the competing demands of family and career. In the year following publication, it has sold over 18,000 copies in the UK (RRP £12.99), and internationally, bringing economic benefit to Ivy Press and Tarcher Penguin [5.5]. As Arts Council- and National Lottery-funded Writer in Residence at Jane Austen's House Museum, Chawton, Smith has delivered more than 40 workshops to young people and the general public on themes including the business of writing, and the economics of life below and above stairs in Austen's England.

Since 2008, more than 4,000 members of the public have attended Clery's and Dow's research-based public lectures. For instance, Clery delivered a talk to an audience of 150 fee-paying attendees at a conference linked to The National Portrait Gallery blockbuster exhibition, *Brilliant Women* (April, 2008). Clery showed how the portraits in the exhibition are part of a contested process by which women writers can be seen as icons of British modernisation and social and economic improvement. She also lectured at the National Maritime Museum on 'Jane Austen and London' (April 2013) to 100 members of the public [5.6]. Her other ticketed public lectures include international Jane Austen Society (JAS) meetings in Aberdeen (2011) and London (2007, 2011, 2013). Dow has also delivered lectures to international fee-paying JAS audiences in Chicago (2008, 2011), London (2008), Sydney and Tokyo (2009) and New York (2012). JAS audiences are drawn mostly from outside academia. There was an average attendance at the above JAS events of 250, but the New York 2012 meeting attracted over 800 fee-paying delegates. The standard fee is \$10 for JAS members and \$15 for others [5.7].

Dow's research insights have been made available to the public through: articles for Public Broadcasting Service's website to accompany the US premiere of a new TV version of *Emma* (January 2010); *Msllexia* (Jan-March 2008); *Sensibilities*, the journal of JAS Australia (readership 600; 2009-13); her co-editorship of *Persuasions* (2010), the online journal of JAS North America (3,000 hits in 3 months after publication). Since 2008, Dow has edited *The Female Spectator*, a non-academic publication distributed internationally to 800 Friends and Members of CHL.

Dow's expertise has been in particular demand in 2013 due to the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*; she has been interviewed by, among others, the BBC, Meridian TV, Al Jazeera and *The Washington Post*. Clery has contributed research-based production advice and interviews to: BBC4's 'How Reading Made Us Modern' (February 2009), 'The Birth of the British Novel' (February 2011), and, 'How To Be A Lady'" (March 2013) [5.8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Evidence of this event can be found at:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/scecs/newsandevents/conferences/>

5.2 Evidence of this exhibition can be found at:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/scecs/newsandevents/exhibitions/>

It resulted in an illustrated online article:

<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no2/dow-halsey.html>

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- 5.3 For participation in the British Library conference for young people 21 June 2010, and a brief podcast which includes Dow lecturing:
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/tarea/teachers/students/conferences/austen/austenconference.html>
- 5.4 Folder of emails from OCR available from the UoA.
- 5.5 *Miss Jane Austen's Guide to Modern Life's Dilemmas* by Rebecca Smith. Published by Ivy Press (UK) Tarcher Penguin (US and Canada), October 2012 ISBN-10/13 9780399160615. Evidence of sales figures is available from the UoA.
- 5.6 For evidence of Clery's public lectures see:
<http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/exhibitions/2008/brilliant-women/conference/conference-programme.php>
<http://www.rmg.co.uk/about/press/nmm-gh-april-may-2013>
- 5.7 Evidence of Dow and Clery's contribution to and impact on JAS in the US and in the UK, contact the past President of the Jane Austen Society of North America, and Secretary of the Kent branch of the JAS UK, see separate list of names.
- 5.8 File of evidence of Clery and Dow's media appearances and interviews available from the UoA.
- 5.9 File of questionnaires from public lectures including LLL available from the UoA.
- 5.10 File of CHL related material available from the University of Southampton, including the MOU between CHL and University of Southampton.
- The following people may be consulted:
1. Chief Executive Officer of the Chawton House Library.
 2. Curator of Jane Austen House Museum.
 3. OCR English Qualifications Manager.
 - 4, 5. Officials of the Jane Austen Society in the USA and UK.