

Bibliographical Note: Searching for Mary Anne

SANDRA SIDER

Gordon N. Ray's collection of rare books at the Pierpont Morgan Library includes three editions of Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, the second edition of which (1779) bears the signature "Mary Anne Parker," written in a slightly awkward hand in an undistinguished style. Nevertheless, as a female owner of "a young lady's entrance into the world," she piqued the interest of library staff and we foraged into the land of peerages and armorials to trace the patently male bookplate pasted over the "y" of her name in the first of three volumes. Luckily, we were given this clue, for many female owners of books and manuscripts are rescued from oblivion only through the men in their lives.

Furthermore, the very detailed and clearly legible engraved bookplate is a cataloger's dream: a shield bearing three birds with ermine chevron; helm with naval coronet surmounted by a demi-Pegasus having a wing charged with a *fleur-de-lis*; a laurel branch; and the motto "THUS" in a ribbon. The outer circle of the bookplate displays the words:

ASTON HALL*STAFFORDSHIRE*EDWARD*SWYNFEN*JERVIS

A quick look at "Jervis" in Burke's *General Armory* confirmed the heraldry as that of John Jervis (1735–1823), Earl of St. Vincent. Assuming that our Mary Anne was in some way connected to this admiral of the fleet whose "heroic" actions near Cape St. Vincent earned his title, we then turned to the entry for Jervis in the *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*. Indeed, we found a Parker, who was Jervis's mother, but her name was Elizabeth. Since, however, the *DNB*, in its patrilineal way, does attempt to trace important male relatives, we found that Jervis's mother was the sister of Thomas Parker . . . so on to "Parker" in the *DNB*.

In the entry for Jervis's Uncle Thomas, a baron of the exchequer among other estimable duties, we discovered that his elder daughter Martha happened to have married John Jervis. With this double "Parker" connection to John Jervis, our next

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step took us to the multivolumed *Complete Peerage* (now we were really getting serious), arriving at “Saint Vincent” after a short detour through “Jervis.” We had placed our bookplate—on stylistic grounds—in the early 19th century, and this dating was confirmed by the identification of “EDWARD SWYNFEN JERVIS” as the nephew and heir of John Jervis. In 1810 he married Mary Anne Parker, second daughter of Thomas Parker (whose name was not given in the *DNB*), when she was in her late thirties. (Mary Anne predeceased her husband in 1855 at the age of 82.)

We envision the young Mary Anne Parker, in the Staffordshire estate of Park Hill where she apparently grew to adulthood and spent almost half her life, proudly penning her name in *Evelina*, a book which she made sure to take with her when she married Edward Jervis. At a later date, either she wrote on the blank page opposite that bearing her husband’s bookplate, or a relative who was her namesake inscribed the volumes inherited from Mary Anne.

Even though this information is only a short footnote to the history of books and their readers, we hope that the relative ease with which such basic research concerning women and their books can be accomplished might encourage today’s collectors and catalogers to attempt to document these owners.



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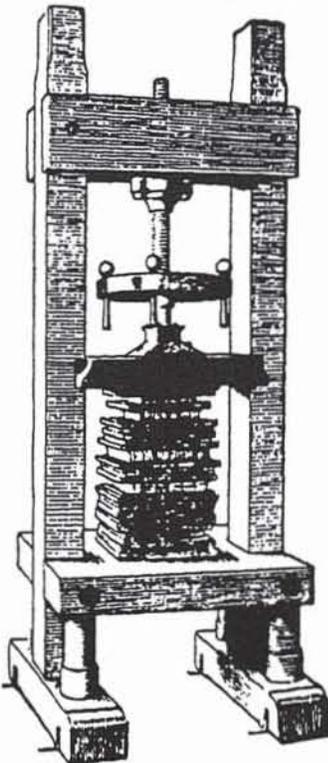
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