BOOK REVIEW

The Princess and her Privy Purse

My Dear Hamy: Insights and Intrigues from the Court of Caroline, Princess of Wales.

By Martin Thomas, Lord Thomas of Gresford. Bridge Books, 2016. 703 pages. 49 illustrations. Hardcover. £25.

Review by Susan Allen Ford.

Jane Austen was fascinated by celebrity and politics, commenting to her friend Martha Lloyd on one enduring controversy, the character of Caroline, Princess of Wales, and her treatment by her husband and the royal family:

"I suppose all the World is sitting in Judgement upon the Princess of Wales's Letter. Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she is a Woman, & because I hate her Husband. . . . I am resolved at least always to think that she would have been respectable, if the Prince had behaved only tolerably by her at first." (16 February 1813)

However comically overstated her opinion, its intensity was neither uncommon nor unwarranted.

My Dear Hamy: Insights and Intrigues from the Court of Caroline, Princess of Wales traces the story of Caroline's dysfunctional marriage, motherhood, trial for divorce, and failed attempt to be recognized as Queen, from the perspective of Anne Hayman, a woman who in May 1797, at the age of 44, left her home in Wales for a probationary

appointment as sub-governess to the 16-month-old Princess Charlotte. London itself was an attraction, but the need to help support her mother and provide for her own financial future as well as the possibility of helping to advance friends and family were more significant motives. despite her careful Caught, behavior, in the sparring between the Prince of Wales and his Princess, Anne Hayman was not offered a permanent appointment

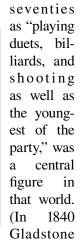
as sub-governess. Instead, she accepted the position of Privy Purse to Caroline, a relationship that lasted until the Princess of Wales left England in 1814. (One of many intriguing details: at their first meeting, Caroline recommended Regina Maria Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* and lent it to Anne.)

Martin Thomas, Queen's Counsel and a working peer in the U.K.'s House of Lords, provides a compelling biography of Anne Hayman (1753-1847). Her story reveals the pressures of the developing empire on relationships, the attractions and potential rewards of political connections, and an energetic woman's shaping of her own life. Anne, the daughter of a Welsh attorney, lived with her mother in the village of Gresford after her father's death in 1783. Although she was engaged at the age of 17, after five years her fiancé died in India, where he had gone to make their fortune; she refused a later proposal of marriage.

Thomas depicts the vibrant society in this part of Wales, a social world characterized by private theatricals, bow meetings (featuring archery contests), and music. Thomas says that this society brought Anne "into easy association with the rich and famous . . . and introduced her to a rising generation of young politicians who were to dominate the political scene as the Age of Reason be-

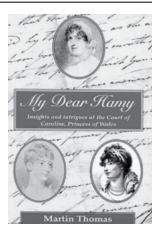
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Allen Ford's Anne
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came subsumed in the wars with France."
Anne Hayman, described even in her



called her "a prodigy of strength and life.")

As its title suggests, this book is as much about court intrigue as about Anne Hayman her-



self. She lived for more than a decade in proximity to Caroline (during which time she was also able to build Glasfryn, in Gresford, today the home of the author). With the aid of a trove of Anne Hayman's letters, Thomas recounts Caroline's narrative as well as that of Anne's intimate friendship with Gilbert Elliott, Lord Minto, an early champion of the Princess of Wales, who later became Governor General of India, ended government slavery in Java, destroyed its instruments of torture, and razed its prison.

Thomas tells a riveting story in language that, though somewhat marred by typographical errors, often echoes Austen's. His subjects speak through the letters that connected them to each other and to those back home, to and from places such as London, Wales, Scotland, Italy, and India. Hamy's judgment of Caroline sorts well with Jane Austen's:

"HRH was good natured in the extreme to all her ladies and to all her servants, so that it was impossible not to feel affectionate interest in her, even when her defiance of all propriety grieved us all to the heart. Nature had formed her well, and a good education might have done much in informing a fine character. . . . But bad as her education was, it did not deprive her of the consciousness of what was right and what was wrong. . . ."

My Dear Hamy brings a legal, political, and very human perspective to the events and people of Jane Austen's world.

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