

Chawton House Library Fellow's Lecture

22nd April 2010

The history and genealogy of England: popular representations of kingship in the Wandering Jew's Chronicle (1634-1820).

Dr. Giles Bergel

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In 1791, a fifteen year-old Jane Austen wrote a satirical History of England from the reign of Henry the 4th to the death of Charles the 1st, playfully inserting the history of her own family into a history of England. In common with the schoolbook histories that it parodied, the use of the English royal succession gave her story a structure and continuity that, while particular to England, was a normal practice for the histories of many nations. This talk will outline the use of royal family history as a basic historical narrative through the example of *The Wandering Jew's Chronicle*, a traditional ballad published in England for almost two hundred years in numerous illustrated editions, but now largely unknown.



Mary Queen of Scots, pen and watercolour by Cassandra Austen, from Jane Austen's *The History of England* (courtesy of The British Library).

Although both royal genealogy and the myth of the Wandering Jew can be traced to antiquity, the Wandering Jew's Chronicle owes its ancestry to a wave of cheap printed pictures, songs and stories that swept across Europe from 1602. An adaptation of the figure to English historical circumstances, *The Wandering Jew's Chronicle* testifies to the versatility of the broadside ballad format, a cheap means of entertainment and instruction that combined images, music and story, enjoyed by many and collected by a few. Dr. Bergel will outline how the publishing history of *The Wandering Jew's Chronicle* offers insights into the forms of historical and popular consciousness associated with oral tradition, print culture and other media, as well as testifying to problems of structure and of continuity within the English national story.

Lecture Tickets: £10 (£7.50 for students)

6.30pm Reception with wine & canapes

7.00pm Lecture



To book, or for more info, call 01420 541010 or email info@chawton.net.

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