

# BEARDED TIE CORNER



By S.W. Book Club Est. 2020

Holiday Gifts Every  
Reader Needs

Our Winter Book  
List to Finish Off  
2023

The Collection of  
Illustrated Letters  
by Beatrix Potter

Reading Letters  
with Jane Austen:  
The Art of  
Persuasion

The Dark Side  
of Academia:

What You're Not  
Supposed to Know  
(But Should)



# RONI HORN

29 AUGUST - 17 OCTOBER

LIMMATSTRASSE 210  
8005 Zurich  
+41 (0) 44 445 80 50  
www.floera.com

## Letter from the Editor's Desk

Dear Reader,

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome you to Behind the Cover Magazine as we start our third year of publication. This year brings about changes, we will be centring each individual print magazine around a theme. We hope you will still be loyal readers and will welcome the changes to come.

Behind the Cover is published and run by S.W. Book Club. We are inspired by the voices of our members, and more specifically, by the multitude of readers that are contained within our book community.

When we started putting together this issue, we knew from the beginning that it should revolve around letters written by female authors. Going through the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the theme that stood out through every era was the celebration of individuality. For this issue, the first of another era, we chose two authors who are deeply true to themselves: Jane Austen and Beatrix Potter.

I have been a fan of Austen's from the first time I watched the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* in theatres, and I knew that the only person who could capture her unique writing style was the brilliant Diane Smith. Her research gives us an insightful view into Austen's world, a fiercely private author.

Finally, in "The Collection of Illustrated Letters by Beatrix Potter," we photographed Beatrix Potter's letters which are defined by what is happening in the world right now. The literary landscape is changing, and magazines, like all media, are becoming increasingly digital. But in the end, it all comes down to creativity. This story and—I hope—the entire issue capture that new spirit.

Many thanks to the amazing and incredibly hardworking team at Behind the Cover for spending their summer making sure our ideas came to life. We hope you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we did making it.

Cheers,

*Bailey Myrin*

Bailey Myrin



Contact Behind The Cover  
15-20 Phoenix Pl, London  
WC1X 0DA, United Kingdom  
Telephone number: +44 300 030  
0700  
Website: [behindthecover.org](http://behindthecover.org)

BAILEY MYRIN  
publisher, editor, designer  
[bailey@behindthecover.org](mailto:bailey@behindthecover.org)

TOM DRESSER  
customer service  
[tom@behindthecover.org](mailto:tom@behindthecover.org)

JANE AUDAS  
copyeditor

JONATHAN WILEY  
graphic designer, photographer

CORE CONTRIBUTORS  
Joy Deneen  
Andrea Jenkins  
Sopia Frances  
Christopher Rouleau  
Diane Smith  
John Orpin

Cover Credits: Jonathan Wiley



The Art of Persuasion

BY INGRID TIEKEN-BOON VAN OSTADE



Image credits: (1) Image of Jane Austen from The Complete Letter Writer, public domain via Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2) Photo of writing desk, Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade.

No, the image to the left is not a newly discovered picture of Jane Austen. The image was taken from my copy of *The Complete Letter Writer*, published in 1840, well after Jane Austen's death in 1817. But letter writing manuals were popular throughout Jane Austen's lifetime, and the text of my copy is very similar to that of much earlier editions of the book, published from the mid-1750s on. It is possible then that Jane Austen might have had access to one. Letter writing manuals contained "familiar letters on the most common occasions in life", and showed examples of what a letter might look like to people who needed to learn the art of letter writing. The *Complete Letter Writer* also contains an English grammar, with rules of spelling, a list of punctuation marks and an account of the eight parts of speech. If Jane Austen had possessed a copy, she might have had access to this feature as well.

But I doubt if she did. Her father owned an extensive library, and Austen was an avid reader. But in genteel families such as hers letter writing skills were usually handed down within the family. "I have now attained the true art of letter-writing, which we are always told, is to express on paper what one would say to the same person by word of mouth," Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra on 3 January 1801, adding, "I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter." But I don't think George Austen's library contained any English grammars either. He did teach boys at home, to prepare them for further education, but he taught them Latin, not English.

So Jane Austen didn't learn to write from a book; she learnt to write just by practicing, from a very early age. Her *Juvenilia*, a fascinating collection of stories and tales she wrote from around the age of twelve onward, have survived, in her own hand, as evidence of how she developed into an author. Her letters, too, illustrate this. She is believed to have written some 3,000 letters, only about 160 of which have survived, most of them addressed to Cassandra. The first letter that has come down to us reads a little

**Her unusual ending, "Good bye", suggests a kind of flirting on paper.**



awkwardly: it has no opening formula, and contains flat adverbs – "We were so terrible good as to take James in our carriage", which she would later employ to characterize her so-called "vulgar" characters – and even has an unusual conclusion: "yours ever J.A.". Could this have been her first letter?

Cassandra wasn't the only one she corresponded with. There are letters to her brothers, to friends, to her nieces and nephews as well as to her publishers and some of her literary admirers, with whom she slowly developed a slightly more intimate relationship. There is even a letter to Charles Haden, the handsome apothecary who she is believed to have been in love with. Her unusual ending, "Good bye", suggests a kind of flirting on paper. The language of the letters shows how she varied her style depending on who she was writing to. She would use the word *fun*, considered a "low" word at the time, only to the younger generation of Austens. Jane Austen loved linguistic jokes, as shown by the reverse letter to her niece Cassandra Esten: "Ym raed Yssac, Ihsiw uoy a yppah wen raey", and she recorded her little nephew George's inability to pronounce his own name: "I flatter myself that itty Dordy will not forget me at least under a week".

It's easy to see how the letters are a linguistic goldmine. They show us how she loved to talk to relatives and friends and how much she missed her sister when they were apart. They show us how she, like most people in those days, depended on the post for news about friends and family, how a new day wasn't complete without the arrival of a letter. At a linguistic level, the letters show us a careful speller, even if she had different spelling preferences from what was the general practice at the time, and someone who was able to adapt her language, word use and grammar alike, to the addressee.

All her writing, letters as well as her fiction, was done at a writing desk, just like the one on the table on the image from the *Complete Letter Writer*, and just like



my own. A present from her father on her nineteenth birthday, the desk, along with the letters written upon it, is on display as one of the "Treasures of the British Library". The portable desk traveled with her wherever she went. "It was discovered that my writing and dressing boxes had been by accident put into a chaise which was just packing off as we came in," she wrote on 24 October 1798. A near disaster, for "in my writing-box was all my worldly wealth". †