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Dancing on the Wind, Sarah Chester, Tudor Publishing, Incorporated, 1988, 0944276229, 9780944276228, 311 pages. In the merry old England of George III, there was a fine line between virtue and vice, and much depended upon what social class to which one belonged. For the poor folk, it took little to send them to the gallows--and the wealthy took great pleasure in exerting their power..

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Dancing on the Wind , Marion Chesney, Jul 1, 2003, , 364 pages. .

Marion Chesney was born on 1936 in Glasgow, Scotland, UK, and started her first job as a bookseller in charge of the fiction department in John Smith & Sons Ltd. While bookselling, by chance, she got an offer from the Scottish Daily Mail to review variety shows and quickly rose to be their theatre critic. She left Smith's to join Scottish Field magazine as a secretary in the advertising department, without any shorthand or typing, but quickly got the job of fashion editor instead. She then moved to the Scottish Daily Express where she reported mostly on crime. This was followed by a move to Fleet Street to the Daily...more Marion Chesney Gibbons

Anxious to spend more time at home with her small son, Marion, urged by her husband, started to write historical romances in 1977. After she had written over 100 of them under her maiden name, Marion Chesney, and under the pseudonyms: Ann Fairfax, Jennie Tremaine, Helen Crampton, Charlotte Ward, and Sarah Chester, she getting fed up with 1714 to 1910, she began to write detectives stories in 1985 under the pseudonym of M. C. Beaton. On a trip from the States to Sutherland on holiday, a course at a fishing school inspired the first Constable Hamish Macbeth story. They returned to Britain and bought a croft house and croft in Sutherland where Harry reared a flock of black sheep. But Charles was at school, in London so when he finished and both tired of the long commute to the north of Scotland, they moved to the Cotswolds where Agatha Raisin was created.(less)

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I am going to die, Polly thought. The crowd clamoured for a speech. Polly raised her hands and they fell silent. From the foot of the gallows, she asked the spectators why she, a poor woman, should hang for theft, while the abbess of Covent Garden can commit murder on the souls of innocent country girls over and over again, and yet go free. And then she condemned them to hell.(less)

Polly James' story from village foundling to lady is extraordinary. Her passion for life, her ability to keep going when all the odds seem against her, even surviving the hangman's noose makes for thrilling and entertaining reading. This is one light romance that packs quite a punch, evocatively captures the period of white slavery, drudgery, wily conscription into the navy and transportation to America and Australia.

Marion Gibbons, née McChesney (born 1936 in Glasgow, Scotland) is a British popular and prolific writer of romance and mystery novels since 1979. She has written numerous successful historical romance novels under her maiden name, Marion Chesney, including the Travelling Matchmaker and Daughters of Mannerling series. Using the pseudonym M. C. Beaton, she has also written many popular mystery novels, most notably the Agatha Raisin and Hamish Macbeth mystery series. She has also written romance novels under the pseudonyms Ann Fairfax, Jennie Tremaine, Helen Crampton, Charlotte Ward, and Sarah Chester.

Writing as Marion Chesney, her most recent endeavour is an Edwardian mystery series featuring Lady Rose Summer, a charming debutante with an independent streak, and Captain Harry Cathcart, an impoverished aristocrat. In a recent interview, she stated that she has ceased writing the Edwardian series due to the pressure of writing for the Agatha Raisin and Hamish Macbeth series.[citation needed]

Marion McChesney was born on 1936 in Glasgow, Scotland, and has worked as a buyer of fiction for a Glasgow bookshop, theatre critic, newspaper reporter and editor. She married Middle East Correspondent Harry Scott Gibbons, they had a son Charles.[1] She had lived in the USA. She divides her time between a cottage in the Cotswolds and Paris.[2]

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Miss Lucinda Linley is the second oldest of seven sisters; she and her sister Henrietta are the only unmarried ones remaining. Their father Baron Linley had been able through careful management to dower all five of the married girls, but when the youngest, Henrietta, fell in love with Lord Carlton, there was not enough for two dowries, and Carlton would not marry her without it. Lucinda, already under pressure to marry a revolting local widower, offers to forego her half and to go to her Aunt Pernelia at Southfield as a companion instead. Her parents are iffy about letting her go, since there was a tragedy there many years ago and there are rumors about the place and the people.

Douglas Wyndham, Earl of Belington owns nearby Ravensbrook Manor, where he lives with his younger brother Alex. At Southfield, Lucinda immediately likes her Aunt Pernelia, who is recovering from a hip injury sustained in a fall. Pernelia's son Edgerton is a different kettle of fish -- a cold, nasty man who rules his cowed family absolutely. Lucinda learns quickly that according to Edgerton the first rule of Southfield is that you never have contact with any Belington, and the second rule of Southfield is that you never have contact with any Belington. She also learns that Edgerton's pretty daughter Alethea has broken this rule; she met and fell in love with Alex in London. When Lucinda meets Douglas, an instant attraction springs up between them, Edgerton goes ballistic, and the old tragedy threatens the happiness of a new generation.

This novel has a rather gothic mystery plot which requires a suspension of disbelief that I just couldn't give it. Lucinda and Douglas are attractive characters, and the author has a pleasant writing style, but the plot improbabilities were finally just too much for me. There is one memorable character, Douglas's mistress Madam Rose Clarisse de Soissons, who has made the capital error

for a whore of falling in love with her client, but she's not in the book enough for me to recommend it.
(Posted by Janice 9/12/10)

At 19 when she was still Miss Darnley, Arabella made a disastrous mistake: she trusted Sir Richard Barton, a con man and gambling addict. He got her drunk and tricked her into marrying him so he could get at her dowry, but her father withheld it. After that life for Arabella was a succession of bad experiences - living hand to mouth as Barton's fortunes varied, being forced to dress like a tart to lure victims to Barton's games, even the occasional beating as well. When Sir Richard got himself shot to death in a duel, Arabella, now 24, was not grief-stricken; she was relieved. It was a very different woman who emerged from her mourning period - one no longer a naive, headstrong innocent.

Miles Cavendish, Earl of Carrington had loved Arabella before her marriage, but he had not spoken; he had believed the stories that Arabella ran off with Richard for love and was a willing participant in his lifestyle. Miles did not know that actually Arabella had been growing to care for him when the whole Richard fiasco happened. He served under Wellington, attaining the rank of colonel; he received a bad leg wound which still gives him constant pain. He hopes that a new surgeon he has heard of in London can repair it. While Miles was away, his uncle Sir George Wetherby looked after his estate; Miles is very fond of his uncle and grateful for his help.

Miles had tried to visit Arabella during the year of mourning she spent with her husband's greedy and self-serving relations, but when he called, he was denied; Arabella was not told of his visits. Once out of mourning, Arabella goes to London to her aunt Lady Fitzwilliam, where she also reunites with her father. Miles follows her to London, where he hopes to find out the real truth of Arabella's old life, and perhaps win her at last, but his campaign may come to nothing as an old enemy bent on revenge has targeted Arabella.

I found this a moderately amusing read. I liked patient Miles, I thought Arabella's story was quite credible, and I liked the hints of the secondary romance between Miles's uncle and Arabella's aunt. I could have done without Mrs. Gordon and the stalker plot, as for me the growth of a solid relationship is all a romance really needs to make it a compelling read. (Posted by Janice 9/6/10)

Lady Helene Ambel is bored with the London season. Her father understands her interest in serious social issues such as white slavery and forced prostitution, but her mother is bent on marrying her off to a suitable candidate as soon as possible; Lady Ambel had married her husband despite fancying herself in love with another man and holds that love is not necessary in marriage. Captain Robert Longford in particular would be unacceptable because of his rake's reputation.

Helene's good friend Miss Juliet Sweeny shares her interests; Juliet has been in love with Nicholas Dexter for ages, but Nicholas lost an arm in a riding accident and, feeling that he was no longer good enough for Juliet, took himself off to Paris, where he took up painting. Juliet is now being pressured by her family to accept the Earl of Radford, so that her father's gambling debts can be paid.

This is an odd little book, one of the sort that probably leads people not familiar with regencies to think they're all Barbara Cartland level books. Reading through it I was hard put even to identify the year it was set in (Lord Wellington is mentioned, as is Lord Byron, yet the heroine powders her hair before attending a ball), and it's littered with what are either typos ("laying seige") or outright mistakes ("Waiter's" for "Watier's"). Throughout it's pretty cliched stuff, but it's a fast read and those who read mostly for action and plot might not find it as lame as I did. (Posted by Janice 9/2/10)

Gervase Davenet, Earl of Ashbourne is informally betrothed to Lady Joscelyn Melling, a very proper widow, with plans to marry when her period of mourning is concluded. He is also juggling a soon to be ex-mistress, Lady Luisa Rosedale, who is not happy about being dismissed. His household is presided over by his middle-aged cousin Almeria. His already tangled female relationships are further complicated when he learns that he is the successor guardian to Miss Cassandra Mowbray, a considerable heiress.

Cassandra's father was a soldier, and she had followed the drum with him until his death in battle. The adventurous life suited her down to the ground, and she became self-reliant and independent to a degree which angers and dismays Gervase and horrifies the women. Once in London Cassandra's reckless good heart leads her to help the most unsuitable people - a former soldier, an abused maidservant, a widow in distress, and Gervase's cousin Rufus's actress ladylove. Every time Gervase tells Cassandra not to do something ever again, she finds a way to evade her promise, thus convincing Gervase that she needs a strong hand at the reins -- possibly his.

This is another of those series regencies in the great middle ground - a tale told well enough, but with so many elements familiar from Heyer and every other London-set regency that it's déjà vu all over again. The author's style is not particularly memorable, but it's not objectionable either. Mention is made of many events of 1814, which shows the author looked some stuff up, but they aren't integrated into the dialog in a natural way -- not research dumps, but not entirely organic either. I can't recommend this book particularly, but if there's nothing else left in the bombshelter to read, you could do worse. (Posted by Janice 8/28/10)

I actually like Cassandra, very much! Although there are plot elements reminiscent of Heyer (when isn't it in a Regency?) the style of writing is quite different as well as the dialog. I didn't notice anything sticking out as a less integral part of the story. It's true that Cassandra bores on quite a bit about the military actions but it fits with and illustrate her character as much more interested in military matters than gossip or fashion. While Ashbourne is a rather typical haughty Regency hero, Cassandra has a passion that is not that often met with, certainly more than any of Heyer's heroines. She's more a creature of impulse than truly obstinate and the one time she does do something out of spite she feels awful about it. I like her and think she'll do something to loosen up the stickish hero, which he needs no end! This is a comfort read of mine and I would recommend it even when it's not the last book in the bomb shelter! (Posted by yvonne 8/28/10)

It's not the book I'd bring out of a burning house but it's well enough, I think. The name dropping, well, onlookers in a crowd often do that sort of thing, however repetitious or well known to their audience or boring it is. I've experienced it myself, which is one reason I avoid such events like the plague.

William Fairhaven, Duke of Severn is a widower of 42. He married as was his duty and had five children with his first wife - three sons and two twin daughters. His sons are now young men; the older two are making their Grand Tour and the youngest is at Eton. Only his two daughters, the Ladies Anne (after her mother) and Amelia, 13, are still at home.

Severn did not love his wife but thought she seemed happy enough with her life; he has never fallen in love and thinks perhaps he's just not wired for that. His wife died when the twins were born, and, as Severn spent very little time at home, the children were all raised by servants, governesses and each other. Now that their brothers are out of the house, the girls have only each other for affection; their father is (from their point of view) handsome, stern, cold and absent, and they haven't seen any evidence of affection for them -- which is why they call him The Dreadful Duke.

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