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THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
JANE AUSTEN

EDITED BY  
EDWARD COPELAND  
*Pomona College*  
AND  
JULIET McMASTER  
*University of Alberta*



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- 16 D. W. Harding, 'Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen', *Scrutiny*, 8 (1940), 346-62.
- 17 For a detailed account of these procedures and a large-scale comparison between tragedies of two literary periods, see J. F. Burrows and D. H. Craig, 'Lyrical Drama and the "Turbid Mountebanks": Styles of Dialogue in Romantic and Renaissance Tragedy', *Computers and the Humanities*, 28 (1994), 63-86.

## Jane Austen and literary traditions

Jane Austen inherited no obvious, no precisely defined tradition: not the classical canon which her brothers studied at school, not (like so many of her literary granddaughters) the canon as studied for a B.A. in English literature; not the full sweep of her predecessors in English fiction, many of whom remained unknown to her; not the intellectual framework offered by any regular course of study. 'Her reading was very extensive in history and belles lettres' (NA, P 7). But it was desultory. She was never in a position, even had she wished it, to work through the kind of subject-bibliography which Emma is always drawing up; instead, she was dependent on titles which happened to come her way.

What came her way was by no means negligible. She was luckier than some of her heroines: Marianne Dashwood, who thinks her family library 'too well known to me' to provide 'anything beyond mere amusement' (SS 343), or Catherine Morland, who says, 'new books do not fall in our way' (NA 41). Austen's first library, her father's, ran to more than 500 books.<sup>1</sup> Though her school experience was brief and insignificant, most of the usual school books were accessible at home. Most importantly, the whole family were avid book-borrowers and book-exchangers. Chawton, scene of her most sustained and productive period of writing, had a better reading group than she had found at Steventon and Manydown, as she was at pains to point out.<sup>2</sup> Her letters teem with every possible kind of reference to books: simple reports of what she or the family is reading; opinions; quotations applied sometimes straightforwardly but more often with multiple layers of irony; loving, joking mention of details from novels in which she treats them just like real life. Only a highly literary sister would write to a brother about to visit Sweden: 'Gustavus-Vasa, & Charles 12th, & Christiana, & Linneus - do their Ghosts rise up before You?' (L 214). This remark alone would place Austen squarely in the centre of the Enlightenment tradition of European learning of the long eighteenth century.

We have, therefore, a paradox of real knowledge and expertise combined with real intellectual deprivation (of which she probably became more conscious as her literary career gathered momentum). She picked her reading matter for herself from a wide range of rich and multiple traditions; but she knew no tradition systematically or comprehensively. One result of this situation is that she never assumes the role of disciple or student, let alone that of pedagogue. She recognizes no canonical status, acknowledges no literary authority. She assumes the sufficiency of her own taste as guide to literary value, admiring authors because she likes them and not because of their currency value as great or respected names; when she admires a Great Name she expresses that admiration in terms of personal friendship, not literary appreciation.<sup>3</sup>

She seems not to have thought in terms of a Great Tradition. She does not, like many of her contemporaries, seek to raise the status of the novel and confer authority on her own fictions by heading chapters with literary quotations. Nor does she seek to endow fictional characters with status and value by making them familiar with great writers. Henry Fielding uses the latter technique for Parson Adams and Will Booth;<sup>4</sup> but both are popular among contemporaries of Austen whose literary quality is questionable. Eleanor Sleath, for instance, in *The Orphan of the Rhine* (one of Isabella Thorpe's choices) is unreliable as to grammar but uses Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Burns, and other canonical authors to head her chapters; her heroine at thirteen is keen on Ariosto and Petrarch. Sleath's next novel, *The Nocturnal Minstrel*, quotes Ariosto in Italian and Horace in Latin.<sup>5</sup>

Austen's way of using the tradition is not Sleath's. Books are of service to her novels because of the daily uses that people make of their reading, in conversation, argument, and the shaping of imaginative experience. She presents them through the minds of her characters, coloured and differentiated by the imagined reader.<sup>6</sup> They are a vital part of the flow of life surrounding her; knowledge of books is, for her, continuous with other forms of knowledge.

I hope to establish here the broad outlines of Jane Austen's reading, and some slight sketch of the uses to which she puts it in her fiction. From an early age she read like a potential author. She looked for what she could use – not by quietly absorbing and reflecting it, but by actively engaging, rewriting, often mocking it. Evidence of her reading comes largely from her letters; it is, therefore, always fragmentary. At most times the Austen family group would be reading some book together; Jane would be reading another book on her own. Her letters mention only a very small proportion of all these books; and what they mention is not designed to convey meaning to a twentieth-century reader, but only to the letter's original

recipient, who shared all kinds of private knowledge with which to make sense of what the letter says.

Almost every item of evidence, therefore, requires analysis and explanation, and this must necessarily be speculative. Austen's references to authors do not flatly deliver approval or disapproval: she has less direct, but perhaps more interesting, impressions to convey. This is not to say that her approval or disapproval is unimportant. As with characters, so with books: judgment, both moral and intellectual, is an important part of the response she solicits. But judgment is invited (against Mrs. Norris and Mr. Elton, for Miss Bates and Mrs. Smith) under the cloak of amusement and pleasure in the quirks of individuality. In the same way Austen does not, like a reviewer, attach quality rankings to books. She leaves it to her readers (the beloved recipients of letters, the anonymous public of novels) to discover her judgments for themselves. She does not praise or analyse George Crabbe: instead she launches a long-running joke about her hopes of seeing him in London and her efforts to detect his marital status from his writings, culminating in a resolve, elaborated with curlicues of fantasy, to marry him now he is a widower. She disguises her admiration for Thomas Clarkson, historian of the slave trade, and for Charles Pasley, writer on British governance in India, under the same metaphor of a woman assessing a man as husband material.<sup>7</sup>

A disciple who mocks discipleship under the guise of husband-hunting, a critic who mocks assessment of poetry under the guise of vulgar personal curiosity, is not one to signpost her favourites or her influences, if any. In fact in her own work she is chary of influence, taking pains always to avoid anybody else's manner of doing anything. She is little given to direct imitation, let alone allusion, let alone the canonical epigraph as chapter-heading.

In the teeth of her reticence and non-cooperation, I shall endeavour to reconstruct an outline of her extremely catholic reading, with some comments on its contribution to her work, although traces of influence have often been carefully erased. I shall comment on her relationship with books as it appears in her letters (where the issues of revelation and concealment are different from what they are in her published work) and on the reading of her fictional characters (not only what they read, but how they in turn use their reading).

We no longer find it easy to believe Austen's claim to be 'the most unlearned, & uninformed Female who ever dared to be an Authoress' (*L* 306). She was, after all, crafting a graceful but absolute refusal of James Stanier Clarke's invitation to build a novel around a clergyman 'entirely engaged in Literature', who, as she herself noted, would discourse 'on

subjects of Science & Philosophy' and 'be occasionally abundant in quotation & allusions' (L 296-7, 306). The meaning of 'occasionally' here is not 'from time to time' but 'to match the occasion'. Clarke means the kind of clergyman whose response to the daily events of life draws *habitually* on the tags and phrases provided by his reading. Such a man is moulded by his 'Classical Education', his 'very extensive acquaintance with English Literature, Ancient & Modern'. We may suppose that Austen, as she made, 'with all possible Vanity', her boast of ignorance, felt profoundly grateful to be disqualified from writing about him; occasional abundance in quotation is not something that appeals to her.

Most of her own quotations and allusions are deliberately mismatched to their occasion. She takes a rhapsodic description of natural beauty and yokes it by violence with news of an unsatisfactory social occasion: "'Tis Night & the Landscape is lovely no more", but to make amends for that, our visit to the Tyldens is over' (L 226). She echoes Falstaff's (disingenuous) appeal to time measured by Shrewsbury clock, on no better excuse than the fact that someone involved in her story 'once lived at Shrewsbury, or at least at Tewksbury' (L 64). The target of her mockery here is the seizing of occasions for quotation, and the vapidity of the tags quoted.

Austen's letters consistently debunk literary tradition, but of course such debunking is a tradition in itself. The Augustan writers loved to make fun of reference to canonical authors: mocking not the authors themselves, but pedantic dependence on them. Pope's 'I cough like Horace', Henry Fielding's mock-epic descriptions of vulgar brawls, innumerable half-submerged references in Johnson's letters, indulge themselves in this kind of fun. Austen herself, in mocking avid Shakespeareans, is nonetheless also indicating familiarity with *Henry IV*, Part I.

Today acceptance of Austen's 'ignorance' at face value has given place to steady growth in critical attention to her reading and her influences. A century ago, just as the university syllabus for English literature was beginning to emerge, the American literary journalist William Branford Shubrick Clymer began the 'placing' of Austen in literary history. Together with her contemporary Sir Walter Scott, he said, she marked the half-way point between Richardson's day and Clymer's own.

Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, the first novelists in England (for Defoe's stories of adventure are not precisely novels as the term is now understood), had been followed by a romantic and by a sentimental school, the former growing from Horace Walpole, through Clara Reeve and Mrs Radcliffe, to Scott; and the latter including men so dissimilar as Sterne, Mackenzie, and Goldsmith. The sentimentalists were virtually a thing of the past, and the romanticists were in full career when Jane Austen, cutting loose from both

influences, set again on a firm basis the realistic study of manners taught her by Richardson and Fielding . . . She belongs to a small group of women who excelled in what has been well called 'fictitious biography'; of that group - comprising Miss Edgeworth, Miss Ferrier, and herself . . . she is incontestably the finest artist.

Her work, he says, is the slender thread which carried the strain of realism safely through the Romantic age from the hands of Fielding and Richardson to those of Thackeray and Trollope.<sup>8</sup>

This account is now itself historical. It is an early act of canon-construction, open-minded and non-rigid in its judgments. Four female contemporaries of Austen's appear (though not Frances Burney), along with several men - Horace Walpole, Henry Mackenzie, Goldsmith as novelist - who did not retain their place in a central canon.

Canon-construction also involves pigeonholing. Austen is a novelist; fiction must be her tradition. In fact she cares nothing for generic boundaries, but a great deal for the way the tradition of fiction flowed outwards to mix with those of history, and essays, and drama, and poetry. The English novel was seen in her day as a legitimate heir of Shakespeare, working as it did with dialogue and character and passion and interaction. Defoe did not yet enjoy the paternal status which historians of the novel later accorded him, and the works of Defoe's female predecessors and contemporaries (Behn, Davys, Barker, Aubin, Haywood) had already been forgotten. For Austen as for Clymer the great age of the novel had dawned with Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. Fiction moved between the poles represented by these two, and Austen, alert to their unlikenesses, learns from and disputes with each.

More recent critics have charted the broad range of influences on Austen's art. Detailed and sensitive attention has been paid to the ties that link her with the Augustan tradition of Addison and Johnson, to the landscape writing of Gilpin, and to a broad range of fiction including that by women, by Richardson,<sup>9</sup> and by her immediate contemporaries. She has been discussed as a novelist of ideas, with views on political, philosophical and legal issues of her day.

This new willingness to take her seriously as a thinker does not involve forgetting her own statements about disliking to be taken *too* seriously. Now we know she never turned her back or closed her ears to the intellectual debates raging around her, we should also remember her necessarily tenuous and deliberately oblique relation to such debates. She says that 'a Woman . . . like me' *cannot* abound in quotation and allusion; none of her writings suggests for an instant that she wanted to. Quoting

many writers, she almost without exception quotes them 'slant'. Whether to read this as female outsidership or as traditional Augustan irony is a matter of taste. While maintaining the superiority of the Chawton to the Steventon reading club, she inveighs against 'enormous great stupid thick Quarto Volumes'. For herself, she 'detest[s] a Quarto', does not want to learn 'everything in the World', and prefers 'a Man who condenses his Thoughts into an Octavo' (L 206). Such anti-pedantry is not anti-intellectualism; but it keeps a deliberate toehold in irresponsibility.

Both in letters and fiction, Austen mock-curtseys to or answers back at books which have caught her interest, disregarding their canonical or non-canonical status. Her reprocessing often makes strange bedfellows. For instance, Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*, a text regularly fed to passive pupil consumers, is pressed into service in her *History of England*, 1791; but so is the essence of innumerable novels treating the opposition between Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots – which, for devotees of the novel, was a more compelling pair of alternatives than Roundhead and Cavalier.<sup>10</sup> Goldsmith on the one hand, historical novelists on the other: the sixteen-year-old Austen takes the classic ruling that literature should combine instruction and pleasure, and divides it between two parties, neither of which, therefore, conforms fully to the rule.

It is safe to assume that even at this age Austen would know this classical rule, would know it was propounded by the Roman poet Horace, and would know the much-quoted tags (*utile dulci*, useful and sweet, and the slightly less hackneyed *jucunda et idonea*, merry and proper) in which it was embodied. Above all, however, she would know, more deeply and feelingly with advancing years, every shade of pedantry, or superiority, or self-importance, with which such tags were trotted out in mixed conversation. Her enquiring mind and retentive memory could not fail to pick up a good smattering of classical learning: what she did not pick up was any faith that these fragments carried the stamp of exceptional value. Like George Eliot later, she connected the idea of classical authors with the idea of little boys studying them.<sup>11</sup> For her the ancients remained subject to the same kind of critical scepticism (whether feminist or Augustan scepticism) as other sources. She calls a woman in childbed a 'sister in Lucina'; but she detects 'pedantry & affectation' in the title of Hannah More's *Cœlebs* [that is, celibate or bachelor] in *Search of a Wife*, 1808: 'Is it written only to Classical Scholars?'<sup>12</sup>

These are not the uses to which the classics are put by a devotee of a Great Tradition. Austen did not turn to the Latin language for authority or authorization. Yet, though she dislikes pedantry, I would not accept that she dislikes scholarship.<sup>13</sup> She went to some trouble to ensure factual

accuracy in works by herself and her nieces. She likes to let foolish characters expose their foolishness by garbling texts. John Thorpe categorically misstates what is and is not contained in Burney's *Camilla, A Picture of Youth*, 1796: he has got only as far as chapter 4 of a voluminous novel, as readers of it will recognize. In the first chapter of *Sanditon* Mr. Parker garbles the context of a quotation from Cowper: what Cowper praises as a virtue in an old woman is confusingly converted into a deficiency in a seaside resort. The reader feels licensed to despise these inadequate readers – but no more than we feel free to despise Mrs. Elton for garbling a traditional saying or cliché by making Surrey, instead of Kent, 'the garden of England'. Mrs. Elton is an inadequate listener in just the way that Thorpe and Mr. Parker are inadequate readers.

While she came to the classics filtered through the minds of others, Austen had direct, almost continuous contact with another body of texts whose roots lie far back in antiquity. The texts of the Christian religion, and of the Anglican branch of it, were variously written by nomadic desert chiefs and priests, by poorly educated rural folk in a province of the Roman Empire, by a Roman ex-civil-servant (St. Paul), and by English Renaissance churchmen. They were either written or translated nearly two hundred years before Austen as a child first became familiar with them; their language was obsolete as well as their morality (in the Old Testament) often alien or unacceptable.

The Bible (Authorised Version or King James Bible) and the Book of Common Prayer, as Austen used them, dated from 1611 and 1662 respectively; but they were closely based on work done by Tyndale and Cranmer during the sixteenth century. Linguistically, therefore, they were a door opening backwards into 'English Literature, Ancient'; and they were familiar to her in a way that only a few texts become familiar to anyone: familiar from daily or weekly or yearly repetition, aloud, marked with the different speech habits of the different voices that pronounced them.<sup>14</sup> Even if she had never read the Bible herself (as she did) she would have heard the passages appointed to be read at the services of the church (no doubt with varying degrees of expertise). The passages appointed for Sundays and for the great festivals would be heard every year. The book of Psalms would be worked through during the church's year; in addition, certain psalms, as well as canticles and prayers, occurred every week as part of the service.<sup>15</sup> The prayers which Austen wrote herself reflect her familiarity with prayer-book rhythms: her words compose themselves into an order which is perfectly in tune with Elizabethan liturgical discourse, foreign to her usual practice but none the less securely hers.<sup>16</sup>

Austen's fictional style or styles may seem remote indeed from anything in

the Bible or prayer-book: not only from ancient annals or martial poetry, but from St. Paul's letter-sermons and St. John's apocalyptic visions. Careful scrutiny, however, reveals the traces left by some of these familiar cadences. The almost prehistorical authors of the Old Testament have bequeathed her their rapidity and spareness of narrative, the New Testament writers their remarkable ability to enter the common mind and to conjure an illusion of verisimilitude by means of a single detail – the qualities that Auerbach notices when he writes about St. Mark's gospel in *Mimesis*.<sup>17</sup> The Bible, Austen's daily bread, must have helped her to plot the moral consequences (momentous for them) of Elizabeth's feeding her vanity with Wickham, or Emma's feeding hers with Harriet, while most novelists needed at least the *idea* of some momentous causes for what deeply affected their heroines. The Bible also helped to keep her rhythms free from the verbosity which afflicts so many of her contemporaries. In narrative passages (a comparatively small part, but an important one, of her novels) her taste for brief declarative sentences is something she shares with the gospels. 'Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang, and every body smiled' (NA 252). That is in its way a very New Testament sentence.

These original Anglican texts had their later descendants. As well as listening regularly to sermons, Austen read them in printed form, subscribed to one collection, and transcribed her father's sermons (L 388 n. 12; xvii-xviii). Jacobean churchmen and later preachers contributed their copia and orotundity, their preference for using two words where one would do, if not directly to Austen then certainly to Mr. Collins.<sup>18</sup>

After the Bible, Shakespeare is 'part of an Englishman's constitution' (MP 338). The implications of Henry Crawford's remark reach beyond his intention, particularly in view of the exclusion of women from public life, and of Austen's generally mocking attitude to the institutional or property-owning approach to texts. It is, perhaps, an English birthright to know Shakespeare, as Edmund Bertram says, 'in bits and scraps', to refer parrot-fashion to Shrewsbury clock without recalling anything about Falstaff's deplorable conduct on the battlefield and without being able to tell Shrewsbury from Tewkesbury. (I believe that the frequent, minute inaccuracies which are sometimes stigmatized as misquotation are better seen as what the eighteenth century accepted as 'ease': a sign that quotations come from knowing an author 'pretty thoroughly', not from thumbing through texts; that the relation of reader to author is relaxed and unpedantic. Changing Shrewsbury into Tewkesbury is a different class of inaccuracy.)

Austen takes familiarity with Shakespeare for granted; but she makes a good deal hang on Fanny Price's delight in Crawford's reading; and at least once I believe she makes a good deal hang on a quotation from Shakespeare.

Ronald Blythe, who believes that Highbury society is essentially Philistine, omits from his sparse enumeration of its literary references a Shakespearian quotation from Emma. 'The world is not theirs, nor the world's law', she says of governesses, echoing (approximately) what Romeo says of the starving apothecary who sells him poison.<sup>19</sup> This is an interesting case. Some might argue that it proves Emma, like Catherine Morland, to have been reading selectively, on the lookout for pathos to grace the speech of a heroine. But, quite apart from the fact that Emma leans less towards the role of heroine than that of producer or director, quite apart from the fact that her reading of *Romeo and Juliet* got all the way to the last act, her picking her example of pathos from this speech about need and oppression, contempt and beggary, rather from the emotional pathos of the lovers, indicates a strong mind reading against the grain, ignoring hackneyed phrases but taking sustenance from a canonical text for her own independent thinking. Her Shakespeare allusion is one of several straws in the wind to suggest that marriage to the tirelessly, practically benevolent Mr. Knightley will suit her down to the ground.

Those critics are surely right who see Austen's natural place in the course of English literature as being among the Augustans. She knows the established canon: Addison, Pope, Gay, the Swift of *Gulliver's Travels*,<sup>20</sup> Thomson, Gray, Goldsmith, and Charlotte Lennox, whose *Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, 1752, renews her admiration on rereading (L 116). Marianne Dashwood's requiring Willoughby to admire Pope 'no more than is proper' (SS 47) may imply that only *Eloisa to Abelard* and *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* are acceptable to her; or it may be a sly hint that Marianne's acquaintance with Pope has not extended so far as these rather early, highly emotional poems.<sup>21</sup> In a letter Austen writes, "'Whatever is, is best.'" – There has been one infallible Pope in the World' (L 245), which besides repeating a well-worn anti-Catholic joke is surely a signal that she relished Pope the poet's insight as well as his *ex cathedra* manner.

Austen's best-loved authors are those with Augustan affinities: apart from Crabbe, they are Richardson, Johnson, Cowper, and Burney. To all these she pays the compliment of frequent and familiar reference. Not only does she quote them from memory, as she quotes Shakespeare or Pope; she also takes liberties with them, using them freely as part of the background of her life. She 'could not do without a Syringa' for the garden because of the way Cowper described it; she writes that 'like my dear Dr Johnson . . . I have dealt more in Notions than Facts' (L 119, 121). This is what Johnson says he does in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, with which Austen thus demurely ranks her own letter.<sup>22</sup> At one point she owned a set

of the standard poetry anthology, Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*, originally published in 1748. Her Augustan texts are not limited to books. She is able to project on Cassandra's mind's eye the whole trajectory of Hogarth's 'Harlot's Progress', by observing that if she travelled to London with nowhere to stay, 'I should inevitably fall a Sacrifice to the arts of some fat Woman who would make me drunk with Small Beer' (L 88, 12).

Cowper threads through Austen's novels, loved passionately by Marianne and soberly by Fanny Price, and quoted by Mr. Knightley. Edward Ferrars, having been judged deficient in spirit and animation by Marianne on the basis of his reading of Cowper aloud, demonstrates both qualities in imagining how Marianne, if she had money, would buy up every extant copy of Cowper and other favourites, 'to prevent their falling into unworthy hands'. His combination of shyness, secret anguish, and whimsical humour in private might even suggest a hint of Cowper in character.<sup>23</sup>

Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, 1753-4, and Burney's *Camilla* probably share the palm for frequency of mention in Austen's surviving letters, though *Evelina, or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 1778, runs them close. (*Camilla*, so far as we know, is the only novel which she honoured by continuing its story beyond the ending, as she sometimes did for her own books). She indulges in comic self-identification with their heroines: 'I shall be just like Camilla in Mr Dubster's summer-house'; 'Like Harriet Byron I ask, what am I to do with my Gratitude?' (In each case the joke lies in the discrepancy between the heroine's situation and Austen's less extreme one.)<sup>24</sup> But minor characters, minor situations in these novels are reckoned to be equally memorable. She writes of the thirst for travelling 'which in poor James Selby was so much reprobated' or of 'Our own particular little brother', confident that her correspondent will pick up her allusions.<sup>25</sup> John Thorpe cannot get through *Grandison*, but thinks *Tom Jones* the best novel written until Matthew Lewis' charnel gothic *The Monk*, 1796. Thorpe's admiration is damning indeed, and from it we might surmise that Austen prefers Richardson to Fielding. Yet what could be more Fieldingesque than the technique she uses to undermine Fielding here, the technique of praising with loud damns from a bad judge? Thorpe praising Fielding, dispraising Richardson, owes something to the famous scene in *Tom Jones* where Partridge praises the loud voice and stiff action of the actor playing Claudius, and dispraises Garrick as too natural to be good acting. To attribute favourites to Austen is not to suppose she failed to appreciate the rest of the Augustan tradition.<sup>26</sup>

Johnson is a special case in Austen's letters and novels. Opinions shared with him pervade her fiction at a deep level vital to meaning and structure. She knew his correspondence with Hester Thrale, which the latter published

in 1788, as well as letters printed in Boswell's *Life*, 1791. Her letters resemble his in their minute detail and in their guessing games of half-submerged, shorthand reference. She might have modelled all her letters to Cassandra on his injunction about the need for 'petty talk upon slight occurrences', for letters to prevent the 'great inconvenience of absence, that of returning home a stranger and an enquirer'. The letter in which she quotes his 'more in Notions than Facts' is explicitly presented as an exercise in the art of writing a letter with nothing to say: what he called the 'great epistolick art'.<sup>27</sup>

Besides his minute particulars, Austen relished Johnson's habits of playful intertextuality and hidden meanings. Thus he implies an equation of himself with Lovelace's rakish friends when he writes, 'So I comforted and advised him.' When she writes 'Now this, says my Master will be mighty dull', she is assuming the language and therefore the mantle of the Johnson-Thrale correspondence, in which Henry Thrale is regularly 'my Master'. In the passage mentioning ordination, which has been so widely misread, the real joke lies in Austen's claim that she is making 'a complete change of subject' - which turns out to be a change from *Pride and Prejudice* and its reception to *Mansfield Park* and its planning. She presents herself as someone too egotistical to write of anything except her own works, though 'I will try to write of something else; - it shall be a complete change of subject'.<sup>28</sup>

Austen makes Cowper stand generically for rural, domestic life and Johnson for urban, social life when she writes (of a manservant who prefers the country) 'He has more of Cowper than of Johnson in him, fonder of Tame Hares & Blank verse than of the full tide of human Existence at Charing Cross' (L 250). In calling this preference 'a venial fault', she implies that she herself might side with Johnson, in spite of Cowper's remarkable power to unite in his support Marianne Dashwood, Edward Ferrars, Fanny Price, and George Knightley. Another kind of opposition between Johnson and Cowper implicitly underlies *Sense and Sensibility*: between Elinor's Johnsonian attempts to combat grief and depression through mental activity, and Marianne's Cowperesque savouring of melancholy. Fanny Price unites Johnson and Cowper, sense and sensibility.

While so many of her characters thus admire Cowper, their narrator is consistently Johnsonian. The spoof aphorism which opens *Pride and Prejudice* is not mockery of Johnson, but Johnsonian mockery: he too loves to burlesque the aphoristic manner with unreliable matter, as he does with the 'great truth', 'In a Man's Letters you know, Madam, his soul lies naked.' Marianne in her penitence and self-knowledge acquires Johnsonian sentiments and Johnsonian cadences: 'His remembrance can be overcome by no change of circumstances or opinions. But it shall be regulated, it shall be



checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment.' When Elinor smiles to see her sister 'introducing excess' into her scheme for rationality and self-control, she might have practised exactly the same smiles in response to a reading of *Rasselas* (SS 347, 343). While Henry Tilney uses Johnson's dictionary to overpower ladies in debate (as if he is copying Johnson in 'talking for victory' as well as in his linguistic views), the novelist draws on Johnson's ideas about history to allocate to both Eleanor Tilney and Catherine: the latter's perception of history as a dark record of wars and pestilences, the former's philosophical speculations as to the reliability of sources (NA 107-9).

Critics have noted that Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are both reliant on Johnson for their moral thinking. (It is with Johnson that Anne seeks to counter the influence of Scott and Byron on Captain Benwick.) His effect on Emma is perhaps more surprising, but equally important. In her Box Hill experience of causing pain through over-eagerness to display her wit, she follows in the footsteps of a number of *Rambler* examples (e.g. nos. 16, 101, 141, 174) of the potential of intellectual excellence to lead its possessor astray. In her struggles for self-knowledge, when presented with detachment and irony, she recalls young female characters who take up their pens in the *Rambler* (e.g. nos. 51, 55, 62, 84, 191); but in her thoughts in the final chapters, in her steady aspiration after self-knowledge, rationality, and candour, she recalls the persona of Mr. Rambler himself.

Austen's tradition did not close with Johnson's death or with Boswell's *Life* – which, along with his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, the Austen family sought out to buy (L 22). Throwaway reference to the plays of Hannah Cowley suggests they had an established status in her mind.<sup>29</sup> She also read pedagogical works, books of travel, history, political and medical pamphlets. At dates close to their publication, the Austens read Francis Lathom's *The Midnight Bell*, 1798, Samuel Egerton Brydges' *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, 1798 (which receives perhaps Austen's worst review ever), Genlis' *Alphonsine* (which displeased by being indelicate),<sup>30</sup> Southey's *Letters from England*, 1807, Anne Grant's *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 1808, and Henrietta Sykes' *Margiana, or Widdrington Tower, A Tale of the Fifteenth Century*, 1808.<sup>31</sup>

Austen's judgments of those publishing contemporaneously with herself are complicated by a new element of irony and indirection: that of feigned or exaggerated envy and rivalry. In another reminiscence of Johnson, she repeatedly asserts her refusal to admire any work that might compete with her own. Hannah More, Jane West, Sir Walter Scott, all fall under this ban. She first implies prejudice against Scott (feeling not 'very much pleased' with *Marmion*, though perhaps she ought to be); then promotes him to the

honour of affectionately inappropriate citing and quoting; then, when he switches from poetry to fiction, reverts to rivalry, and does not 'mean to like Waverley if I can help it – but fear I must'.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, her judgments on contemporaries are particularly slippery to assess. The accolade to Edgeworth (the only novelist, with herself and her niece, she is willing to like) is considerable. Her delight in Barrett's satirical *The Heroine*, her disappointment at Sarah Harriet Burney's debut in *Clarentine*, 1796, are directly expressed and can be trusted. So can her recommendation of Germaine de Staël's *Corinne*, 1807.<sup>33</sup> A relative, Cassandra Cooke, author of *Battleridge*, 1799, is apparently exempt from professional envy. But when Austen salutes Elizabeth Hamilton as 'such a respectable Writer', the compliment *may* be as back-handed as 'good Mrs West' or the expectation that *Ida of Athens* by Sydney Morgan (later Owenson) must be 'very clever' because written in only three months.<sup>34</sup>

There has been debate over the question whether Austen's literary judgments reflect any partiality towards her own sex (who, by this date, dominated the field of fiction). Such partisanship, like concern for her own fame, she would express only by indirection, with playful hyperbole or understatement. One can hardly mistake her treatment of the 'very Young Man, just entered of Oxford, wears Spectacles', who 'has heard that Evelina was written by Dr Johnson'. His so easily believing (and so authoritatively communicating?) what he has heard invites the reader to convict him of having a prejudice against women writers and no ear for style (L 43). When Austen disliked Sir Jenison Gordon for uttering 'once or twice a sort of sneer at Mrs Anne Finch', it seems probable that the sneers were directed at Anne Finch, Lady Winchilsea, an important poet of a century earlier. She was well known by the name she bore before her husband inherited the title; she lived at, and loved, and wrote about, the Finch family seat at Eastwell (where, during a visit, the sneers were uttered), and lay buried in the church there.<sup>35</sup> This sentence is *probably* Austen's strongest expression of solidarity with another women writer; but as so often her meaning remains obscure.

Austen's own sex is exempt neither from her serious literary judgment nor from her outrageous teasing. Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*, 1811, is 'excellently-meant, elegantly-written', but its failures in nature and probability invite, and receive, severe ribbing. *Rosanne; or, A Father's Labour Lost*, 1814, by Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, is 'very good and clever, but tedious'. Delightful on religion and other serious subjects (the heroine has a father influenced by Voltaire and a governess believing in human perfectability), it becomes, 'on lighter topics', improbable and absurd. The flamboyant *Wild Irish Girl*, by Sydney Owenson, later Morgan, would be worth reading in cold weather if only 'the warmth of her Language could

affect the Body'. Hester Piozzi's colloquialisms are taken off in a sentence which is repeatedly, ramblingly prolonged by further second or third thoughts tacked on the end.<sup>36</sup> Mme de Genlis' *Olimpe et Theophile* is energetically repudiated for tormenting its characters; even at Austen's 'sedate time of Life', she tells her niece Caroline, she could not reread it 'without being in a rage. It really is too bad! ... Don't talk of it, pray' (L 310). Here Piozzi and Genlis, though they are targets of mockery, are also offered a slightly dubious compliment: Austen has clearly enjoyed the former's self-indulgence in the slapdash and slipshod, and been moved, albeit against her better judgment, by the latter's sentiment.

For failure of original thought, for re-hashing of stereotypes (by writers of either sex), she has no mercy. In fiction she reprobates 'thorough novel slang', 'the common Novel style': diction like 'vortex of Dissipation', characters like the handsome, amiable young man who loves desperately and in vain (L 277). The cant of critics fares no better. Early in her career, in *Northanger Abbey*, and at its end, in *Sanditon*, she holds up in disgust the well-worn phrases: 'threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans'; the 'mere Trash of the common Circulating Library' (NA 37; MW 403). The pedagogical tradition (which dealt largely in stereotypes) gets short shrift. Catherine Morland is right to hate the lamentable 'Beggar's Petition' by the Rev. Thomas Moss.<sup>37</sup> Lydia Bennet is never more sympathetic than when she meets James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, 1766, with yawning and interruption, in contrast to her sister Mary's eternal copying of extracts.<sup>38</sup>

Austen treats the exaggerated conventions of the novel of terror rather differently from other stereotypes. Her father borrowed from the library at least one novel admired by Isabella Thorpe: Francis Lathom's *The Midnight Bell*.<sup>39</sup> Austen's delight in Henrietta Sykes' fifteenth-century *Margiana* equals Henry Tilney's in Radcliffe's *Udolpho*; as usual she signifies pleasure by pretending the action is real, and pretending she can participate. The family, she says, 'like it very well indeed. We are just going to set off for Northumberland to be shut up in Widdrington Tower, where there must be two or three sets of Victims already immured under a very fine Villain' (L 164).

She responded rather similarly to Mrs. Rachel Hunter of Norwich, using her twice (in collaboration with two of her nieces) for the favourite game of taking fiction to be true stories about actual people. Twelve-year-old Fanny Austen (later Knight) used the opening story from Hunter's *Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone* to convey a private message about her own behaviour;<sup>40</sup> Anna Austen (later Lefroy) received a letter ostensibly addressed in the third person to Mrs. Hunter herself, chatting about the most pathetic characters

in her *Lady Maclairn, the Victim of Villainy*, 1806. Since Austen also alluded to another episode in *Lady Maclairn* in the elopement of Lydia Bennet,<sup>41</sup> she surely felt some affection for Hunter.<sup>42</sup>

It would take too much space to set about tracing the ways in which Austen learned from the writers who made up her tradition: how she developed her mastery of balance from Pope, wisdom and playfulness from Johnson, gendered power-struggle and immediacy of representation from Richardson, relation of books to life from Lennox, pathos and domesticity from Cowper, grotesquerie from Burney, etc. She tends to stand a little outside the beaten paths of discipleship. While she reflects some of Johnson's opinions, she never calls on his authority or copies his style. She avoids both the unmixed models of virtue and vice and the heavy-handed poetic justice which often characterize the followers of Richardson.

Each of Austen's works occupies a particular position in relation to the community of literary texts. She commonly defines her characters in part through their reading habits; and the text itself inevitably engages in dialogue with texts by others. The juvenile volumes First, Second, and Third make explicit reference to sixteen works or writers.<sup>43</sup> Their parodic spirit gives way to the self-sufficient imaginative world of *Lady Susan*, where books are never mentioned, but where the epistolary novel's traditional inclusion of some callously self-seeking, cynical character is transformed by the simple device of switching this person's gender. Emma Watson turns thankfully to a book in time of trouble, for 'the employment of mind, the dissipation of unpleasant ideas which only reading could produce' (MW 361). If her reading is fiction, it depicts a level of society closer to the one she has just lost than to the one she has just found, for *The Watsons'* low level of social and financial status is its chief claim to originality. It was conventional for a heroine's financial affairs to have a certain substance. (Eliza Parsons was creating fictional problems involving £4,000 at a time when she was in danger of debtors' prison for the sum of £12.<sup>44</sup>) *The Watsons* presents, in Elizabeth, a woman who is vulgar and obsessively concerned with getting married, yet who has none of the complementary negative qualities of an Anne Steele or a Mrs. Bennet, but only a warm heart and strong sense of duty. Even in this fragment Austen has found space to challenge several conventions of the contemporary novel.

*Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* each makes fun of a particular literary ideology; yet the Dashwoods are probably Austen's most studious family, and Catherine is far better educated than many readers notice. Elinor's pity for Lucy Steele's lack of education, her 'illiterate' state, is genuinely felt. Marianne's 'knack of finding her way in every house to the

library, however it might be avoided by the family in general' is not an aspect of her behaviour that needs modification (SS 127, 304). Mrs. Dashwood can allude to a little-known novel by Richard Graves (*Columella, the Distressed Anchoret*, 1776) and expect to be understood by her daughters and Edward Ferrars.<sup>45</sup> Plans of study (Marianne's after her heart is broken, and their mother's for young Margaret) are subjected to some teasing from the narrator. Still, the atmosphere overall is far more favourable to reading and study than is usual in either of *Sense and Sensibility's* two prototype genres: the novel of misguided reading, like Lennox's *Female Quixote*, or the novel of good and bad sisters, as written by Elizabeth Helme, Jane West, and others. If books and ideas have led Marianne astray, encouraging her to seek intensity of emotion as the greatest good, then books and ideas, and especially meditation and self-examining, are to play some part in her redemption. This makes another highly original resolution of a familiar fictional dilemma.

Catherine Morland is educated squarely within the Augustan tradition. She resists the 'trembling limbs' and emotional blackmail of Moss's aged beggar; but she has no trouble learning a poem from fifty years earlier, 'The Hare and Many Friends' by the under-rated John Gay (a little gem of irony and black humour). The hunted hare evidently wrings her heart as the beggar does not. At fourteen her dislike for 'books of information' is matched by delight in those which are 'all story and no reflection'. At seventeen she has read Shakespeare, Pope, Thomson, and Gray, even if only in order to comb them for aphorisms and sentiment.<sup>46</sup>

Austen's supposed dislike of scholarship is hard to square with Henry Tilney. He has scholarly tastes; he delights in the cut-and-thrust of argument; on linguistic niceties he overpowers ladies with Johnson's dictionary and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*. His sister (herself a reader of the historians David Hume and William Robertson) thinks the scholar in him liable to prevail over the gentleman. Where Edgar Mandelbert as Camilla's mentor acts repressively, issuing no instructions but finding fault later, Henry behaves like a skilled tutor, eliciting Catherine's ideas, consistently questioning received opinion, playing down his pleasure in conscious intellectual superiority (NA 106-14).

*Northanger Abbey* famously defends novels by setting them, too, squarely at the centre of the literary tradition. Novels exhibit 'genius, wit, and taste'. They display, in 'the best chosen language', 'the greatest powers of the mind ... the most thorough knowledge of human nature ... the liveliest effusions of wit and humour'. This praise would be as apt for Pope or Johnson as for Burney and Edgeworth. But while novelists shine so brightly, says Austen, modern men of letters (reviewers, editors, anthologizers) do not; the revered

*Spectator* is really guilty of the 'improbable circumstances, unnatural characters' of which the novel stands accused.<sup>47</sup>

While she defends her own 'literary corporation', Austen engages it in debate. Having introduced Henry challenging received opinion (the cliché that women write better letters than men) she quickly issues her own challenge to Samuel Richardson's opinion 'that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman's love is declared' (NA 29-30). This was also, famously, the view of Camilla's father;<sup>48</sup> so *Camilla*, explicitly lauded by the narrator, is also criticized, implicitly but radically, in the action.

Catherine must learn to throw off her gothic illusion and cease to expect in life the trappings of villainy: concealment of suspected horrors, as in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794, or ancient texts testifying to female suffering, as in Parsons' *Castle of Wolfenbach*, 1793 (one of Isabella's favourites), Eliza Kirkham Matthews' *What Has Been*, 1801, and many, many more. But first and more importantly she must learn to throw off the social timidity which makes her vulnerable to the Thorpes' social tyranny, as Evelina was vulnerable to that of the Branghtons. Catherine trapped in John Thorpe's carriage, breaking her word to the Tilneys against her will, strongly recalls Evelina trapped in Lord Orville's carriage which has been borrowed in her name against her will. If Radcliffe is reproved, Burney is endorsed; so is Johnson, who made one woman advise another to consider herself 'a being born to know, to reason, and to act'.<sup>49</sup>

Literary reference is less central to *Pride and Prejudice*. Burney contributes the novel's title;<sup>50</sup> but *Cecilia's* pride and prejudice belong to the older generation, while Elizabeth's and Darcy's are their own. Elizabeth may be less of a reader than Elinor, Marianne, or Catherine, but her impromptu comment on picturesque grouping shows she knows her Gilpin (PP 53). Free spirit that she is, she is hedged around with ineffectually repressive texts: her father's library, Mary's improving books,<sup>51</sup> the gender-obsessed Fordyce, with whom Mr. Collins replaces more solid Christian thinkers.

*Mansfield Park* is another battleground of texts. It has been shown that Austen was familiar with contemporary pro- and anti-slave-trade debates. (Johnson's letters on the Mansfield case would have brought the matter to her attention, even if she had not read and fallen 'in love with' Thomas Clarkson.)<sup>52</sup> Issues of governance at Mansfield therefore (like Mrs. Norris's Popean meanness to servants) are related to issues of governance in the West Indies, whence Sir Thomas returns as more of an oppressor than he was before. But behind the heavyweight 'books of information', used for this novel only, stand the familiar books of imagination which feed all of Austen's work. Sir Charles Grandison and his loving extended family

provide a silent commentary on that of the Bertrams. The caged starling in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (which is agonized over but never let out) provides a sudden, shocking parallel to Maria's prospects in marriage. Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows* (a play of passion, translated by the radical Elizabeth Inchbald, 1798) offers the delusory escape of fiction. Fanny keeps both her heart and mind alive with books. Cowper (well known as an opponent of the slave trade) is her *alter ego*, Lord Macartney on China her serious reading, Crabbe and (especially) Johnson her relaxations (*MP* 156, 392). Against her heartfelt reading of, for instance, Scott (86, 281) is set the uncommitted facility with which the Crawfords can summon Milton or poems of seduction, or imitate an imitator of Pope (43, 161, 292).

The literary situation in *Emma* resembles that in *Pride and Prejudice*. Emma is a woman of action who knows the world of ideas through bibliographies, but never actually reads the books; still, her use of Shakespeare is significant. Mr. Knightley is an outdoors man, a glutton for practical work; yet he is familiar with Cowper. Books are not forgotten. Robert Martin's knowledge of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, 1762, and the *Elegant Extracts* edited by Vicesimus Knox in 1789, his ignorance of Radcliffe or Regina Maria Roche, mark him squarely as an unmodish, middlebrow reader; only Harriet finds this dismaying. Mrs. Elton, raised like Catherine Morland on Gay's 'Hare and Many Friends', shows it by shatteringly inappropriate quotation.<sup>53</sup>

Austen's last completed novel brings two of her traditions, the writers of feeling and the writers of thinking, into direct confrontation for the soul of the bereaved Captain Benwick. As Anne urges him to read moralists, letter-writers, and 'memoirs of characters of worth and suffering', Johnson makes another masked appearance in the text at two levels. Along with sermon-writers like Austen's favourite Thomas Sherlock (*L* 278), he is the most obvious moralist for Benwick to read; he is also an important source of Anne's own creed of activity and benevolence and self-control. Anne shows that knowledge of fiction can be illuminating, not misleading: she compares herself both with an exaggeratedly self-abnegating romantic heroine of Matthew Prior and with the awful Miss Larolles in Burney's *Cecilia*, 1782.<sup>54</sup>

Austen's final novel, the fragment *Sanditon*, would have been her most literary. Charlotte Heywood's reading habits recall Anne's: she is 'a very sober-minded young Lady, sufficiently well-read in Novels to supply her Imagination with amusement, but not at all unreasonably influenced by them' (*MW* 391-2). Comparing herself with Camilla leads her to deliver a mental *coup de grace* to that tale of outrageous female suffering which had haunted Austen's imagination for years: 'She had not *Camilla's* Youth, & had no intention of having her Distress' (390). The misreaders here are

male: Mr. Parker and Sir Edward Denham. Sir Edward can quote without conveying meaning of any kind (by repeating, for instance, 'Oh! Woman in our Hours of Ease - ' without a verb, without a statement). He races from Scott to Burns to Montgomery<sup>55</sup> to Wordsworth to Thomas Campbell and back; but none of these writers is to blame for his incoherence. As always in Austen, what matters is what you make of your reading. Sir Edward's intellectual digestion malfunctions: he draws 'only false Principles from Lessons of Morality, & incentives to Vice from the History of it's Overthrow ... only hard words & involved sentences from the style of our most approved Writers' (404-5).

Austen returns at last to Lennox's *Female Quixote*, to reverse the gender of its protagonist and to present, so far as I know unprecedentedly, a man misreading the world in the light of his misreading fiction. In a typically daring reversal, the female protagonist is a reader in calm control of her texts.

Her literary traditions give depth to Austen's fiction. It depicts a society whose overall level of interest in ideas and books is very high, in which novels rank with poetry, drama, and 'Essays, Letters, Tours & Criticisms' (404). For her and for her central characters books and life are not divided; books are a vital part of life. In this as in other matters, her manner of proceeding sets her squarely in the steps of Richardson and Burney, Johnson and Cowper, and closely in touch with neglected fields and forgotten chambers, with John Gay and Richard Graves, Rachel Hunter and Henrietta Sykes.

## NOTES

- 1 D. J. Gilson, 'Jane Austen's Books', *The Book Collector*, 23 (1974), 27.
- 2 *Letters*, 3rd ed., collected and edited by Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 198-9. Twelve years after visiting Dawlish she remembered its 'particularly pitiful & wretched' library (*L* 267).
- 3 Sometimes her stance is jokingly appropriative: Dr. Edward Percival wrote 'Moral Tales for Edward to give to me' (*L* 145).
- 4 *Joseph Andrews*, 1742, I, ch. 17; *Amelia*, 1751, VIII, ch. 5.
- 5 *The Orphan of the Rhine*, ed. Devendra P. Varma (London: Folio Press, 1968), p. 31; *The Nocturnal Minstrel*, ed. Varma (New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 1, 64, 209. Austen owned Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* in John Hoole's translation, 1783, copy later bought by Virginia Woolf (Gilson, 'Jane Austen's Books', 30-1).
- 6 Lascelles says this of her presentation of the natural world (*Jane Austen and her Art*, 1939 (London: Athlone Press, 1995), p. 1).
- 7 *L* 218, 220-1, 243, 198.
- 8 'A Note on Jane Austen', *Scribner's Magazine*, Feb. 1891, repr. in B. C.

- Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage: Volume II 1870-1940* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 199-200.
- 9 See, among several valuable studies, Jocelyn Harris, *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 10 Its popularity was fostered though not begun by Sophia Lee, *The Recess*, 1783-5.
- 11 She wrote for Frank some verses which 'seemed to me purely classical - just like Homer & Virgil, Ovid & Propria que Maribus' (L 170).
- 12 L 224, 172. She had another reason to dislike More, whose *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 1799, called novels a principal source of moral corruption: 'The glutted imagination soon overflows with the redundancy of cheap sentiment and plentiful incident' (422-3).
- 13 In his edition of *Emma*, Ronald Blythe says she disliked it 'very much' (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 467.
- 14 Perhaps the nearest parallel for Austen would be the motley collection of plays her family performed at home, from Susanna Centlivre and (probably) Fielding to Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (London: British Library, 1989), pp. xvi-xvii.
- 15 Said rather than sung. See Irene Collins, *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London: Hambledon, 1994), p. 181.
- 16 See Bruce Stovel, "'The Sentient Target of Death": Jane Austen's Prayers', Juliet McMaster and Bruce Stovel, eds., *Jane Austen's Business* (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 192-205.
- 17 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, 1946, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 40-9. Auerbach does not, regrettably, mention Austen.
- 18 PP 105-6. Note his repetitions and self-elucidations, his *firstly, secondly, thirdly*.
- 19 E 400. 'The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law' (*Romeo and Juliet*, V. i; E, ed. Blythe [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966], pp. 467-8).
- 20 L 47.
- 21 Catherine Morland finds a line to remember in the *Elegy* (NA 15).
- 22 Samuel Johnson, *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. Mary Lascelles (New Haven: Yale, 1971); to Boswell, July 7, 1774. Lascelles borrowed the phrase *Notions and Facts* from Johnson and Austen, as the title of a book, 1973.
- 23 SS 18, 47, 92; MP 56, 431; E 344.
- 24 L 357, 6, 234; also 9, 220.
- 25 L 93, 38. It is unfortunate that this new edition does not index authors or titles of books, so that these allusions remain untraceable in the volume. *Evelina* is referred to on pp. 120, 302.
- 26 *Tom Jones*, xvi, ch. 5. This novel enters her letters in connection with the dashing Tom Lefroy's white coat, *Tristram Shandy* in connection with a praiseworthy servant, *Robinson Crusoe* only as a servant's reading (L, 93, 95).
- 27 To Hester Thrale, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992-4), III:50, 89.
- 28 L 202. Italics added. See also Johnson, *Letters*, II:328
- 29 As well as being acted by request of Eliza de Feuillide at Tunbridge Wells in 1786 (L 74; MW 65; Le Faye, *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters. A Family Record*, 57).

- 30 L 15, 22, 115.
- 31 L 141, 164. Attribution from Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy, *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 32 L 131 (1808), 194 and 202 (1811, 1813), 277 (1814).
- 33 L 278, 255, 120, 161.
- 34 L 252, 321, 166.
- 35 Austen, who was particular about modes of address, normally uses 'Miss Finch' for the present-day Anne Finch, and 'Mrs Finches' for her and her sister (L, 106; e.g. 8, 38, 107, 108).
- 36 'He is more comfortable here than I thought he would be, & so is Eliz: tho' they will both I believe be very glad to get away, the latter especially - Which one can't wonder at *somehow*' (L 44). Footnoted as referring to Piozzi's edition of Johnson's letters, this is far more likely aimed at her *Observations in the Course of a Journey through Italy ...*, 1789, whose style was widely reprobated as too like gossipy speech.
- 37 NA 14. Written when its author was an undergraduate and frequently anthologized or reprinted in periodicals, it voices a flatly pathetic appeal to 'Pity the sorrows of a poor old man!' Moss, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1827), pp. 18-21.
- 38 PP 68. Against her expectations, however, Austen enjoyed Thomas Gisborne's *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (L 112).
- 39 L 15; NA 40.
- 40 L 107; *Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone to her Daughter, Inculcating Morality by Entertaining Narratives* (1803), first story.
- 41 Hunter's eloping Lydia resembles Austen's in character; her family resembles Austen's in reaction. *Lady Macclairn*, III: 223; IV: 144-8.
- 42 L 195, 407 n. 3, 408 n. 6, 269. Cf. Deirdre Le Faye, 'Jane Austen and Mrs Hunter's Novel', *N&Q*, 230 (1985), 335-6; Isobel Grundy, 'Rachel Hunter and the Victims of Slavery', *Women's Writing: The Early Modern Period*, ed. Janet Todd and Marie Mulvey Roberts, 1 (1994), 25-34.
- 43 Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life*, p. 39.
- 44 Blain et al., *Feminist Companion*, p. 835.
- 45 There is something highly instructive in way she uses, casually and unexplained, the name of its protagonist, and the way that Austen scholars (versed in the classical tradition but not in that of eighteenth-century fiction) at first supposed she meant an obscure Latin writer who shares that name (SS 103 and Chapman's note at 384).
- 46 NA 14-16. Her mother later selects for her improvement a periodical, *The Mirror*, which, although written by Henry Mackenzie, belongs not in the sentimental but the social-Addisonian category. Mrs. Morland is mistaken in thinking that pedagogy can help in this crisis; but her choice of pedagogue is traditional and sound. (Alyson Bardsley and Jeff Ewing pointed this out on the Eighteenth-Century List.)
- 47 NA 37-8. Some surprise has been expressed at Austen's finding the *Spectator's* language coarse; but a word-count of a few terms like 'whore' and 'cuckold' would explain her reasons.
- 48 'A Sermon', *Camilla*, v, ch. 5.

- 49 NA 87-8; *Evelina*, II, letter 23; *Rambler* 133.
- 50 Burney, *Cecilia*, final chapter. The words 'pride and prejudice' also occur in Robert Bage's *Hermesprong; or, Man as he is not*, 1796, which Austen owned (Gilson, 'Jane Austen's Books', 31).
- 51 Mary even parodies *Evelina*'s Mr. Villars in the aftermath of Lydia's loss, with parroted comment on female reputation: 'no less brittle than it is beautiful' (PP 289; *Evelina*, II, letter 8).
- 52 L 198. R. W. Chapman once supposed this referred to Clarkson's *Memoirs of William Penn*, 1813; but his *History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, 1808, is immeasurably more likely.
- 53 She embarrasses Jane Fairfax and no doubt amuses Emma with 'For when a lady's in the case, / You know all other things give place' (lines 41-2) – originally said by a bull intent on sex (E 454).
- 54 P 150, 116, 189. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu thought the 'monstrous folly' of Prior's heroine in 'Henry and Emma' (1709) likely to lead young readers astray. *Complete Letters*, ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-7), III: 68.
- 55 Presumably James Montgomery (1771-1854), another poet who wrote against the slave trade.

CLAUDIA L. JOHNSON

## Austen cults and cultures

Ever since Henry James, early in this century, observed that a 'body of publishers, editors, illustrators, [and] producers of the pleasant twaddle of magazines' found 'their "dear", our dear, everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose', two things have been abundantly clear: first, that Austen has been not a mere novelist about whom one might talk dispassionately, but a commercial phenomenon and a cultural figure, at once formidable and non-threatening; second, that many of Austen's most acute admirers have been unhappy with this extravagant popularity. An Austenian descendant himself, James aims his criticism not so much at Austen but at her faddish commodification by publishers and marketers. He had a point. Since 1832, Austen's six novels were available separately in the *Standard Novels* series published by Richard Bentley. But even though Bentley reprinted the novels at various times in the coming decades, joined by other printers once his copyrights expired, Austen's novels were hardly best sellers. Indeed, she remained an artist admired intensely by a few, such as George Lewes and Thomas Macaulay. 'Janeitism' – the self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for 'Jane' and every detail relative to her which James is alluding to – did not burgeon until the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It was spurred on by J. E. Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870, which provided biographical information about the quaint and saintly obscure spinster aunt who lived in a quieter time, and by Bentley's deluxe *Steventon Edition of Jane Austen's Work* in 1882 (the first collected edition of Austen's novels), which included *Lady Susan*, the *Memoir*, a frontispiece portrait of Austen, and woodcuts of Chawton Church and Steventon Parsonage, and which thus put most of Austen's famous little 'world' into a tidy bundle.<sup>1</sup> Janeitism boomed with the wider publication of Austen's novels singly and in sets, ranging from Routledge's cheap issues of 1883, and the Sixpenny Novel series starting in 1886; to Macmillan's 1890 issues, lavishly if inately illustrated by Hugh Thomson; to the quasi-scholarly ten-volume set of R. Brimley Johnson for Dent in 1892, reissued five times in as many years.<sup>2</sup>