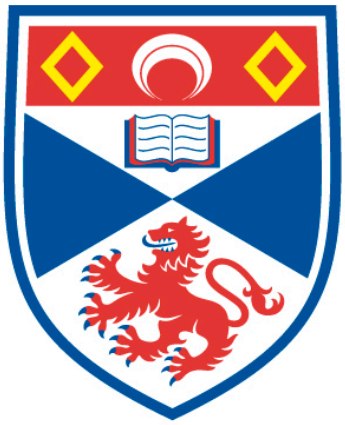
FINISHING OFF JANE AUSTEN : THE EVOLUTION OF RESPONSES TO AUSTEN THROUGH CONTINUATIONS OF THE WATSONS

Marina Cano López

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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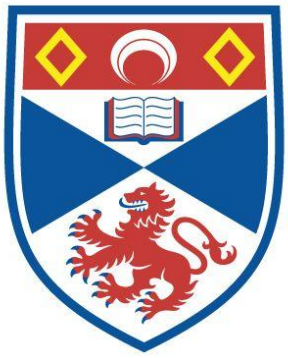

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis analyses the evolution of responses to Jane Austen's fiction through continuations of her unfinished novel *The Watsons* (c.1803-5). Although the first full "appropriation" of an Austen novel ever published was a continuation of *The Watsons* and a total of eight completions appeared between 1850 and 2008, little research has been done to link the afterlife of *The Watsons* and changing perceptions of Austen. This thesis argues that the completions of *The Watsons* significantly illuminate Austen's reception: they expose conflicting readings of Austen's novels through textual negotiations between the completer's and Austen's voice. My study begins by examining how the first continuation, Catherine Hubback's *The Younger Sister* (1850), implies an alternative image of the Victorian Austen to that propounded by James Edward Austen-Leigh, Austen's first official biographer (Chapter 1). The next two chapters focus on the effects of World Wars I and II on modes of reading Austen. Through L. Oulton's (1923), Edith Brown's (1928) and John Coates's (1958) completions of *The Watsons*, this study examines the connection between Austen's fiction and different notions of Englishness, politics and the nation. Chapter Four addresses the contribution of the 1990s completions to the debate over Austen's feminism. Finally, Chapter Five analyses recent trends in Austenalia, which thwart the production of successful completions of *The Watsons*. My thesis presents the first substantial analysis of this body of work.

Declarations

I, Marina Cano López, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: Signature of Candidate:

I was admitted as a research student in September 2009 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in July 2010; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2009 and 2012.

Date: Signature of Candidate:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Contents

Abbreviations

References to R.W. Chapman's third edition of Jane Austen's works (Oxford University Press) will be cited parenthetically as follows:

E	*Emma*
MP	*Mansfield Park*
NA	*Northanger Abbey*
P	*Persuasion*
PP	*Pride and Prejudice*
SS	*Sense and Sensibility*

Illustrations

Introduction

Rereading and Rewriting Austen

> "Such art as hers can never grow old"
> Commemorative tablet at Chawton (1917)

> "There shall be no more novels which are really about other novels. No 'modern versions', reworkings, sequels or prequels. No imaginative completions of works left unfinished on their author's death. Instead, every writer is to be issued with a sampler in coloured wools to hang over the fireplace. It reads: Knit Your Own Stuff" Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984: 99)

In 1949, Margaret Mitchell died having discouraged any future attempt to continue her bestselling novel *Gone with the Wind*. Jane Austen, by contrast, seems to have authorised potential continuations when she speculated about the future lives of her characters; according to her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, Austen would, "if asked, tell us many little particulars about the subsequent career of her people." In this way, "we learned that Miss Steele never succeeded in catching the Doctor; that Kitty Bennet was satisfactorily married to a clergyman near Pemberley, while Mary obtained nothing higher than one of uncle Philip's clerks, and was content to be considered a star in the society of Meriton [sic]" (Austen-Leigh 1871: 157-8). Austen also "retold" her own stories, explaining to her nieces and nephews that Mrs. Norris's present to William Price consisted simply of one pound, and that Frank Churchill's letters to Jane Fairfax contained the word "pardon" (Ibid.).

A plethora of sequels, adaptations and continuations of Austen's novels, of the kind mockingly condemned by Julian Barnes, has been produced over the last two centuries. From Catherine Anne Hubback's first Victorian completion of *The Watsons* (1850) to postmodern spinoffs such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), Austen has outfaced the passage of time as very few writers have done. Scholars have resorted to geographical, medical and even

religious metaphors in an attempt to understand this phenomenon. Beatrice Battaglia and Diego Saglia use the term "Austenland" to refer to a vast province comprising all the appreciations, readings and reproductions of Austen and her work over time (2004: 1). More emphatically, Marjorie Garber has coined the "Jane Austen syndrome," which refers primarily to popular manifestations of Austenland – from newspapers and film adaptations to tea towels (2003: 203). Deidre Lynch envisages the modern cult of Austen as a religion, or even a sect, with its own relics (the writer's lock of hair in Chawton) and pilgrimages (to Steventon, Bath and Chawton) (2005: 114). This idea finds an early incarnation in Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Janeites," which, in 1924, depicted a secret society of Austen worshippers whose members must master a "secret code," or prayer, consisting of phrases from Austen's novels (1924: 155, 162).

The novels have been persistently recreated since the mid-1800s to answer various emotional, psychological and political needs. As my thesis explores, her novels were exalted as the epitome of pious femininity by the Victorians, read and reread in the trenches and appropriated as feminist icons in the late twentieth century. Clara Tuite talks of Austen's "transhistoricity," meaning "the way in which canonical Austen has become transportable across and within conventional period designations" (2002: 2). My study considers the evolution of Austen's reputation – that is, her "portability" – through the lens of popular appropriations of her oeuvre, in particular the eight completions of her unfinished novel *The Watsons* (c.1803-5). It argues that the continuations of *The Watsons* illuminate the complex history of Austen's reception: they provide a useful insight both into how writers of various periods see Austen's text and Austen herself, and into the historical interests and narrative biases of their own time. Each continuation is both an expression of fidelity (it honours Austen) and of appropriation and difference (Austen's text is re-viewed and transformed). These texts speak simultaneously of their own authors and periods and of Austen: they are

interesting both in themselves, as literary artefacts, and for the light they shed on changing critical perceptions of Austen. My thesis also highlights certain turning points in Austen's reception (such as World War II) which have often been underestimated, therefore providing a more nuanced perspective on the evolution of responses to Austen's fiction. As the authors of the eight completions of *The Watsons* are British, the responses considered are limited to the West, particularly Britain and occasionally America.

The study of Austen's popular reception was established as a respectable field of scholarly enquiry in the late 1990s. Claudia L. Johnson's two essays, "The Divine Miss Jane" (1996) and "Austen Cults and Cultures" (1997), visibly contributed to this. Johnson addressed the politics of Austenian reception and legitimised its study, although she was more concerned with the evolution of Austen's critical heritage than with popular appreciations. In "Jane Austen as a Cultural Phenomenon," Juliet McMaster made up for this bias: besides discussing the dispute between popular and academic readers (Janeites vs. Austenites), McMaster dwelled on the period dances, card-playing and dressing-up sessions that the former engage in (1996: 11-12). It was Judy Simons who finally set up the study of "pulp" Austen in academia. In "Classics and Trash: reading Austen in the 1990s" (1998), Simons examined the novelist's status as a cultural icon, pointing to the value of "trashy" para-literature, since it could contribute sophisticated readings of the original (1998: 35). Simons acknowledges the presence of Austen productions in various media, such as the internet, the cinema and the novel. Ultimately, since Austen herself was addicted to popular culture (the theatre, the novel), the academic resistance to pulp Austen seems unjustified (Simons 1998: 31).[1]

[1] Simons develops this point in a later essay, "Jane Austen and Popular Culture" (2009). One of the examples provided is Austen's eclectic reading habits: in the spring of 1814, she was reading Eaton Stannard Barrett's trashy novel *The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina* alongside Byron's *The Corsair* (2009: 467).

These essays, which founded the study of Austen's popular reception, spawned book-length investigations in the following decade. Deidre Lynch's edited volume *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees* (2000) is a significant example. It is concerned with reception theory and the uses to which Austen has been put over time, including, for instance, nineteenth-century appreciations, early twentieth-century influences on novels printed by Virago, and Austen's presence in America. John Wiltshire's *Recreating Jane Austen* (2001) is, by contrast, interested in the present, in Austen's contemporaneity. Defending popular recreations, Wiltshire, like Simons, notes that "they make public and manifest what their reading of the precursor text is, that they bring out into the discussably open the choices, acceptances, assumptions and distortions that are commonly undisclosed within the private reader's own imaginative reading process" (2001: 5). Sequels and rewritings reflect ways of reading Austen and, in their choices of scenery, plot and characters, they comment on and give more prominence to certain aspects of the original – hence altering its flavour. Two other essay collections have tackled this topic: *Jane Austen and Co* edited by Suzanne Pucci and James Thompson (2003) and *Re-drawing Austen* by Beatrice Battaglia and Diego Saglia (2004). *Jane Austen and Co*, like Wiltshire's study, deals with Austen as a contemporary phenomenon. It is divided into four sections (the classroom, the nation, the home and the bedroom), where the editors consider that Austen currently has an important presence. Saglia and Battaglia's *Re-drawing Austen* is more ambitious in its scope: it aims to offer a picture of Austen readings across time and space, and for this reason, includes less frequently researched topics such as European Austen, Austen rewritings and Austen in the new media.

The value of these works notwithstanding, they pose a number of problems for the study of Austenmania or Janeitism. Their approach is often too broad, examining the Austen phenomenon in the abstract without focusing upon the particulars – this is certainly the case with Johnson and McMaster. Whereas all of them share a preoccupation with Austen's

centre-stage position in culture, it is still rare to find in-depth analyses of individual derivative works – the notable exception being the film adaptations. This may be due to the surviving anxiety that studying Austen and sensation fiction, zombies or chick lit is after all not a serious academic pursuit. Also, since these studies tend to be edited collections with multiple contributors, they find it difficult to provide a consistent narrative of the evolution of Austen's reputation. Most of them are already around ten years old – hence the need for a new discussion that considers recent developments in "pulp" Austen.

There is a significant bias among Austen scholars towards the film adaptations. This partiality is to some extent present in *Recreating Jane Austen*, *Jane Austen and Co* and *Re-drawing Austen*, but especially in the increasing number of volumes wholly devoted to the analysis of Austen screen adaptations. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield's *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (1998) paved the way for Gina and Andrew Macdonald's *Jane Austen on Screen* (2003). The story goes on: the field of Austen screenings has seen other full-length contributions, such as the less well-known *Jane Austen on Film and Television* by Sue Parrill (2002) and *The Cinematic Jane Austen* by David Monaghan, Arianne Hudelet, and John Wiltshire (2009).

It is true that the film adaptations have been the most successful, and lucrative, of all the Austenian recreations. Yet the dearth of literature on Austen renditions in the written medium is still surprising, given the number of sequels, completions and rewritings composed in the last 200 years.[2] There are a few scattered essays, but no book-length study: Marilyn Sach's "Sequels" (1986) provides a brief overview of the sequel phenomenon up to the 1980s, but its interest is mostly bibliographical. Sach simply summarises the plot of the

[2] The Republic of Pemberley lists 9 sequels to *Sense and Sensibility*, 63 to *Pride and Prejudice*, 14 to *Mansfield Park*, 17 to *Emma*, 3 to *Northanger Abbey*, 1 to *Lady Susan* and 17 miscellaneous reworkings in the novel form (29 June 2011). Their catalogue is in any case incomplete for it only records seven of the eight completions of *The Watsons*, five of the eight of *Sanditon*, so more sequels and rewritings of the other novels presumably exist.

sequels, but does not provide an in-depth analysis of what they may imply about popular responses to Austen. The same goes for Anna Rosa Scrittori's "Rewriting Jane Austen" (2004), which is also more descriptive than argumentative. Her only explicit claim is that sequels of Austen's novels tend to be defective because, in their attempt to reproduce the past for modern audiences, they resort to literary clichés (2004: 266). In a different article, Scrittori (1998) has, interestingly, contended that the sequels disseminate landmarks of women's writing to a wider audience, thereby helping to build a female literary canon. Deidre Lynch, in one of her contributions to Janet Todd's *Jane Austen in Context* (2005), has traced the history of the Austen sequel. She half-heartedly defends the recent upsurge of sequels because, as Simons and Wiltshire argue, sequels may elucidate some of the original's meanings, although, like Scrittori, Lynch remains critical of their sensationalism (2005: 165).

The literature on the completions of Austen's texts is even scarcer. In 1986, David Hopkinson (himself the author of one of them) wrote a brief piece entitled "Completions" but, like Sach's, its value is mainly encyclopaedic: Hopkinson lists and briefly discusses the authors and plots of the completions of *Sanditon* and *The Watsons*, yet he does not attempt an argument. The limited criticism on the continuations seems more focused on bringing these novels forward to the Janeite reader than studying why they change or complete Austen in the way they do. In this sense, Judith Terry (1986) has provided an amusing, albeit limited, discussion of the plot of *The Watsons*' completions, which simply concludes by stressing the need to provide a diverting continuation. Deidre LeFaye (1987) has composed a more inspiring essay on the first continuation of *Sanditon*, which argues that the novel is interesting in its imitation of Austen's language but unfulfilled as a historical examination of the original.

There is no full-length volume devoted either to the sequels or completions of Austen's novels. The sole exception is Kathleen James-Cavan's unpublished doctoral thesis *Readers as*

Writers: A Study of Austen's The Watsons and Sanditon and Their Completions by Subsequent Writers (Queens University, Ontario 1993). James-Cavan applies reader response theory to the continuations of Austen's two unfinished novels, arguing that these derivatives enact readers' transformation into writers. My study differs from hers significantly: I focus on *The Watsons*' completions only, connecting them to the evolution of responses to Austen. My theoretical apparatus is based on New Historicism because, as I argue below, this seems the most fruitful approach to studying how the Austen text has been repeatedly tailored to specific social, cultural and political needs in Britain. Whereas James-Cavan tends to focus on individual readers and their interpretations of Austen, I attempt to analyse how the completions of *The Watsons* fit, or not, into the larger picture of Austen's afterlife. Three new completions of *The Watsons* have also been published since James-Cavan finished her dissertation. I look at all these novels in the context of other Austenian productions, including a wider array of "pulp" material, which I hope will provide a richer and more multi-layered view of the Austen phenomenon.

Scholars may not have recognised the full import of the Austen continuations, but my thesis reclaims both her fragmentary texts and their completions. Balachandra Rajan sees the fragment's lack of closure as something positive, because it grants the text certain openness "often through patterns of contestation, generic and substantial" (1985: 303). These dissensions are commonplace in completions of *The Watsons* which, often exploiting the tensions within the original, tend to provide an ambivalent reading of Jane Austen. But, as Rajan claims, such conflicts should be seen as "opportunities rather than frustrations…The result may not be settlement but it will be continuation – the continuation of a debate in which the forces engaged can define and evolve themselves only through their engagement with each other" (1985: 305). My dissertation addresses these opposing forces and, what is

more interesting, how different authors negotiate them, ultimately failing to achieve the "settlement" of the text of *The Watsons*.

The unfinished has also been regarded as an essentially romantic creation. In her discussion of Austen's "disjecta membra," Clara Tuite views the fragment as the "most privileged of Romantic genres" (2002: 157). Because it evokes an absent whole, which the imagination must supply, the fragment is connected with longing and desire (Ibid). It also suggests the romantic notion of a youthful genius cut off in his/her prime (Ibid.). William Godwin shared this view of the fragment: in his preface to Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria* (1798), Godwin noticed the "melancholy delight in contemplating these unfinished productions of genius, these sketches of what, if they had been filled up in a manner adequate to the writer's conception, would perhaps have given a new impulse to the manners of a world" (1798: 71). Nineteenth-century unfulfilled "masterpieces" include Charlotte Brontë's *Emma* (1855), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1864-66), Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) and Wilkie Collins's *Blind Love* (1889). All of them have been dutifully concluded: Brontë's and Dickens's novels were completed in the late twentieth-century; Gaskell's and Collins's were concluded by two of their contemporaries. These examples show the impulse to complete as an important engine in modern literary history. In some cases, the need to provide an ending has been peremptory: *Wives and Daughters* was being published in instalments when Gaskell died, leaving the novel, after 750 pages, missing only one chapter – which probably makes the fragment, in Godwin's terms, all the more melancholic.

Jane Austen left two of her mature works unfinished, *Sanditon* and *The Watsons*. My investigation concentrates on *The Watsons*, not *Sanditon*, for various reasons. First, *The Watsons* has received considerably less critical attention; whereas critics often regard *Sanditon* as Austen's would-be masterpiece (Southam 1964: 101), evaluations of *The*

Watsons have been comparatively scarce and not always positive.[3] *Sanditon* has also spawned eight completions, the first one dating from the 1930s – one of Austen's nieces made an attempt in the 1830s, but it remained unfinished and did not come to light till the late twentieth-century. It is for this reason that *The Watsons* stands in a unique position: it generated the first full derivative of an Austen novel ever written (*The Younger Sister*, 1850), inaugurating the Austen sequel/completion phenomenon which is still in full swing in the twenty-first century. Because the completions of *The Watsons* span the period from 1850 to 2008, they provide an excellent opportunity to investigate the development of responses to Austen's fiction over time.

My thesis contends that the continuations of *The Watsons* can usefully be studied as representatives of changes in responses to Austen and her work, mirroring shifting trends and marking new directions in the popular re-creation of the author. My exploration of these continuations alongside the evolution of Austen's reputation shows how they frequently converge, and how there are some historical turning points in the trajectory of reading and rewriting Austen which have previously been misidentified or misunderstood. This investigation adds to a more comprehensive understanding of Austen's afterlife, often presenting an alternative picture of the phenomenon. It is not my intention to impose a grand narrative on *The Watsons*'s completions or Austen's reception – as if the authors had consciously set out to reflect historical moments or popular readings of Austen. On the contrary, I am interested in how these novelists often engage with Austen in ways that are both contradictory and complementary to each other (see especially Chapters 3, 4 and 5). Readers' relation to Austen is frequently ambivalent – conceiving her as a writer of her own

[3] All these authors have devoted full chapters to *Sanditon* in their studies, without putting as much emphasis on *The Watsons*: Alistair Duckworth (1971), Tony Tanner (1986), Roger Sales (1994) and Clara Tuite (2002). *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* by Peter Knox-Shaw (2004) and *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions* by Jill Heydt-Stevenson (2005) engage with *Sanditon* more openly. Southam calls *Sanditon* Austen's "seventh novel": "The opening chapters to this seventh novel herald an entirely new phase in Jane Austen's development" (1964: 101).

time and theirs, guided by Regency and modern social rules at one and the same time. My interest lies in these dissensions within the rewritten text, and in how Austen's oeuvre has been adapted to satisfy society's desires and cultural demands throughout time.

My study has benefited from previous accounts of Austen's literary reputation. Claire Harman's *Jane's Fame* (2009) offers a valuable overview of the evolution of Austen's reception, but does not follow the afterlife of any particular piece. *Jane's Fame* is primarily addressed to a general, not scholarly, audience and does not dwell on some of the phenomena my thesis explores (World War II, the Sexual Revolution). Kathryn Sutherland's *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (2005) analyses the history of Austen's reception through the fate of her manuscripts and the editorial treatment of her novels. It is especially interesting in being one of the few studies to engage with Catherine Anne Hubback's *The Younger Sister*. Again, however, my project differs in following the afterlife of one particular work, *The Watsons*, which adds consistency and continuity to my analysis. Katie Halsey's *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945* (2012) explores the interaction between Austen's texts and readers, both celebrated and anonymous. Halsey's study and my own form an interesting tandem: I analyse how the completions and other retakes are manifestations of different responses to Austen; Halsey examines how some of these productions (editions, illustrations of the novels) affected the way Austen was read. Rather than mutually exclusive, Halsey's work and my own seem complementary – showing Austen's reception as a double-sided phenomenon.

My thesis presents the first substantial study of the completions of *The Watsons*. The rest of this introduction sets up some of the necessary equipage for our journey through Austenland, to borrow Saglia and Battaglia's term: first examining readers' compulsion to reread Austen, the critical debates around *The Watsons* and finally the terminology and methodology employed in this thesis.

Why Jane Austen?

Lionel Trilling (1976) posed this same question nearly forty years ago, but was unable to provide an answer to why his Austen course had been flooded by 150 students when he only wanted 30. Although it is hard to identify why readers keep coming back to Austen's fiction, some explanations have become recurrent. Many allege the romantic notions of timelessness and universality; Virginia Woolf, for example, believed that: "[w]hatever she writes is…set in its relation, not to the parsonage, but to the universe" (1925: 175). Austen's novels stand outside of time, Elizabeth Jenkins noted (qtd. in Harman 2009: 272), and renew themselves for every single generation of readers (Martin Amis 1975: 83). Or as J.B. Priestley put it: "Jane Austen is in fact one of the most lasting of English novelists: she 'wears well'...Make friends with this quiet but brilliant woman, this superb artist in fiction, and you have made a friend for life" (1960: 99).

It is this sense of Jane Austen as an intimate friend that compels most readers to go back to her novels again and again. Katherine Mansfield felt that every "true admirer of the novel cherishes the happy thought that he alone – reading between the lines – has become the secret friend of their author" (1930: 304). Janet Todd has recently echoed this sentiment: "Austen permits this intimacy to us all in an intimable way, so that we believe we are peculiarly close to her as a person and would somehow be appreciated by her were we to know her" (2009: 158). But some readers take this emotion so far that it becomes a desire for possession. Mockingly echoing Henry James,[4] Juliet McMaster exclaims that Austen "is theirs; she is ours; she is everybody's. Her admirers are not content to read her; they want…her to be their own particular Jane. And since she can't really be everybody's, each

[4] As early as 1905, Henry James condemned the Austen cult, deprecating "the body of publishers, editors, illustrators, producers of the pleasant twaddle of magazines; who have found their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose, so amenable to pretty reproduction in every variety of what is called tasteful, and in what seemingly proves to be saleable, form" (1905: 62).

admirer has to create a camp, a little army of those who admire her in exactly the right way" (1996: 5).

Mostly, Austen's novels are fun, readers seem to feel, and this is the main reason why they (and we) persist in repeatedly reading her texts: pleasure. For Roland Barthes, the text of pleasure "contents, fills, grants euphoria" – and hence fulfils the Freudian pleasure principle – in contrast with the text of bliss, which discomforts and unsettles (1975: 14). Sigmund Freud noted that any given process originates in the pleasure principle: human action is always motivated by the avoidance of pain and the production of pleasure (1920: 1). The process of reading Austen appears to be stimulated by the feeling of enjoyment that her novels unleash in the reader – they are what Barthes calls texts of pleasure. But Austen's novels could be seen as texts of bliss too, for bliss, Barthes claims, comes from the absolutely new or its opposite – since repetition creates bliss too: "The more a story is told in a proper, well-spoken, straightforward way, in an even tone, the easier it is to reverse it, to blacken it, to read it inside out...This reversal, being a pure production, wonderfully develops the pleasure of the text" (1975: 26). Rereading and recreating Austen's novels transforms them into texts of bliss, which grant readers pleasure and comfort but can at the same time disturb and upset them – as some "pulp" sequels occasionally do.[5] These two opposing conditions, content and discomfort, will be considered in my analysis of the completions.

Repetition is key here: as can be observed in children's games, pleasure and repetition are inextricably intertwined (Freud 1920: 25). Emma Woodhouse's nephews demand the re-telling of the story of Harriet and the gypsies, objecting to any slight changes in the narrative (E 336). For Freud, the compulsion to repeat is even more basic to psychic life than the

[5] The recent monster mash-up *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which I analyse in Chapter 5, is a good example. See p. 200 for a discussion of some contradictory appreciations of the rewrite.

pleasure principle. Majorie Garber regards the repetition involved in rereading Austen as central to our enjoyment:

> Few *pleasures* can compare to *the sheer joy* of curling up with one of Austen's novels, turning the pages, occasionally laughing out loud. It is *the experience of reading and rereading her*, the perfect phrases, the laser-sharp observations, the balanced repetitions and inversions of her brilliant plot devices, that keeps us always coming back for more (2003: 209-10, my italics).

Linda Hutcheon believes in the comforting power of adaptations and, in a Freudian turn, compares them with "a child's delight in hearing the same nursery rhymes or reading the same books over and over" (2006: 114). "Like ritual, this kind of repetition brings comfort," Hutcheon continues, "a fuller understanding, and the confidence that comes with the sense of knowing what is about to happen next" (Ibid.). Yet sequels and adaptations combine the comfort of familiarity with the desire for difference: "The sequel cannot be the same as its original text," Terry Castle notes; readers "persist in demanding the impossible: that the sequel be different, but also *exactly the same*" (1986: 134).

Nostalgia plays an obvious role in the compulsion to revisit Austen's novels. Raphael Samuel has stressed the importance of popular memory and how it has always been a constituent part of the human experience (1994: viii). The art of memory, whose modern shape owes much to the Romantic period, is "premised on the sense of loss" and belongs to "the realm of the intuitive and the instinctual" (Samuel 1994: ix). This sense of loss is present in Austen's afterlife: Marie Dobbs, author of one of *Sanditon*'s completions, defends her project as an attempt to "escape from the shoddy values and cheap garishness of our own age" by "turning to Jane Austen's novels to catch glimpses of the life in what appear to be far more leisured times" (1975: 314). Yet, as Hutcheon notes, the past is irrecoverable, and this irretrievable nature is precisely what accounts for its emotional appeal (2000: 195). The "shoddiness" of the present cannot be quite eschewed: Austen's is an imagined past,

"idealized through memory and desire," which suggests that "nostalgia is less about the past than about the present" (Hutcheon 2000: 195). Rewriting Austen's works is less about the 1800s than about the writer's present, less about Austen than about us. The past (of Austen's fiction) serves various socio-cultural needs when recreated in subsequent eras, the study of which will be one of the hinges of my investigation. Chapter Two, for instance, will explore how the 1920s completions romanticise *The Watsons* in the aftermath of World War I.

Austen's novels allow this permanent recreation due to their openness and ambiguity. There is a degree of indeterminacy about Austen's own ideological position, which explains why her works have been transformed into a Victorian novel about lawsuits and governesses (Hubback's *The Younger Sister*), a 1950s novel about the levelling of the social classes (Coates's *The Watsons*) and a vampire blockbuster (Grange's *Mr Darcy, Vampyre*). Austen is hard to find in her texts. About her admirer Tom Lefroy, she claimed: "I mean to confine myself in future to Mr Tom Lefroy, for whom I donot care sixpence," followed by: "At length the Day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy...My tears flow as I write, at the melancholy idea" (Letter 2, 14-15 Jan. 1796). Austen's defining sense of irony, her playfulness and mocking self-contradiction account for the ambiguity of her texts. This is the reason why literary biographer Jon Spence could exploit Austen's relationship with Lefroy in *Becoming Jane* (2003) – since, from her correspondence, it is impossible to ascertain how she really felt about the young man. Contradictions about Austen and her readers have been a constant: the status of her novels as high and popular culture at the same time confirms readers' ambivalent feelings about them. Her novels belong in the pantheon of Western literature – and are listed in Harold Bloom's extremely select canon (1994). It seems that, like National Heritage sites, Austen's novels should be preserved and protected. Yet they are also popular artefacts for mass consumption, temptingly available for "redecoration."

The production of Austen completions entails an extra motivation. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode insists that ends and beginnings are crucial to life, particularly in a modern apocalyptic world where ends have become immanent rather than imminent (1967: 6). Kermode relates beginnings and ends in fiction to the origin and end of the world, the Genesis and the Apocalypse. We need our lives to be related to a beginning and an end. We are born in *medias res*, and to give sense to our lives, which we can only consciously perceive "in the middle," we need fictions with beginnings and ends (Kermode 1967: 7). Likewise, books must end; they must have a conclusion, Kermode insists, for this is one of their greatest charms (1967: 145). This may be the reason why readers have persevered in completing *The Watsons* throughout two centuries: supplying the fragment with its necessary end, while at the same time subverting this need by persistently writing new completions that undermine earlier ones and never allow the book a final conclusion.

Why *The Watsons*?

An early notice in *The Girl's Own Paper* announced that "[b]etween the date of her leaving Steventon and that of her settling down at Chawton Jane had not written a single word" (Childe-Pemberton, 11 March 1882: 379). There was, however, literary activity between 1799 and 1811 (when Austen completed the draft of *Susan* and began *Mansfield Park* respectively): she revised *Susan*/*Northanger Abbey*, and probably other manuscripts (Chapman 1948: 49). Most importantly for my study, Austen began *The Watsons*, a piece that is inherently interesting in being the only new project Austen embarked upon during these "dark" years, when she was leading an unsettled life in Bath and Southampton.

The history of *The Watsons*' manuscript has been full of accident. Cassandra bequeathed it to her niece Caroline Austen. The latter's nephew, William Austen-Leigh, donated the first six leaves to a Red Cross sale (1915); these pages were later rescued and are

now in the Pierpont Morgan Library (New York). The rest belonged to James Edward Austen-Leigh's descendants, who sold it to the British Rail Pension Fund in 1978. Ten years later, Sir Peter Michael purchased the pages and donated them to Queen Mary, University of London, but the first eight of these pages have been inexplicably lost. The Bodleian Library (Oxford) has recently acquired the leaves that were still in private hands for nearly one million pounds.[6] *The Watsons* was first published in the second edition of James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* (1871) and separately by A.B. Walkley (1923). In 1954, R.W. Chapman included the fragment in his six-volume edition of Austen's works.

Opinions about the literary merits of *The Watsons* vary. Among its detractors, E. Quincey thought it "unpromising" (qtd. in Southam, 1987: 16); B.C. Southam (1964: 64) and Marvin Mudrick regarded it as heavily flawed. According to Mudrick, the main problem is that there is no momentum in the narrative, whose moral tone subverts Austen's artistry and results in a lapse in her use of irony (1952: 146). Some twentieth-century periodicals also professed that Austen did well by putting it aside.[7] Virginia Woolf was slightly more generous, observing that the fragment reveals Austen's writing method: "Jane Austen was indisputably one of those writers who lay their facts out rather baldly in the first version, and then go back and back and back and cover them with flesh and atmosphere" (10 March 1923: 662). For Woolf, it was clear that *The Watsons* was still in this early stage of composition, although she recognised its "surface animation, the likeness to life;" "it has the permanent quality of literature" (Ibid.). F.B. Pinion has expressed mixed feelings too: "Though rather flat and colourless at first, *The Watsons* becomes more and more animated, and never declines in interest" (1973: 72). Like Woolf, Pinion believes that, "had she been preparing the work for publication, her assiduous attention to detail would have resulted in a series of

[6] For more information on the history of the manuscript, see B.C. Southam's *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts* (1964) and Janet Todd and Linda Bree's introduction to *Jane Austen: Later Manuscripts* (2008).
[7] See *The English Review* (March 1923: 294), *The Times Literary Supplement* (1 Feb. 1923: 67) and *Books Abroad* (1959: 356).

revisions, expanding it to make it more lively and explicit here and there, recasting passages, and even modifying presentation and arrangement" (Ibid.). Other readers have thoroughly enjoyed *The Watsons*. Late Victorian Anne Thackeray found it "a delightful fragment, which might belong to any of her other histories" (1871: 88). A century later, Margaret Drabble described it as "a tantalising, delightful and highly accomplished fragment, which must surely have proved the equal of her other six novels, had she finished it" (1974: 15). Critics R.W. Chapman (1948: 50), Deborah Kaplan (1992: 156-7) and Claire Harman (2009: 45) have also seen in *The Watsons* a promising beginning.

Disparate opinions notwithstanding, *The Watsons* offers a fruitful territory for scholarly enquiry. Like Virginia Woolf, B.C. Southam, Janet Todd, Linda Bree and Kathryn Sutherland agree that *The Watsons* is valuable because it illuminates Austen's working method. Since the manuscripts of the "major" novels have not survived,[8] revisions in *The Watsons* (for instance, the assembly scene) suggest the alterations that may have been made to the finished novels (the balls in *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*) (Southam 1964: 76). Janet Todd and Linda Bree conduct a thorough analysis of the original manuscript, noting that, unlike that of *Sanditon*, it underwent significant revision and correction. These are mostly local adjustments rather than large-scale alterations, which increase in the last few pages, intimating that Austen was becoming increasingly anxious and dissatisfied with her work (Todd and Bree 2008: lxvii). Todd and Bree value Austen's manuscripts "in their own right, as manuscript texts unmediated by print and compositor" (2008: xxxii). Because there is no film adaptation of these texts, nor can there be any in their current state, they allow readers to exercise their imagination directly, envisaging the original characters "as Jane Austen makes me imagine them," without them "being embodied for me by Jennifer Ehle or Keira Knightley or Emma Thompson or Colin Firth" (Todd 2009: 158-9).

[8] The only adult works by Austen that survive in manuscript form are the cancelled chapters of *Persuasion* and the two unfinished novels, *Sanditon* and *The Watsons*.

Kathryn Sutherland appreciates *The Watsons* as text and manuscript. Like Todd and Bree, she believes that "[w]orking drafts provide somatic clues to this unusual specificity – the wayward spellings, irregular dashes, and erasures – the signs of the hand's performance of the mind's bidding, which are effaced by print" (2005: 119). But Sutherland also considers *The Watsons* a turning point in Austen's writing, in so far as it inaugurates a new treatment of subjects, such as the function of place, which will be expanded in subsequent novels (2005: 141). *The Watsons* is different from other texts in the Austen canon due to "[t]he bleakness of its social vision, the queer Dickensian humour of Tom Musgrave and Lord Osborne, and the uncertainty as to how the heroine might be developed" (Sutherland 2005: 142). Along the same lines, Claire Tomalin finds the fragment unique in its truthful account of provincial life, more detailed than anywhere else in Austen, with references, for instance, to curl papers in hair, powdered footmen and cold ballrooms (1998: 185).

The critical debate around *The Watsons* has focused on two major questions: its date of composition and the reason for its incompleteness. The year in which the fragment was written has long been a site of contestation among Austen relatives and scholars, with different theories ranging from 1801 to 1812. The date commonly assumed is 1803 or shortly afterwards, the choice of R.W. Chapman (1948), Elizabeth Jenkins (1949), B.C. Southam (1964), David Hopkinson (1977), John Halperin (1984) and Janet Todd and Linda Bree (2008). Because the manuscript bears a watermark of 1803, Chapman thought that this was probably its date of composition; paper being expensive at the time, it would not have been stored for long in the household (Chapman 1948: 49). Fanny Lefroy, Austen's great grand-niece, claimed that Austen started *The Watsons* "somewhere in 1804" (1883: 277), a theory Southam supports (1964: 64).

Janet Todd, Linda Bree and David Hopkinson date the fragment to 1804 due to internal evidence. Todd and Bree claim that this date is supported by a reference to a "doubtful half

crown" in the text. In the 1790s stamping Spanish dollars with a small head of George III was a normal practice. Counterfeiting was quite common and easy until 1804, when new coins were issued to replace old ones with a new counterstamp (Todd and Bree 2008: lxviii). Thus, Todd and Bree claim, counterfeiting and counterstamping would have been popular topics at the time Austen was writing *The Watsons* (Ibid.). More speculatively, Hopkinson believes that the fragment was started in September 1804, due to a letter Austen wrote from Lyme. The ball she mentions there, Hopkinson asserts, served as inspiration for the assembly in *The Watsons*: Austen attached herself to a good-natured girl (the model for Mary Edwards) and had to suffer the stares of an odd aristocrat (the model for Lord Osborne) (1977: 231).

Even dating Austen's fragment becomes a work of personal narrative creation – an attempt to read her social diary, her writing method and her mental state. A combination of some of these explains Edith Brown's and Paul Pickrel's choice of the year 1807. Brown (Austen's descendant and author of a completion of *The Watsons*) dates the opening assembly to 13 October 1807 because, as in the text, it was a Tuesday, which leads her to think that this may be the day when Austen commenced the novel. *The Watsons* could not have been written before 1804, due to the paper watermark, and in 1806 Austen visited Stoneleigh Abbey, the inspiration for Osborne Castle according to Brown (1927: 1016-17). Paul Pickrel favours the 1807 option, surprisingly, due to the paper watermark. Unlike Chapman, he thinks that the cost of paper is actually the reason why it may have been stored in the shop for some time (1988: 466). The mournful tone of the novel supports this date: Austen's father had died in 1805, so by 1807 she must have felt sufficiently recovered to take on another project but not enough to complete it (Pickrel 1988: 448-9).

Departing from all previous theories, Ellen Moody (2003) proposes that the fragment was either written in 1801 or was the product of a gradual composition. Despite the watermark, Austen may have written the piece earlier and copied it in a different manuscript

years later, as she did with her juvenilia (Moody 2003). However, the heavy corrections and cramped writing, noted by Todd and Bree, suggest a first draft. Like Brown, Moody focuses on the one date provided in the text, Tuesday 13 October, and argues that this day was a Tuesday not only in 1807, Brown's choice, but also in 1795, 1801, 1807 and 1812.

The second major issue in *The Watsons*' criticism is why Austen put the fragment aside after only 17,500 words. Its incompleteness grants *The Watsons* an aura of mystery, for whereas *Sanditon* was clearly left unfinished at Austen's death, *The Watsons* was voluntarily abandoned before Austen reached her thirtieth birthday. Although scholars disagree as to why, most theories, as Kaplan notes (1992), can be grouped into "biographical," "aesthetic" or a combination of the two. Edith Brown believed in the biographical explanation: "I think Jane put *The Watsons* away because it was too near her own life" (1927:7). After the death of her father, Austen was temporarily living with her brother and sister-in-law, Francis and Mary, just as Emma Watson was presumably going to do after Mr. Watson's death. These episodes had to be funny and satirical at the expense of Robert and Jane Watson, and Austen may have wanted to avoid the risk of offending her relatives (Brown 1927: 1017). Many believe that, after the death of her friend Mrs. Lefroy in 1804 and her father in 1805, Austen was simply too depressed to take up writing. For Mary Lascelles, these deaths justify Austen's abandonment of the fragment, especially considering that her father had been her main literary support (1939: 19). Margaret Drabble similarly reflects that the fragment must have acquired melancholic associations which were "too much for her" (1974: 16). David Hopkinson and Claire Tomalin add a more mercenary note: the numerous economic difficulties after her father's death may have led Austen to put the book aside (Hopkinson 1977: 232). "The story touched too closely on Jane's fears for herself, Cassandra and their companion Martha Lloyd," Tomalin claims – that is, the fear of the future of poverty and spinsterhood which seemed in store for the Watson sisters (1998: 184).

James Edward Austen-Leigh was the first to propound an aesthetic explanation for *The Watsons*' incompleteness. In 1871, he claimed that Austen had "placed her heroine too low, in such a position of poverty and obscurity as, though not necessarily connected with vulgarity, has a sad tendency to degenerate into it; and, therefore, like a singer who has begun on too low a note, she discontinued the strain" (1871: 296). Subsequent critics have vehemently disagreed with Austen-Leigh: Deborah Kaplan points to Fanny Price's visit to Portsmouth (1992: 178), and Kathryn Sutherland sees Austen-Leigh's comment simply as a sign of his Victorian snobbery (2005: 130). Other aesthetic theories revolve around the idea that the heroine, Emma Watson, is too perfect and therefore cannot evolve or mature. Southam and Mudrick, among others, have found the novel's "flaw" in its flawless heroine, who represents a static viewpoint (Southam 1964: 68) and does not allow any irony at her expense (Mudrick 1952: 141). Contradicting this view, McMaster draws readers' attention to heroines such as Elinor Dashwood, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, who have less to learn than Marianne Dashwood, Catherine Morland and Elizabeth Bennet (1996: 72). Yet Southam *had* considered sensitive and intelligent characters like Elinor and Mr. Knightley, but claimed that none is as central to the narrative as Emma Watson (1964: 68).

Other "aesthetic" critics opine that the material in *The Watsons* had already been exhausted. A.B. Walkley notes that the struggle between Lady Osborne and Emma, for him the key point in the novel, had already been used up in *Pride and Prejudice* (1923: 18). Yet it is worth noticing that, at this point, Austen had written only *First Impressions*, not *Pride and Prejudice*, and it is impossible to ascertain to what extent the encounter between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth was present in this early draft. Joseph Wiesenfarth believes that, after revising *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, there was not much that Austen could use in *The Watsons*: she had transformed Emma Watson into Jane Fairfax, Robert and Jane Watson into John and Fanny Dashwood (1986: 105-6). The opening assembly had also

been reproduced in *Pride and Prejudice* and the topic of a sister who is too good for the society of those around her was followed up in *Persuasion* (Ibid.). One of the most recent "artistic" explanations is Kathryn Sutherland's: Austen grew dissatisfied with her own performance and, because she was an immanent author (writing by impulse), she could not continue the fragment (2005: 131-2).

Finally, the main advocates of a combined explanation, aesthetic and psychological, are John Norris (1986) and Juliet McMaster (1996). Both insist on Austen's misery after her father's death and her reluctance or inability to portray illness and death. Norris notes how "[i]llness in her novels was almost always mysterious, and death safely in the remote past or in the vague future," not because they are improper subjects, but because "the novels are about life" (1986: 95). *The Watsons* was left unfinished as Austen could not avoid representing death in the novel: "It was as though the last important test of adulthood – experiencing through the death of a parent the end of childhood – was avoided as much as possible" (Ibid.). Yet by this time Austen was nearly thirty, certainly middle age in the early 1800s.

Some critics have wondered not only why Austen abandoned the fragment, but why she never returned to it. Pickrel (1986: 449) and McMaster (1996: 179) are surprised that Austen's habits of revision did not extend to *The Watsons*, for she could have corrected its literary "problems" (the heroine, her father's death). Deborah Kaplan is one of the few to answer this question: providing a feminist reading of the fragment, Kaplan claims that none of the finished novels constitutes such a clear depiction of female friendship as a potential substitute for heterosexual closure (1992: 179). Of course, Austen could have revised *The Watsons*, but "[w]ith the form of a fragment she could retain those representations. Its fragmentary nature declares the work's forever-in-progress status, which helps to mute the sentiments it preserves" (Kaplan 1992: 180). In other words, precisely because of its

unfinished status, *The Watsons* could convey bolder representations of female friendship as an alternative to matrimony.

An important sector of *The Watsons* criticism has centred on its bleak depiction of marriage. A.B. Walkley noted that the town of D. is populated by husband-hunters, but he did not go into the motives or consequences of this practice (1923: 12). In contrast, Kaplan reads *The Watsons* as an exhibition of the detrimental effects poverty has on female identity, especially in the case of Margaret Watson. Margaret's determination to get a husband, cost what may, has even affected her looks – now she exhibits an anxious, sharp expression (Kaplan 1992: 171-2). David Nokes (1997) has interestingly connected the depiction of marriage in *The Watsons* with Austen's own marriage proposal by Harris Bigg-Wither. He reads the text for clues of what may have happened the night before Austen retrieved her initial consent: Emma and Elizabeth's conversation at the start of the novel may reproduce that between Jane and Cassandra, which must have taken place on the night between the second and the third of December 1802. But Nokes also finds something of Cassandra in Penelope Watson, as he wonders if the sisters' rivalry in *The Watsons* did not exist too between Jane and Cassandra (1997: 254-5).

It is impossible to pin down *The Watsons*: its date of composition and the reason why it was abandoned and never revised remain elusive. The uncertainties about *The Watsons*, its past and its future, make it a fascinating field of study – unique in its extant manuscript, its mysterious dating and incompleteness, and in its having produced the first full reprise of an Austen novel.

Terminology

The labels given to these reprises, in their various shapes, are similarly hard to delimit and define. Completing Adrian Poole's catalogue (2004: 2), Julie Sanders lists more than thirty: borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating, being influenced, inspired, dependent, indebted, haunted, possessed, homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion, intertextuality, variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, re-evaluation (2006: 3). The borderlines between them are certainly blurry, as scholars often assign different meanings to one term, or label one concept under different names.[9]

A clear necessity in studying derivative literature is establishing some generic term that includes all variations in different media and styles. First employed by Shakespearean scholar S. Schoenbaum (1970), the term "afterlife" has become a favourite to describe the subsequent "lives" of literary authors and their works. Sanders approves of this label, because the prefix "after" endorses "postmodernism's beloved idea of belatednesss" and suggests imitation or allusion (2006: 157). "Derivative" is another umbrella term, defined as any piece "based on or derived from one or more already existing works…Any work in which the editorial revisions, annotations, elaborations, or other modifications represent, as a whole, an original work of authorship is a derivative work or a new version" (US Copyright Office 2010: 1). The term was proposed by Wolfgang G. Müller (1995), who later applied it to *Wide Sargasso Sea* (2007). Other scholars, however, prefer "post-text" for these derived works (Breuer 1998) and "pre-text" (Broich 1996) or "parent-text" (Desmet 1999) for their sources.

[9] Compare, for instance, Julie Sanders's and Linda Hutcheon's definitions of "adaptation" below. To make it more complicated, Christy Desmet (1999) calls film versions of a novel/play "appropriations," not adaptations as Sanders does.

The most recurrent terms in this thesis are sequel and completion. There is a clear distinction between them: the OED defines "completion" as "[t]he action of completing or making complete; the condition of being completed or perfected." In contrast, the first meaning of "sequel" is a "train of followers, band of adherents, following, suit," also "[t]hat which follows as a result of an event or course of action; an after-consequence" (OED). Sequels "follow" or come after a previous narrative; they push the action past the original ending, whereas completions or continuations provide their original with its missing ending. In the words of Gérard Genette, the sequel "differs from a continuation in that it continues a work not in order to bring it to a close but, on the contrary, in order to take it beyond what was initially considered to be its ending" (1997: 206).[10] For instance, Joan Aiken's *Eliza's Daughter* (1994) is a sequel to *Sense and Sensibility*, whose story it prolongs an extra generation, but her novel *Emma Watson* (1996) is a completion or continuation of *The Watsons*. The sequel emerges from what Terry Castle calls the "best-seller syndrome" (1986: 133); it extends well-known texts, such as *Sense and Sensibility*, spinning off the original to satisfy readers' craving for more. Completions rarely have such luck: unfinished texts, even by the most popular author, are often known to only a handful of scholars.

Completions can be seen as more interesting objects of scholarly enquiry than sequels. Balachandra Rajan regards the unfinished as "the most insistent form of resistance to closure," which creates "that environment of indeterminacy in which the unfinished assumes its formal prominence" (1985: 3). The indeterminacy of fragments is the key here: writers of completions have significantly less freedom than sequel authors; everything has been laid out for them – themes, characters, plot strands, which they need bring to closure. In contrast, sequel authors can create their novels anew and set out what their main elements will be.

[10] However, for Deidre Lynch, the term "sequel" encompasses all Austen re-imaginings in the novel form – that is, sequels proper and what I am calling rewritings and completions here – but not recreations in other media (film adaptations, radio dramatisations) (2005: 160).

Juliette Shapiro, author of a twenty-first completion of *Sanditon*, has phrased it this way: "A continuation is very different from a sequel where the writer has, if not *carte blanche*, at least a chance at creating her own beginning, albeit one that must follow the original writer's ending" (2003: 191). The dynamics between source and target text are clearly different in the case of completions: there is a tense negotiation between two periods, cultural moments and artistic styles, the original author's and the completer's. Consequently, the interest of completions lies precisely in how these numerous tensions and struggles are negotiated and resolved. Because *The Watsons* is unfinished, Joan Aiken enjoys less liberty when concluding the novel than when extending *Sense and Sensibility*. Novelists completing *The Watsons* have to negotiate the disparities between Austen's original text and period and their own more strongly than sequel writers do. Completers are of necessity more deeply involved in the critical work of interpreting the source author – whether trying to discover what Austen would have done or choosing to re-orient her plot and characters.

Other recurrent terms in my thesis are "rewriting" and "adaptation." Often, rewritings, or rewrites, re-narrate older stories from a different point of view; for instance, Joan Ellen Delman's *Lovers' Perjuries* (2007) retells the story of *Emma* focusing on the courtship of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. The final product mirrors events, characters and/or themes from the original, but some may be added, suppressed or modified. Rewriting is characterised by an extended engagement with one main pre-text. Matei Calinescu distinguishes it from other forms of intertextuality as follows: "Rewriting would involve a reference of some structural significance (as opposed to a mere mention or passing allusion) to one or more texts or, if we want to underline the connection, *intertexts*" (1996: 245).

Adaptation is frequently understood as a change of media or genre, which provides a commentary on its source by highlighting motives, characters or making the story more appealing to modern audiences. Sanders defines adaptation as "a transpositional practice,

casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself" (2006: 18-9). In contrast, Linda Hutcheon holds a broader view of adaptation, which includes media as varied as TV, cinema, radio, the internet, videogames, opera, ballet, musicals, comics and webpages. Hutcheon gives "adaptation" a meaning closer to that outlined above for "rewriting:" it is "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art," which reveals "how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (2006: 170-6). I follow Sanders's definition rather than Hutcheon's, using "adaptation" primarily in my discussion of film transpositions of Austen's novels (Chapter 4). The main problem with Hutcheon's use of the term is precisely its looseness – for having one term to name too many concepts is clearly unproductive.

Other terms employed in this dissertation are "spin-off" and "mash-up." These neologisms pervade discussions of popular culture, which is probably why their use in scholarly circles has been limited. For Douglas Lanier, "spin-off" is associated with television and the cinema, and has the connotations of mass production (2002: 4). Another problem with these terms is again their vagueness; "spin-off," also "off-shoot," can refer to any type of derivative. Graham Holderness (2003), for instance, calls all the novels that stem from *Hamlet*, whether historical novels, romances or crime thrillers, spin-offs. "Mash-up" is an even later coinage, originally applied to those musical pieces which merge disparate elements from two or more existing songs. The OED defines it as "a mixture or fusion of disparate elements," and this is precisely what it does: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, for which I use this label in Chapter 5, fuses the zombie blockbuster and the Regency novel. Both "spin-off" and "mash-up" are mainly employed in my final chapter which looks at postmodern renditions of Austen's novels.

Methodology

The main theoretical framework for my project is New Historicism. Born in the 1980s, New Historicism emerged as a reaction against the Formalism and New Criticism that dominated the first half of the twentieth century. New Historicism positioned literary works in their historical domain, inaugurating the emphasis on context that still prevails in academic studies. Because there are no fixed rules or written manifesto for New Historicism, different critics have practised it differently: Romantic scholars, like Marjorie Levinson, often try to recuperate the original historical context, while Victorian critics, like D.A. Miller, prefer a Foucauldian approach.[11] My research is informed by Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher's account in *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), which brings the theoretical movement into the twenty-first century.

The main tenets of the School dovetail nicely with my project. The critic's involvement with "a multiplicity of historically embedded cultural performances" and his/her rejection of literature as a unitary story (Greenblatt and Gallagher 2000: 4-5) strike a chord with my thesis, which explores the numerous ways in which Jane Austen has been read, or performed, throughout history. I am interested in the "multiplicity" of the "performances" of Austen's novels over the last 200 years, and how they relate to some key points in British social history. Hence, my study has a strong historical component: reading "literature *in* history" (Brannigan 1998:3), it looks at the completions in the context of, for instance, Victorian socio-cultural developments and World Wars I and II. I am interested in how these historical events affected lay culture and indirectly the way Jane Austen was read. New Historicists treat culture as a text and notice "the social energies that circulate very broadly through a

[11] A good example is Levinson's essay "Insight and Oversight: Reading 'Tintern Abbey'" (1986), which she analyses as an example of New Historicist practice in "The New Historicism: Back to the Future" (1989). Levinson reads Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" in the context of his visits to the Wye Valley in 1793 and 1798, noting how these visits explain the "structure of feeling" and grammar of the poem.

culture, flowing back and forth between margins and center" (Greenblatt and Gallagher 2000: 13). Likewise, my thesis is concerned with the changing "social energies" that operate throughout the continuations of *The Watsons* and the relations between margin and centre, in its exploration of responses to Austen through the afterlife of one of her minor works.

Greenblatt and Gallagher explore an array of texts besides "major" literary works. They look at the marginal and non-literary and "ask not only what stories were occluded, but also how they have been concealed from view in order to facilitate the elaboration of a closed system" (2000: 82). *The Watsons* belongs to Austen's marginalia and has received considerably less critical attention than her complete novels. My thesis puts the fragment back into the picture, but also the work of other novelists who, sometimes successful during their lifetime, have been obliterated from literary history: Catherine Anne Hubback, John Coates and Joan Aiken. It studies how their completions, and the responses to Austen they voice, thwart accounts of Austen's afterlife as "a closed system." Like other works influenced by New Historicism, my study considers non-literary works: periodical notes and reviews (Chapter 1), biographies and family documents (Chapter 2) and films (Chapter 4). It examines some little-known materials, such as John Hubback and Edith Brown's *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* (1906) and Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (1920).

Influenced by Michel Foucault, New Historicism highlights the connection between literature and power. It conceives literary texts as "a space where power relations are made visible," for "[a]ll texts, all documents, are representations of the beliefs, values and forms of power circulating in a society at a given time in specific circumstances, and therefore all texts of a given time are in some ways interconnecting and interactive" (Brannigan 1998:6, 132). My thesis participates in this politicisation of literary history, as becomes clear especially in Chapters Two and Three, which show how Austen has been used as a political tool at

troubled points in British history. Not only are texts instrumental in the construction of power in their own time, but, as these chapters show, they can also be subsequently appropriated and reconstructed as tools helping to preserve public sanity and celebrate nationhood.

My study also inherits some of the paradoxes of New Historicism. Greenblatt and Gallagher declare their contradictory desire to treat a text as typical of a particular cultural period and at the same time show how it departs from the mood of the period (2000: 16). I am probably at the same crossroads when relating *The Watsons*' continuations to the history of Austen's fame: showing how they reflect her literary reputation and how they deviate from it, how they disclose new turning points and how they differ from other contemporary appropriations. Mine is not a unitary picture of Austen's afterlife. Greenblatt admits that New Historicism "erodes the firm ground of both criticism and literature...[It is] less concerned to establish the organic unity of literary works, and more open to such works as fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses" (1982: 6). My thesis reflects on the tensions that inhabit the completions, as they negotiate different historical periods – Austen's and the completer's. In this sense, they take the "dissensions" that Greenblatt noted to a further level of complexity: the completions encompass a later period, with its own historical forces and contradictions, added to the ones active in Austen's time. For instance, Oulton (1923) and Brown (1928) attempt to be faithful to Jane Austen in their respective continuations, but they fail when the cultural inheritance of the New Woman filters into their narratives. As a result, the history of responses to Austen that emerges from my thesis is not always coherent, but open to contradiction. Chapter Four examines feminists' conflicting agenda: the desire to celebrate Austen as a foremother and to change her narratives; Chapter Five deals with the postmodern attempt to depict a Jane Austen of the 1800s and the 2000s simultaneously. The history of Austen's reception is neither neat nor unitary.

One of the pitfalls ascribed to New Historicism is that it often fails to read literary texts as texts (Brannigan 1998: 206). My thesis, however, includes the textual analysis of the continuations of *The Watsons* and some other spin-offs. It has benefited from intertextual theory too, for sequels and completions are by definition highly intertextual. Roland Barthes envisages the text as "a tissue of quotations," "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1968: 146). This is the case of *The Watsons*' continuations, which become a collage of Austen quotations, but also draw "from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1968: 146), for example, Victorian scientific developments (Chapter 1) and the 1940s levelling of social classes (Chapter 3).

Austen sequels and completions are also intertextual in a stricter sense. For Michael Riffaterre, an intertext is "one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance" (1990: 56). Similarly, Harold Bloom (1975) believes that all intertexts must be other texts (primarily, Shakespeare's, Milton's or Freud's), excluding the socio-cultural influences that Barthes acknowledges. The completions examined here "quote" various texts other than Austen's. Catherine Anne Hubback's *The Younger Sister* (1850) is clearly influenced by sensation fiction; John Coates's *The Watsons* (1958), by the theatre of the absurd; and Michael Thomas Ford's *Jane Bites Back* (2010), by the chick lit novel and the vampire blockbuster. Yet, for my project, the most useful definition of intertext is probably Barthes's: the intertext is "a *circular memory*" that reveals "the impossibility of living outside the infinite text" (1975: 36). This expression nicely captures the way Jane Austen has been rewritten, expanded and concluded: she has indeed become a "circular memory," which returns every epoch, even if in varying shapes. Writers and readers cannot escape the Austen text which, far from being finite (6 novels, 2 fragments and the juvenile pieces), has become "infinite" in the number of post-texts it has spawned.

In its exploration of Austen's "circularity," this thesis consists of five chapters ordered chronologically. Chapter One examines how the first completion of *The Watsons*, Catherine Anne Hubback's *The Younger Sister* (1850), reveals different Victorian responses to Austen to that "officially" outlined by James Edward Austen-Leigh. Chapters Two and Three study the way in which Austen was read during World Wars I and II through the completions by L. Oulton, Edith Brown and John Coates. Chapter Four reads the completions and sequels of the 1990s in the light of the feminist revolution. Finally, Chapter Five addresses Austen as a postmodern phenomenon, alongside the impossibility of successfully completing *The Watsons* in the 2010s.

Chapter I

Austen and *The Watsons*, 1850-1870

In 1850, Catherine Anne Hubback published the first full Austen derivative ever: *The Younger Sister*, her completion of *The Watsons*. Hubback was Jane Austen's niece and the daughter of Sir Francis Austen. Although she had no personal knowledge of the author, Catherine was brought up by the two women who were closest to Jane, Cassandra Austen and Martha Lloyd. She first took up professional writing when her husband, barrister John Hubback, suffered a major mental breakdown, and went on to publish nine more titles between 1850 and 1863 (sometimes two in the same year), partly supporting herself, her three children and her invalid husband. In 1870, she settled in California with her son Edward, and seven years later died of pneumonia in Virginia. Intriguing as her life may seem, there has been little interest in Hubback and her fiction in the last one hundred and fifty years. Her novels are among the approximately 60,000 works of adult and juvenile fiction (Sutherland 1989: 1) published during Queen Victoria's reign, many of which have inevitably sunk into oblivion.

Hubback did not publish in an Austenian literary vacuum. After more than a decade of obscurity, the 1830s saw the beginning of Austen's restoration to the reading public. Publisher Richard Bentley bought the copyright of the novels in 1832, and in the next couple of years, he re-issued them with illustrations depicting the hair styles and clothes of the 1830s, not the 1800s – an adaptation and mixture of temporalities also present in *The Younger Sister*. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a significant upsurge in demand for Jane Austen, reflected in the publication of new editions. Besides the Bentley editions (1833-82), there were some minor ones from the 1840s onwards by Clarke, Simms

and M'Intyre, Briggs and Routledge (Gilson 2005: 128).[12] This growing interest in Austen in the 1840s, especially towards the end of the decade, laid the literary groundwork which Catherine Hubback was to build on.

The 1850s saw the publication of Hubback's first novel *The Younger Sister*, which is, I argue, crucial for a fuller understanding of the Victorian Jane Austen. Diana and David Hopkinson have noted how "[l]ooking back at the history of the Jane Austen cult, the Austen Leighs were clearly its main promoters. But their efforts sometimes give the impression that Jane's reflected glory shone solely on their branch of the family" (MS. Chapter 4: 17-18). James Edward Austen-Leigh (hereafter JEAL), the son of Austen's eldest brother James, published a successful *Memoir* in 1870, where he pictured his aunt as a gentle and saintly retiring spinster, who never ridiculed her neighbours: Austen "never abused them or *quizzed* them" for she "was as far as possible from being censorious or satirical" (1871: 73). The *Memoir* soon became a publishing success, winning flattering reviews[13] and going through a second edition within a year of its original publication.

The Younger Sister, although forgotten by Janeite as well as literary history, is necessary for a more complete appreciation of Austen's Victorian reception. Like the *Memoir*, it portrays Austen as a domestic writer, but also as an ironist and a professional author. In its alternate compatibility and antagonism with the image of Jane Austen subsequently created by the Austen-Leighs, *The Younger Sister* emerges as an early example of literary conflict and dispute about Austen: about her style, alliances and place in history. Adding to this unsettling of Austen and *The Watsons* is the fact that, in her completion,

[12] For a more detailed discussion of the Victorian editions of Austen's novels, see Katie Halsey's *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786-1954* (2012: 110-13).

[13] *The Dublin Review* spoke of the second edition of the *Memoir* in obsequious terms: "Mr. Austen-Leigh's admirable memoir of his aunt, Miss Austen, was received with the alacrity and approbation which it so well merited...He has earnestly endeavoured to supply the lacunes in the brief, interesting, and worthy story of the life of the gifted author" (July 1871: 251). The *Times* praised the *Memoir* for its brevity and concision: JEAL "has done well the little there was for him to do" (17 Jan 1870: 5), which suggests that reviewers align themselves with JEAL's view of Austen's life as reduced in its scope and uneventful (JEAL 1871: 9).

Catherine Hubback simultaneously plays on the family connection and disguises *The Watsons* as her own, hence undermining her novel as a Victorian rendition of Jane Austen. *The Younger Sister* emerges as a curious mixture of retrospection and modernisation, fidelity and infidelity, weakness and strength, whose ultimate alliances often remain undecided. This chapter explores mid-Victorian attitudes to Austen's prose and period through the work of Catherine Hubback. I will first look at how Hubback adopts and adapts Austen's themes and style, and how the image of Austen implicit in *The Younger Sister* relates to JEAL's. Then I will move on to a discussion of Hubback's and JEAL's Victorian reception, which confirms the completion as a site of contestation over Jane Austen.

I. *The Watsons*, *The Younger Sister* and *The Memoir*

Jane Austen's *The Watsons* is the story of Emma Watson, the daughter of an impoverished country parson. After her mother's death, Emma is adopted by her rich aunt and uncle, the Turners, and brought up away from her closest relatives in comparative luxury. But, following her husband's death, Mrs. Turner remarries, and Emma is returned portionless to her father. Elizabeth Watson, Emma's eldest sister, is the only one at home at this time, apart from Mr. Watson. The youngest sisters, Margaret and Penelope, are away striving to secure husbands: Margaret is staying in Croydon, hoping that local dandy Tom Musgrave will pine away during her absence; Penelope has gone to Chichester with the intention of snatching a rich elderly doctor. The Edwardses, a wealthy local family, are to chaperon Emma at her first local assembly. Driving the heroine to their house, Elizabeth advises Emma about local customs and asks her to watch Mary Edwards's dancing partners – for their brother Sam, a young surgeon, is in love with the girl. The assembly is a success; even the local titled family, the Osbornes, attend it, with a party consisting of: the dowager Lady Osborne and her children (Lord and Miss Osborne), Miss Osborne's friend Miss Carr, Mr. Howard (the clergyman of the parish in which the castle stands), his sister Mrs. Blake and her

son Charles. Lord Osborne, an awkward young peer, is quite taken by Emma's beauty, as is his former tutor Mr. Howard. Osborne and Musgrave visit the Watson girls a few days later, interrupting their modest early dinner. Elizabeth and Emma's felicity is disturbed again by the visit of their brother Robert and his snobbish wife Jane, who bring Margaret back from Croydon. Austen's fragment concludes with Emma rejecting an invitation to go back to Croydon and with the guests' departure.

It is difficult to see exactly how *The Watsons* was to end. Janet Todd and Linda Bree remark on this uncertainty: as a comedy, the novel would have probably concluded with several marriages; yet the number of revisions towards the end of the manuscript suggests Austen's growing dissatisfaction. Perhaps Austen herself was unsure about what the ending would be or how it would be brought about (Todd and Bree 2009: lxvii). JEAL, however, claimed that Cassandra had told her nieces how the novel would conclude – a piece of information provided by Catherine Hubback, according to her son John (*TLS* 24 May 1928: 396). The development of *The Watsons* was to include Mr. Watson's death, Lady Osborne's interest in Mr. Howard and Lord Osborne's proposal to Emma:

> When the author's sister, Cassandra, showed the manuscript of this work to some of her nieces, she also told them something of the intended story; for with this dear sister – though, I believe, with no one else – Jane seems to have talked freely of any work that she might have in hand. Mr. Watson was soon to die; and Emma to become dependent for a home on her narrow-minded sister-in-law and brother. She was to decline an offer of marriage from Lord Osborne, and much of the interest of the tale was to arise from Lady Osborne's love for Mr. Howard, and his counter affection for Emma, whom he was finally to marry (MW 362-3).

The Younger Sister is faithful to these plotlines – quite consistently if Hubback was really JEAL's source of information. Her novel proper starts when Emma and Elizabeth, returning a visit from Mrs. Willis, Howard's sister here, are snowed in at the parsonage. Trapped in the house (like Jane and Elizabeth Bennet at Netherfield), hero and heroine are brought into daily contact. Mr. Watson soon dies, reducing all his daughters to poverty and

sending Emma and Elizabeth to Croydon with their brother Robert. There, Emma is daily exploited as a seamstress and a nurse to his little daughter Janetta, also becoming victim to the sexual overtures of the local doctor Mr. Morgan. Under the pretext of providing her with a position as governess, Morgan first gains the heroine's confidence and, by making Emma the object of his attentions, sets all the inhabitants of Croydon talking behind her back.

Emma escapes Croydon thanks to an invitation to Osborne Castle from the former Miss Osborne, now married to Sir William Gordon. Learning the slanders of which she has been victim, Lord Osborne exerts himself to clear Emma's name, but his reward is not to be the heroine's hand; his marriage proposal is turned down. Howard, who has likewise rejected Lady Osborne, is finally reunited with Emma. Next, she goes back to Croydon for her sister Margaret's wedding to Tom Musgrove (not Musgr*a*ve in Hubback) and Elizabeth's to George Millar, a wealthy brewer. The novel closes with Morgan's sudden death in a boat accident and Emma and Howard's long-awaited union.

The Younger Sister victorianises Austen in ways that do not always agree with the romanticising impulse of other family members. Early in the *Memoir*, JEAL described Austen's native Steventon as the idyllic "cradle of her genius," whose surroundings "inspired her young heart with a sense of the beauties of nature" (1871: 24). Hubback did not share this tendency to view Austen through rose-tinted spectacles. While reproducing Austen's fictional themes and style, she augmented *The Watsons* with mid-Victorian ingredients (Morgan's sensational drowning) and preoccupations (the metropolis, the suffering poor). It is Hubback's alternate agreement with and departure from "mainstream" Austen discourses from the second half of the nineteenth century that makes her novel an interesting field of enquiry into the dissensions within Austen's early readership.

I.1. Themes: urbanisation, religion and sexuality

The world of Austen's *The Watsons*, as Walton Litz noted (1965: 87), is closer to the nineteenth than the eighteenth century, closer to the world of Elizabeth Gaskell than Fanny Burney. This is probably one of the reasons why *The Watsons* was the first Austen novel ever to produce a full sequel or continuation in the 1850s. *The Watsons* seems one of the easiest to transform into a Victorian novel, or one appealing to Victorian audiences. Its fictional world is less stable than that of other Austen novels: like many later nineteenth-century characters, Emma Watson is an orphan in the original – her mother had died when Emma was a child and her infirm father was probably soon to die. Alone in the world like Jane Eyre, Emma yearns for emotional fulfillment in the original: "I had hoped to find all my sisters at home; to be able to make an immediate friend of each" (MW 318). This emotional craving is highlighted and expanded in *The Younger Sister*: "All her life she [Emma] had wished for fraternal affection; much as she had loved her uncle and aunt, she had always wished to know and love her brothers and sisters" (1:126-7).

Mr. Watson was presumably going to die in the original. Whereas Austen does not linger over death in her mature works, the Victorians often placed death at the centre of their narratives. Margarete Holubetz has noted how the abundance of death-bed scenes, funereal processions and burials in the novels from the mid-1800s was a popular device to capture the Victorian reader, who had probably suffered analogous losses (1986: 14). The work of Dickens, Gaskell and Eliot famously contains a large number of deaths, sometimes including the main characters. For Holubetz, Dickens's and Thackeray's treatment of death in their novels provided a model for other writers to imitate, including second-rate novelists like Hubback (1986:14). It is perhaps for this reason that Hubback felt at home writing Mr. Watson's death, the event which, according to many a critic (Lascelles 1939; Drabble 1974), kept Austen from ever completing the novel. It must have been *The Watsons*' inherent

qualities and those of its intended ending that made the fragment appealing to the Victorians, becoming the first Austen text to produce a finished sequel or continuation.[14]

This section examines how Hubback completes the transformation of *The Watsons* into a mid-Victorian text and how, in retrospect, the image of Jane Austen that emerges from her Victorian continuation differs from or agrees with JEAL's. This comparison enlarges and complicates stable, uniform views of the Victorian responses to Austen's fiction, for critics have often overemphasised the import of the *Memoir*, to the extent that it appears as the only Victorian response to Austen.[15] *The Younger Sister* is indeed a novel of its time: it is the only one of *The Watsons*' completions unashamed of not having been written in the early 1800s. The rest, to a lesser or greater extent, are at pains to forge their contemporaneity with Austen, but *The Younger Sister* updates Austen to the mid-nineteenth century, incorporating typically 1850s concerns (urbanisation, religious debates, sexual alarm). These themes are explored in what follows – I examine the ambiguity of a text that victorianises *The Watsons* but at the same time maintains its alliance to Austen.

[14] This was a strategic move too: Hubback could remember the fragment from her childhood readings with Cassandra, and she presumably rewrote it from memory in her completion (John Hubback 1935: 5). As a fragment, *The Watsons* provided her with the necessary beginning for her first novel – if it is also true that, having had similar access to *Sanditon*, Hubback seems to have preferred *The Watsons*. According to Hubback's son, Cassandra used to bring Austen's novels and unfinished MSS. whenever she visited Francis Austen's children in Portsmouth (John Hubback 1935: 5). In 1862, Anna Lefroy complained that Catherine Hubback had "stolen" a copy of the MS. of *Sanditon*: "The Copy which was taken, not given, is now at the mercy of Mrs. Hubback, & she will be pretty sure to make use of it as soon as she thinks she safely may" (8 Aug 1862, qtd. in LeFaye 1987: 58). Yet Hubback never completed Austen's last unfinished novel.

[15] B.C. Southam (1968), Clara Tuite (2000), Roger Sales (2000) and Claire Harman (2009), among others, refer to the *Memoir* as the first turning point in Austen's literary reputation. Although this is mostly accurate, such emphasis on the *Memoir* often gives the false impression that there were no other insights into Austen at the time. As this chapter shows, the story of Austen's Victorian reception is far more complex and multi-dimensional.

I.1.1. Urbanisation: class and politics

Both JEAL and Hubback re-imagined Austen as a decidedly domestic writer. In the *Memoir*, this impulse translates into JEAL's careful description of the various domestic spaces Austen inhabited, from Steventon Parsonage to Chawton Cottage. About the latter, he notices:

> A good-sized entrance and two sitting-rooms made the length of the house, all intended originally to look upon the road, but the large drawing-room window was blocked up and turned into a book-case, and another opened at the side which gave to view only turf and trees, as a high wooden fence and hornbeam hedge shut out the Winchester road, which skirted the whole length of the little domain. Trees were planted each side to form a shrubbery walk, carried round the enclosure, which gave a sufficient space for ladies' exercise (1871: 69).

JEAL's Austen is constrained by private spaces, by the drawing-room and the two sitting-rooms of the small and somehow remote cottage in Chawton. The Austen implicit in *The Younger Sister* is similarly domestic. When Emma Watson first visits the Howards, Hubback provides an extensive description of the parsonage and its domestic amenities, filtered through the heroine. Emma notices how "the neatness of the place conveyed an idea of comfort and taste," and "the little vestibule, through which they passed into the parlour, was ornamented by some fine myrtles and geraniums in pots, which combined with the well-arranged guns, fishing-rods, and similar objects to give an air at once elegant and pleasing to the eye, but not too studied for the daily habits of domestic life" (1: 173). JEAL and Hubback re-imagine a homely novelist through their emphasis on private spaces. There is even a similar tonality in their respective descriptions of Chawton Cottage and Howard's parsonage, through their careful examination of the size and distribution of the furniture and the benefits of the surrounding vegetation.

However, Hubback does not concur with JEAL's idea that Austen's experience was delimited by domesticity, that "[o]f events her life was singularly barren: few changes and no

great crisis ever broke the smooth current of its course" (JEAL 1871: 9). Austen had actually lived in the city, in Bath (1801-5) and Southampton (1805-9), after her father's retirement and later death. According to biographer David Nokes, Austen enjoyed city life in Bath, where she could promenade in the Pump Room and attend the Theatre Royal, musical soirees and concerts in the New Assembly Rooms (1997: 265-66). But JEAL devoted most of his chapter on Austen's time in the city to the family relations that connected the Austens to Bath (Mr. Leigh Perrot and Rev. George Leigh Cooke) and the "pleasant garden" and other domestic amenities of "my grandmother's house" in Southampton (1871: 58-9, 65-6). This lack of emphasis on Austen's urban experience, in favour of family and domestic description, confirms JEAL's limiting portrait of his aunt.

Through her focus on the city in *The Younger Sister*, Hubback indirectly grants her aunt a wider range of experience, recreating Austen's world as larger than other descendants re-imagined it. Hubback's work frequently illustrates the intensive process of urbanisation that Britain saw during Queen Victoria's reign and in this sense has a wider scope than Austen's fiction, whose urban scenes, although present, are limited to a fraction of the text. For instance, both *The Watsons* and *The Younger Sister* dramatise Elizabeth and Emma's long opening conversation while driving to the Edwardses'. In Austen's text, the drive concludes: "The old Mare trotted heavily on, wanting no direction of the reins to take the right Turning, and making only one Blunder, in proposing to stop at the Milliners, before she [Elizabeth] drew up towards Mr. Edward's door" (MW 322). But before they are fully arrived, Hubback inserts a detailed description of the market place:

> Elizabeth whipped and urged on the old horse into something like an animated trot, and they soon were threading their way between the carts of cabbages, and turnips – wagons of hay – stalls of cattle, and sheep – old women with baskets – young women with fine gowns – boors with open mouths, and idle boys and girls with mischievous fingers congregating in the untidy market-place of a small country town (1: 20-21).

Hubback's description adds some local colour to Austen's *The Watsons* – such thorough descriptions are rare in Austen's fiction, especially when including something as down-to-earth as livestock, cabbages and turnips. Austen's irony in the original is also downplayed, for in *The Watsons*, the mare, perhaps like the young ladies, "wants" to visit the milliner's. Hubback sometimes reproduces Austen's playful irony, but never as extensively or successfully. This scene can be taken as a microcosm of the way Hubback approaches the Austen text: her continuation interweaves Regency and mid-Victorian discourses, re-directing *The Watsons* towards the 1850s.

Whereas Austen's fiction is largely rural, Hubback's reflects the speed of urban development in Victorian Britain. Concerns about the growth of the city had been common since the late eighteenth century – in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* William Wordsworth famously lamented "the encreasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident" (1800: 239-40). Yet the process had never acquired these dimensions: in 1800, there were no places in England and Wales with a population of 100,000 or more; when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, there were only five, but by 1891, 23 towns or cities had over 100,000 inhabitants (Briggs 1968: 59). This process was particularly intense in the second half of the nineteenth century, coinciding with Hubback's career: between 1841 and 1891, the population of London increased from 1,873,676 to 4,232,118 (Ibid.). *The Younger Sister* hints at this phenomenon, in the example above through its detailed portrait of the bustling market square in the town of Dorking. Hubback's Mr. Edwards is said to live in "the High Street" (1: 21), whereas Austen's simply lives in "the best house in the Street" (MW 322). The term "High Street" had, from the late seventeenth century, started to denote the primary business street in towns and cities, where most shops and retailers concentrate. This subtle addition emphasises

Hubback's greater interest in depicting the commercial life in the town of Dorking, something Austen's narrator does not remark upon.

Hubback's fiction explores life in the larger city too: the central action of *The Younger Sister* takes place in Croydon; two of her subsequent novels, *The Wife's Sister* (1851) and *May and December* (1854), are largely set in London. Only nine miles South of London, Croydon was popular among Victorian commuters, but also had a growing industry of its own: gasworks, boot factories and mineral water manufacturers contributed to boost its economy. Between 1839 and 1884, six new railway stations were built, and new lines connecting Croydon with London and neighbouring towns were constantly added. John Ruskin, Hubback's contemporary and an eminent Victorian, called their age one of "great cities," in which "[t]he very quietness of nature is gradually withdrawn from us," since "[a]ll vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates" (1849: 138). JEAL averts his eyes from urban life, despite composing his *Memoir* in the late 1860s, preferring an emphatically home-loving Austen, protected by family members at all times. Hubback, in *The Younger Sister*, abandons the luxuries of the landed estate, the "quietness of nature" Ruskin mourned, in favour of the emerging bourgeois town. In this sense, she brings Austen's scenes of city life fully into the mid-1800s, exploiting the seeds present in the original, such as Austen's choice of Croydon as the place of Robert Watson's dwelling.

By setting so much of her action in Croydon, Hubback makes a shift in what her characters *see*. Austen's Emma Woodhouse only sees a small world when she stands in front of the shop in Highbury: "Emma went to the door for amusement. – Much could not be hoped from the traffic of even the busiest part of Highbury" (E 233). She is at Ford's, Highbury's only shop, which, as Frank Churchill teases, "every body attends every day of their lives" (E

201), for there is not much else to do in the small village. Hubback, in contrast, widens her characters' experience, making them see some of the bustling commercial life that characterised Victorian Croydon. In the mid and late 1800s, Croydon was a city of flourishing business: laundries, groceries, newspaper offices, decoration firms and clothes shops clogged its streets.[16] This is the world to which Emma and Elizabeth Watson would have had access while walking the streets of Croydon on one of Jane Watson's frequent errands (2: 343) – a world where the Robert Watsons count soap boilers, clerks and bakers among their closest neighbours (2: 202, 243, 290), rather than the clergymen and landowners that populate Austen's novels. This commercial phenomenon has a darker side, for as Jane Watson's little daughter observes, the streets of Croydon are also inhabited by beggars, who "go without shoes, and wear old clothes" (2: 168).

The city of Croydon in *The Younger Sister* is dominated by the new bourgeois prosperity of the professions: from Robert's law practice to George's brewing business, passing through a large number of doctors, surgeons and bakers. The process of urbanisation in the Victorian period was indeed closely connected to industrialisation and capitalism, for the exodus from the countryside to the city entailed the export of capital and the formation of new systems of production (Rodger and Morris 1993: 6, 12). Among the professions Hubback examines, the law acquires special significance, both as a recurrent element in Victorian fiction and as central to this narrative. John Sutherland has identified the law as the main stepping-stone for those Victorian men who went into writing. As for female authors, they were frequently the wives of barristers (1996: xxi) – Hubback's own case.

[16] The Museum of Croydon houses remnants from these trades that give the modern visitor an idea of the city's nineteenth-century booming economy: unsold trimmings and buckles from Madame Jardine's clothes shop, Frederick Wratten's products from his company of photographic supplies "Wratten & Wainwright" and advertising tokens from Sainsbury, which successfully opened its doors in Croydon in 1882.

The law is at the core of the novel, with Robert's attempted legal action against Tom Musgrove. After proposing to Margaret in a state of inebriation, Tom denies the existence of any engagement, which results in Robert's threat to take him to court for breach of promise. Robert becomes even more adamant on learning that there were two unseen witnesses, Emma and Miss Osborne, who accidentally listened to the proposal. Robert Watson is an example of a self-made man who puts business in front of everything else. "Deeds not words" is the motto of this lawyer who is permanently "taken up entirely with facts, not feelings, and looking decidedly as if his mind at least never quitted his office" (2: 129). Like Mr. Jaggers in *Great Expectations* or Mr. Bruff in *The Moonstone*, who held that "Time was money" (1868: 397), Robert is the model of the Victorian lawyer who has made his own fortune with determination and dedicated work; facing the prospect of litigation, Robert "rubbed his hands with inexpressible glee," being "in an ecstasy of hope and enjoyment" (2: 194).

The Younger Sister also depicts the increasing gulf between the rich and the poor that often marked life in the mid-Victorian provincial city. After the Hungry Forties, and the incidents of localised violence it generated in protest against the effects of industrialisation, the 1850s were a period of seeming economic expansion. This was "a money-making age," G.M. Young noted, "of all decades in our history, a wise man would choose the eighteen-fifties to be young in" (qtd. in Herbert 2002: 188). Yet Christopher Herbert notes that this feeling of self-congratulation was based on an illusion, which writers like Dickens would make their mission to undermine – for instance, *Little Dorrit* (1855-57) explores the derelict position of a growing class of debtors (2002: 188, 197). A town of fabulous prosperity, the historical Croydon, like many British cities in the 1850s, was characterised by the rift between the increasingly rich middle-classes and the ever poorer lower orders.[17] The poor

[17] Based on real accounts, D. Blakeley's *At the Precipice of Poverty* (2001) dramatises the life condition of the working classes in 1907 Croydon, including life in the infirmary, the workhouse and the small rooms members of the lower orders often inhabited.

must have been perceived as a problem by the local authorities, which implemented several measures to deal with their growing numbers. In the 1850s (when little Janetta would have encountered street beggars), Croydon saw the building of one workhouse and the expansion of another; in the 1890s, the Croydon Improvement Act was passed, which cleared away the slums in Middle Row, an area near the High Street.

Like many mid-Victorian novels, *The Younger Sister* is a piece of social criticism. Mr. Morgan condemns the social hierarchies of Croydon: equality, he claims, is nonexistent, for people are permanently trying to imitate those above themselves, while watching those at the same level to detect any slight sign of elevation. These class differences, which Morgan denounces, are conspicuous in church, where aristocrats "have their carriages and horses to bring them to their Sunday devotions" and "have likewise their comfortable pews for lounging through the prayers – their cushions, their carpets, their footstools, that they may not be too fatigued by worship" (3: 31). The professions, although commanding cushions and carpets, lack the curtains the aristocracy enjoys. In contrast, "inferior classes are forced to sit on benches without cushions, whilst the poorest of all may enjoy what comfort they can on the hard open seats in the stone aisle" (3: 31). JEAL would delineate a purely domestic Austen who excelled in needlework, an occupation on which she spent "much time" (1871: 77). But Hubback's depiction of the plight of the poor, like her exploration of urban spaces and the legal profession, hints at a different Victorian picture of Austen: the Austen implied in *The Younger Sister* has a wider experience of the world and is more concerned with socio-political issues than the exclusively familial Austen, immovably attached to village life, manufactured by JEAL.

Hubback's non-urban passages also register the presence of the working classes, including peasants and gamekeepers. Whereas the lower orders in Austen have a minor role (in the case of servants, chiefly indicative of the family income), in Hubback they attain their

own voice. In Austen's *Emma*, Harriet Smith is molested by some gypsies, who are portrayed as a mob, "clamorous, and impertinent in look" (E 333-4), lacking any sense of identity or individuality. The whole "gang" assails a terrified Harriet demanding her money, but their speech is never reported. In *The Younger Sister*, Emma and Margaret are attacked by a dog in the Winston fields, but the peasant who owns it refuses to call the dog back, so that the young women can pass, simply saying: "Thy sister must jist make up her moinde to pass as other foalk do – unless you chose to go athert the field yonder, to get out of him's way" (1: 143-4). These incidents are very differently handled: the way Austen constructs Harriet's adventure conflates the gypsies into an anonymous, threatening mass. They are de-personified through Austen's repeated use of the passive voice, which denies their agency: "such an invitation for attack *could not be resisted*; and Harriet *was soon assailed* by half a dozen children," and later again: "her terror and her purse *were too tempting*, and she *was followed, or rather surrounded*, by the whole gang, demanding more" (E 334, my italics). The persistence of the passive voice conceals the agent of the action in these sentences. In contrast, characterising the peasant through his discourse, full of dialect, Hubback records the speech of the lower classes. He speaks twice and is described by the narrator in the active voice as "the countryman who seemed, in reality, rather amused at the fright of the young ladies" (1: 143). In Hubback's narrative, working-class characters acquire a certain individuality: they become the subjects of their own sentences, rather than a mere complement pushed to the end of the sentence.

Positive as this inclusion may seem, the attitude of Hubback's narrator towards the labouring poor is sometimes ambivalent – perhaps suggestive of Hubback's own class ambivalence (as daughter of *Sir* Francis Austen and wife of a barrister) and that of her novel. Emma Watson and Sir William Gordon, surprised by the rain during their early morning walk, take refuge in the gamekeeper's lodge, where they find only his wife, "a *pretty* and

neat-looking young woman" (2: 64, my italics). The lodge lacks all the luxuries of Osborne Castle, but is repeatedly eulogised for its cleanliness. The room where Emma and Sir William wait for the rain to stop is "small and plainly furnished," "illuminated by the burning fire – which, in spite of the gloom without, threw a ruddy glow over every thing beside it" (2: 65-66). Similarly, the small cart they borrow from Mrs. Browning to reach the Castle is a "neat, little chay-chart" (2: 72). This idyllic portrait of honest and simple working-class life is to some extent patronising: Sir William strikes the modern reader as smug when, on leaving the lodge, he claims "What a charming little scene" (2: 72). Lower-class life is "little," "neat" and "pretty" – the adjectives that recur throughout the passage. Adding to the ambiguous stance of Hubback's narrator is Howard's defence of the labouring classes: although "[t]heir manners of course are uncultivated, and their habits are what you would call unrefined," one can find "the germs of generosity, gratitude, and self-sacrifice for the good of others" (1: 157-8). The decent labouring poor are the bearers of "true poetry," Howard asserts rather condescendingly, as he provides a monolithic, unified picture of working-class experience.

The Younger Sister, like *The Watsons*, is dominated by financial anxieties, yet this concern is handled differently in the continuation. When Tom Musgrove and Lord Osborne visit the Watsons early in *The Younger Sister*, the discussion on economy is much more overt than in the original. In *The Watsons*, Emma replies to Lord Osborne's insistence that she ride a horse: "Female Economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one" (MW 346). In *The Younger Sister*, she openly responds: "My father cannot afford it…and I have no wish to act in a way inconsistent with our circumstances;" to which Lord Osborne impertinently adds: "Poor is he? how uncomfortable!...why, what's his income, do you suppose?" (1: 66-67). This sort of detail is absent from Austen's fragment. True, Austen's novels are preoccupied with money – with characters' incomes and the problems an insufficient income entails, but these concerns are never discussed so explicitly.

The Victorian novel often deals differently with money, being less comfortable with marriage and inheritance as the chief vectors for financial enrichment. Money for the mid-Victorians had to be earned, produced: after the ordeal of the Hungry Forties, the 1850s were characterised by the imperative to make a quick profit (Herbert 2002: 187-88). Money had become a "vehicle of cultural awareness" and this idolatry of money produced new psychological structures among the Victorians (Ibid.). A good fictional example is Robert Watson, whose conversation with Emma about her aunt's dismissal acquires a ruder and more unpleasant turn. Whereas in *The Watsons* he simply laments that her uncle did not make any provision for Emma (MW 352), in *The Younger Sister* Robert calls him an "ass" and becomes much more specific about monetary matters: if Emma had inherited at least £1,000, Robert could have invested that capital, but lacking the money he sadly missed a good opportunity the previous week (1: 82-3). Hubback, to some extent, seems to be vulgarising the language of the original; interestingly, in the eyes of other members of the Austen family, Austen was more vulgar than her descendants.

This notion of an unrefined, slightly lower-class Austen was shared by Lady Knatchbull, better-known as Fanny Knight, one of Austen's favourite nieces. In an infamous letter to her sister, Lady Knatchbull disparaged the social status of her aunt and some of her family circle:

> Yes my love it is very true that Aunt Jane from various circumstances was not so *refined* as she ought to have been from her *talent*, & if she had lived 50 years later she would have been in many respects more suitable to *our* more refined tastes. They were not so rich & the people around with whom they chiefly mixed, were not at all high bred, or in short anything more than *mediocre* & *they* of course tho' superior in *mental powers* & *cultivation* were on the same level as far as *refinement* goes (23 Aug 1869, qtd. in LeFaye 1989: 169).

There is a dramatic alteration in Fanny's attitude towards her aunt. This is the niece to whom Austen had written more than fifty years earlier: "It is very, very gratifying to me to know you so intimately. You can hardly think what a pleasure it is to me to have such thorough

pictures of your heart" (Letter 151, 20 Feb. 1817). Although Fanny's presumed senility may account for her tirade, her Victorian snobbery must have played an important role in this change of attitude. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* expressed analogous views on Austen's unsophisticated connections: "Fortunately for Jane Austen, the better education and tastes of her parents screened her from associations with the free life and conversation so prevalent in those days…Notwithstanding, her early life was not surrounded by much elegance or material refinement. The parsonage was a very inferior house" (1 Ap. 1873: 187). Due to the private nature of Lady Knatchbull's letter, the idea of Austen as belonging to an "inferior" social echelon expressed in the periodical must have been to some extent prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Hubback's deployment of a middle-class ideology in *The Younger Sister* supports this image of a less refined Austen. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Austen was a "gentleman's daughter." Her family belonged to the lesser gentry: her father was a clergyman who had risen from a family of traders; her mother occupied a higher social station, being distantly connected to the aristocracy. By introducing professional life into a work originated by her aunt, Hubback by implication celebrates the material and commercial aspects of her aunt's background. In *The Younger Sister*, Hubback adopts the Watson family, already impecunious in the original, and explores the efforts of its professional members: lawyer Robert Watson and surgeon Sam Watson. Marriage to a barrister (from a working-class background) who failed to provide for his family had given Hubback's mind a practical and economic turn. She would spend her last years fostering her children's advancement in business – the reason why she moved to California in the first place.[18] Lady Knatchbull may have disparaged what she perceived as

[18] There, she kept house for her son Edward until his engagement to Florence Bentley (1876), and then moved to Virginia with his youngest son Charles and his wife Bernadette. Hubback's letters show her preoccupation with Edward's career: "I wish with all my heart that it were possible for Edward to have done with Mr. Makin [his business partner]...But Edward says it cannot be – they must get on as well as they can for another year – and then the partnership ends. He thinks that is only right. I am sure it is not to his advantage in a worldly sense"

Austen's lack of refinement, but Hubback unashamedly appropriates and celebrates the breakdown of old economic relationships in her continuation.

I.1.2. Science and Religion

JEAL and Hubback recreated an emphatically religious Austen in their narratives. Religious faith sustained Austen throughout her whole life: as the daughter of a country parson, religion was undoubtedly part of her daily life – the prayers she composed, included in Chapman's *Minor Works*, attest to her devotion. Austen did not, however, include extensive religious commentary in her novels: her fiction often mocks members of the clergy (Mr. Elton, Mr. Collins), and most of her characters make moral choices without any reference to God.[19] In contrast, JEAL felt the need to emphasise Austen's faith in his *Memoir*, insisting on "the piety which ruled her in life, and supported her in death" and the "Christian love and humility [that] abounded in her heart, without presuming to lay bare the roots whence those graces grew" (1871: 26, 80).

This change in attitude relates to the disintegration of the old bond between science and religion that took place in the mid-1800s.[20] Whereas before the nineteenth century religious faith and the sciences had mostly been in harmony, the Victorian Age saw an increase in debates about the possibility of divine creation in the light of new discoveries in geology. It was for this reason that a contemporary periodical like *The British Mothers' Magazine*, which Hubback might have known, insisted on the need to reconcile both subjects. In "The Uses of Physical Sciences to the Young," the periodical stressed how children should receive

(Letter 21, 10 Jan. 1874). In 1875, Edward was forced to end his business partnership with the unscrupulous Mr. Makin.

[19] Austen's faith and her fictional representation of the clergy have been successfully tackled by Irene Collins (1994), Michael Giffin (2002), Laura Mooneyham White (2011) and Kathleen James-Cavan (2011).

[20] Frank Turner (1978) argues that epistemological disagreements over different scientific theories and methods, and the epistemological redefinition of science, should be considered when discussing the antagonism between Victorian science and religion, for this was ultimately a debate about structures of knowledge. Christopher Herbert notes the contradiction between Christian religion and the Victorian idea of money. Although the urge to produce money is rooted in Protestant culture, there is an inherent contradiction between the poverty and humility Christianity endorses and the impulse to amass a fortune (Herbert 2002: 190).

"instruction on the objects and operation of nature," while at the same time noting that "the works of man are much less complex, cumbrous and prodigal of means than they would have been if he had not the example ever before him of the 'easy, artless, unincumbered' plans by which Omnipotent Wisdom effects his purposes" (1847: 65). Other essays in this issue reinforce the tension between both subjects, with titles such as "The Religious Instruction of Children," "The Mother's Faith" and "The Medical Mother," which condemns medical women for overdosing their children.

What this example from *The British Mothers' Magazine* shows is the growing breach between science and religion that is also evident in JEAL's and Hubback's recreations of Austen. Hubback dramatises this public debate, questioning a world where science and technology seem to have replaced religion as a source of moral advice. In *The Younger Sister*, Mr. Bridge and Mr. Morgan represent this conflict, when both attempt to win Emma's confidence and "save" her from the evils of Croydon. Mr. Morgan, the representative of science in the completion, is a charming physician whose speciality is counselling female patients. Mr. Bridge, the Croydon clergyman who warns Emma about Morgan's reputation, is the first overtly devout Austenian parson. In Austen's novels, clergymen are potential husbands for the heroines (Henry Tilney, Edward Ferrars, Edmund Bertram), who socialise with the gentry and attend their dinner parties. Mr. Bridge, in contrast, preaches to his community; consoling Emma, he advises her to think of God: "But above all, my child, endeavour to subdue a repining spirit, and remember that there is One above, who is the Father of the fatherless, and who has promised never to forsake those who call upon Him faithfully!" (3: 60). Whereas religion was a given in the world of Austen's novels, in the world of Hubback and JEAL religion is increasingly being questioned, hence the need to highlight it at the expense of Austen's frequently ironical presentation of the clergy.

The Younger Sister also downplays Austen's light-hearted humour at its heavily moralistic conclusion:

> I have nothing more to say of any of the party, and only trust that all who read my tale, may be convinced, as I am, that prudence, gentleness, and good sense, will secure friends under the most disadvantageous circumstances; but that marriage alone, unless undertaken with right feelings and motives, cannot be considered a certain recipe for worldly happiness (3: 412-3).

Hubback's completion closes with a maxim to guide the reader; by contrast, when Austen finishes her novels with a "lesson," the tone is clearly satirical. *Northanger Abbey* is a famous example, with the narrator's playful remark on how her story should be read: "I leave it to be settled, by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience" (NA 252). Austen never concludes her novels with serious maxims, but with a parody of *precisel*y those works that do – conduct books and sentimental novels. Her sense of humour and characteristic ironic bite are absent from *The Younger Sister*'s Victorian conclusion.

The narrator's discussion of phrenology marks the novel's engagement with Victorian scientific discourse. Phrenology was a popular form of pseudoscience during the nineteenth century, whose main tenet was that character could be determined from the shape and size of the skull. This philosophy often permeated character description in Victorian fiction: Charlotte Brontë's Mr. Paul tells Lucy Snowe, the heroine of *Villette*: "Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull, that night you came; I see your moyens: play you can; play you must" (1853: 202). Referring to Howard's cowardice after Osborne confesses his love for Emma, Hubback's narrator distances herself from the text and comments: "Had phrenology then been in fashion, it is possible that the origin of this weakness [Howard's passivity] would have been discovered in the absence of the bump of self-esteem; but this not being the case, and in consequence his head never having been phrenologically examined, I cannot answer for more than the entire absence of the quality"

(2: 114). This mini essay that interrupts the action, like the content itself, marks *The Younger Sister* as Victorian text, yet the narrator's ironical detachment, different from Brontë's direct engagement, connects back to Austen.

The main difference between JEAL and Hubback is the latter's occasional ambivalence towards the religious debate, as she straddles Austenian and mid-Victorian trends to depict illness and medicine. Austen depicts apothecaries in *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Watsons*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. Preoccupations with health are emergent in her last three novels and especially in her unfinished *Sanditon*. In *The Younger Sister*, there is a large number of doctors, surgeons and apothecaries: Sam, Morgan, Denham (Miss Osborne's doctor, curiously named after one of *Sanditon*'s characters), the unnamed apothecary who initially attends Mr. Watson, Penelope's husband, and even Penelope herself (who is reportedly more knowledgeable than the apothecary).

Illness and medicine constitute one of the chief thematic threads of *The Younger Sister*, with a distinction between those characters who fancy themselves ill and those who are truly sick. Margaret Watson belongs to the first group. Like Diana Parker in *Sanditon*, who "was evidently the chief of the family; principal Mover & Actor" despite her alleged invalidism (MW 414), Margaret uses health as a way of acquiring the centrality denied to her as a dependent woman. Her fits of hysterics and recurrent headaches – akin to Mary Musgrove's sore throats, "always worse than anybody's" (P 164) – are Margaret's way of making society work for her. So when her father is taken ill, she turns hysteric and therefore escapes from sitting with him overnight, but has, on the contrary, Nanny nursing her. Likewise, when Tom denies their engagement, "Margaret *thought* it incumbent on her immediately to go off in a fit of hysteria on hearing this read, sobbing out between whiles" (3: 253, my italics).

If Margaret's hypochondria harks back to Austen's deployment of health and medicine, Emma is genuinely ill (her worries about Morgan make her feverish), and her illness moves the novel into the mid-1800s. Emma's condition may bear some connection to that of Marianne Dashwood (who mostly brings the fever on herself through her excessive sensibility), but it resonates with the disorders of some mid-Victorian heroines. Like Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth Hilton, Emma has been infected by Morgan's sexuality and therefore needs to "detoxify." The doctor repeatedly harasses Emma during her country walks with Janetta, and suggests the little girl ride his donkey as a pretext to have Emma's company (2: 339-49). After Morgan's sexual attacks, the heroine feels a "burning, throbbing pain in her head, which Emma complained almost drove her mad…and towards the morning she was in a decided fever" (3: 64). When Morgan visits, the fever only gets stronger: "his presence caused the feverish symptoms which at first alarmed him" (3: 67). Gaskell's Ruth similarly suffers from typhoid fever after being infected by Bellingham's sexuality. Only after undergoing a "cleansing" process can Emma recover and meet Morgan with "a calm self-possession" and "a degree of *frigid* composure." In their next meeting, she is "*impenetrably* grave, *yielding* to neither tenderness nor gaiety" (3: 72-3, my italics). With terms such as "self-possession," "frigidity" and "impenetrability," these passages make very clear what Emma's indisposition is about.

These scenes expand the heroine's experience and Austen's by extension, presenting both as more worldly characters than the Austen-Leighs ever imagined. Claudia Johnson has recently remarked on JEAL's frequent use of fairyland to rethink Austen and her world, which in turn becomes feminine, diminutive and enchanting (2012: 80). For instance, JEAL noted how Austen would tell her nephews and nieces "the most delightful stories, chiefly of Fairyland, and her fairies had all characters of their own. The tale was invented, I am sure, at the moment, and was continued for two or three days, if occasion served" (1871: 72). In

contrast, through Emma Watson's sexual experience, Hubback adds physicality to her re-imagining of Austen and *The Watsons*. Austen's text is granted a new bodily dimension in *The Younger Sister*, which contrasts with what Johnson sees as JEAL's insistence on Austen's disembodiment (by imagining her as fairy-like and ethereal). The seeming contradiction in the hybrid text, which presents Austen's heroine with a domestic and self-consciously sexual body, adds to the ambivalence of Hubback's Austenian rendition.

I.1.3. Gender and Sexuality

Re-imagining Austen's putative concerns with gender and sexuality becomes an obvious point of conflict between JEAL's and Hubback's narratives. For the former, Austen was a retiring aunt, intent on "home duties, and the cultivation of domestic affections" but without much knowledge of the outer world (1871: 130); for the latter, she was possibly a proto feminist preoccupied with the condition of portionless women and the (sexual) dangers looming over them. The typical Victorian tension between the individual and society is present in the Croydon passages of *The Younger Sister*. Hilary Schor defines the Victorian novel as an uneasy negotiation between individualism, society and representation (1999: 325). The novel occupies "some uneasy ground between the individual and the collective," at the same time that, formally, its central plot moves the individual from childhood to adulthood and moral revelation (Schor 1999: 324). In *The Younger Sister*, this troubled opposition arises when Emma walks alone with Morgan through the streets of Croydon. Like Gaskell's Ruth Hilton and Mary Barton, Emma is initially unconscious of doing any wrong: "Emma considering him as a man old enough to be her father, and thinking no evil herself, felt no hesitation in listening to him or allowing him to walk beside her" (2: 313). But Croydon's busybodies think differently: Morgan is a single man, and a dandy at that, who has long been perceived as their own property (2: 315). The feeling of female "ownership" over

Morgan is confirmed by the antipathy that Emma arouses when Morgan's sisters and their friends surprise them in an apparent tête-à-tête (3: 11-12).

Female sexuality, and the dangers assailing women, is a major concern throughout Hubback's fiction. Emma becomes a potential fallen woman – of the type Gaskell and Eliot portrayed. After living with Jane and Robert for some months, Emma decides to become a governess. On the one hand, this continues a plotline already hinted at in Austen's fiction, where Jane Fairfax plans to become a governess, despite comparing the profession to the slave-trade (E 300). On the other hand, Emma Watson's teaching scheme places the novel within the context of other Victorian governess narratives, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847). Hubback takes an element Austen touches upon – the exploitation of governesses – and gives it a post-Brontëan spin, drawing on the mid-1800s preoccupation that governesses were liable to be not only overworked but also sexually harassed by their employers, as Emma is by Mr. Morgan.

In *The Victorian Governess*, Kathryn Hughes (1994) provocatively compares the figure of the governess and the prostitute. The sexual aggressiveness associated with the prostitute was often ascribed to the governess, Hughes notes (1994: 120). Both contributed to the smooth running of the middle-class Victorian household, as prostitution was often seen as a necessary evil, which regulated male desire by preventing men from forming illicit attachments with women of their own class (Ibid.). Like the prostitute, the governess came from a world of financial necessity, and was propelled into the centre of middle and upper middle class life (Ibid.). Questions of class and sexuality are clearly intertwined in *The Younger Sister*, for it is lower-class or portionless women that are often the target of sexual attacks. One of the guests to Margaret and Tom's wedding tells the groom that he never pays attention to genteel girls: "those I can have nothing to say to," but he saw a girl keeping the lodge-gate "who stared at me as I came in, I noticed her there, and winked at her as hard as I

could; and I intend to notice her again *before I've done with her*" (3: 268, my italics). Is this a half-voiced suggestion of prostitution? What is the guest going to "do" with the pretty gatekeeper? Through the lens of Hughes's comments, *The Younger Sister* sheds an interesting light on Hubback's reading of *The Watsons*: it is as if Hubback was indirectly assigning the original fragment/Austen the sexual knowingness that JEAL would be so insistent to erase.

In her completion, Catherine Hubback alternately conforms to and contradicts JEAL's remodeling of Austen two decades later: the impression of Austen that emerges from her continuation is domestic and emphatically religious, but also more knowledgeable and experienced than JEAL's "Aunt Jane." The ambivalence of Hubback's reconstruction undermines the authority of the *Memoir*, questioning some of its main tenets and showing how responses to Austen have been contradictory from an early period. The internal clashes in the way Hubback depicts class and urbanisation, science and religion, and gender and sexuality – neither fully Regency nor Victorian – illustrate the split identity of the completion, and suggest conflicting elements in Austen's afterlife at large. They also undermine JEAL's neat hagiographical narrative, showing how, in the Victorian period, Austen's character and legacy had become something contested – textually in *The Younger Sister* and at a wider level within her surviving family circle.

Although she progressively shook off her aunt's cloak, Hubback never completely abandoned it. Her third novel *The Wife's Sister* (1851) can be traced back to Austen's *Emma* in the marriage between Cecil and Fanny Mansfield, his late wife's sister – and clearly also links back to *Mansfield Park*. Because old laws forbid the marriage, the characters discuss the viability of their union: "We cannot, must not marry, Cecil. *We are brother and sister, you know*," Fanny laments, to which Cecil replies: "We are not – I deny it. It is an imaginary tie which binds us: one which Mary's death forever severed" (1: 65, my italics). This exchange clearly echoes that of Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley during the ball at the Crown:

"'You have shown that you can dance, and you know that we are not so much brother and sister as to make it all improper.' 'Brother and sister! No, indeed'" (E 331). Hubback exploits the potential problems of such a union and the underlying incest question that pervades *Emma*.

In *May and December* (1854), Hubback similarly expands on the potential of *Sense and Sensibility*. *May and December* revolves around young May Luttrell, who marries the sixty-year-old wealthy merchant Mr. Cameron. A sort of sequel to *Sense and Sensibility*, the novel explores what might happen to Marianne and Brandon after their wedding, and the difficulties that ensue when a middle-aged man marries a beautiful young girl. Like Marianne, May is a sensitive, romantic heroine: surprised by the storm during their boat trip, she insists on experiencing the tempest in all its violence, and scolds the sailor who tries to soften the impact of the waves (1: 300). There is even a Willoughby figure in the shape of Wildey, May's unscrupulous cousin and Cameron's employee. Wildey encourages the marriage between May and Cameron to advance his own position in the company, while planning his union to May after Cameron's decease.

I.2. Style: irony and free indirect style

Austen's influence over Hubback is not limited to themes, characters and plotlines. Hubback occasionally mimics Austen's playful writing style – full of mockery, double meanings and caustic wit. In *The Watsons*, Austen satirises conceited aristocrats: when Tom Musgrave asks Emma what she thinks of Lord Osborne, she replies "He would be handsome even though he were not a lord, and perhaps, better bred; more desirous of pleasing and showing himself pleased in a right place" (MW 340). Hubback does not satirise the aristocracy: although not the funny, subtle novelist that her aunt was, Hubback offers glimpses of this type of Austenian satire throughout her fiction. Mr. Watson's interventions

in *The Younger Sister* are a good example. When Tom Musgrove visits the parsonage in the completion and boasts that, like the late Lord Osborne, he too will suffer from the gout at a young age, Mr. Watson retorts: "Unless you have reason to suppose the late Lord Osborne was your father likewise...I don't see what either his gout or his aristocracy have to do with you" (1: 163). Mr. Watson the ironist could be read as Austen's surrogate within the text. At the end of this visit, he dismisses Tom, claiming: "There goes a young man, who if he had had to work for his bread might have been a useful member of society. But unfortunately the father made a fortune, so the son can only make a fool of himself" (1: 167).

Interestingly, Hubback at times re-ironises Austen's ironic fragment by inserting extra comic passages in the opening sections. In both texts, Emma and the Edwardses discuss her brother Sam before the assembly: "I do not much think she [Emma] is like any of the Family *but* Miss Watson," Mr. Edwards says in the source text, "but I am very sure there is no resemblance between her and Sam." With this, the "matter was settled, and they went to Dinner" (MW 324). What Hubback adds is a mocking remark by the narrator. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards are against a possible match between Sam and their daughter Mary but, in the completion, Mr. Edwards persists on talking about the young surgeon, "seeming, in a very husband-like way, bent on continuing the conversation which his wife desired to stop" (1: 25). In a typically Austenian fashion, Hubback's narrator is poking fun at married couples – the Edwardses are here reminiscent of the Palmers and the Middletons – by adding ironic observations which are absent from the original. Other Austen family members were bent on suppressing, rather than enhancing, Austen's sense of humour: JEAL stressed how "she never played with its [life's] serious duties or responsibilities, nor did she ever turn individuals into ridicule…She was as far as possible from being censorious or satirical" (1871: 73). In contrast, Hubback seems to value Austen's sharp, critical laughter.

Another example of this appreciation is Hubback's dramatisation of Emma and Mary Edwards's preparation for the ball, which in *The Watsons* is mostly glossed over (MW 323). Hubback mimics Austen's characteristic ridicule of social conventions: Mary momentarily alludes to Sam Watson, but "as Miss Edwards turned away directly after uttering this, and bent over a drawer to search for something, which she never found, it was impossible to decide as to the degree of her blushing" (1: 23-24). A mockery of blushing girls, lovers' behaviour and the social propriety that dictates the disguise of emotion would be at home in an Austen text. However, this passage, inserted in Hubback's rewriting of *The Watsons*, is absent from the parent text. Hubback's writing style as a whole may not be as "light, and bright, and sparkling" as her aunt's, but there is at times a curious attempt to re-ironise Austen's already ironic fragment, which suggests that Hubback did envisage her aunt as a humorist – if anything, it seems there was not enough mockery in *The Watsons* for Hubback's taste.

The way Hubback reproduced Austen's mockery of social mannerisms in some of her other novels confirms this appreciation, unusual among JEAL and his reviewers. *May and December* (1854) makes fun of lovers' misunderstandings too. When Mr. Cameron praises his goddaughter, Harry, who is in love with the girl, feels a pang of jealousy: "lovers have the prescriptive right to torment themselves about trifles," comments the narrator, "and indulge in gratuitous and supernumerary fears. It would, indeed, be a very comfortable thing for the rest of the world if these individuals were the only ones who subjected themselves to such wilful tortures" (1: 3-4). Hubback laughs at the lovers through the (Austenian) internal clashes of her sentence: lovers agonise over trifles and indulge in self-torture. There are some odd word pairings in this sentence (wilful/torture, indulgence/fears) from which the humour of the passage stems.

Another characteristic feature of Austen's style that *The Younger Sister* reproduces is free indirect discourse. Although not Austen's invention (it appears in earlier authors such as Goethe and Fanny Burney), free indirect style was largely refined and developed in Austen's novels.[21] This is a means of conveying the voices of character and narrator simultaneously, erasing any fixed boundary between them. For instance, in *The Watsons*, Austen indirectly reproduces little Charles's speech during his dance with Emma: "she learnt, by a sort of inevitable enquiry that he had two brothers & a sister, that they & their Mama all lived with his Uncle at Wickstead, that his Uncle taught him Latin, that he was fond of riding, & had a horse of his own given him by L^{d} Osborne" (MW 331). Imitating the blabbering of an enthusiastic child at his first ball, this passage resonates with the words Charles Blake might have used – his "Mama" and "Uncle" – but is still reported by the narrator.

Although Hubback does not reproduce Charles's free indirect speech, she occasionally employs this sophisticated technique which, as in Austen, contributes an ironic distance between reader, character and narrator. When Emma receives Miss Osborne's invitation to stay at the Castle overnight, Margaret's jealousy is aroused: "This discovery made her [Margaret] very angry; she could comprehend no reason for such a marked preference; why should Miss Osborne invite Emma who was the youngest, and exclude herself; it really surpassed her comprehension; it was most extraordinary; she had a great mind not to go at all" (1: 295). This sounds like Margaret's own words: the accumulation of short clauses, the repetitions and the questions mark this passage as an indirect rendering of Margaret's speech. Through free indirect discourse, Hubback invites the reader to laugh at Margaret's covetousness and question the verity of her argument.

[21] Subsequent writers such as Henry James presumably inherited this technique from Austen. This is one of the jokes in Ruyard Kipling's short story "The Janeites," which claims that Austen "did leave lawful issue in the shape o' one son; an' 'is name was 'Enery James" (1924: 153-4).

Hubback also puts Austen's characteristic technique to a different use: the exploration of a criminal mind. Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore note how the perception of crime radically changed in the nineteenth century: the rise of the police force (1829) and the creation of the detective police (1842) increased the general interest in the capture and taxonomy of criminals (2004: 1). Rejected by Emma after her return to Croydon, Mr. Morgan persuades himself that this is really a sign of her secret preference: "*unless*, and the thought actually thrilled his mind with delight, *unless* she had really preferred him, and now feared to trust herself in his power...His vanity was excited to the highest pitch, as he thought of this interpretation" (3: 370, my italics). The repetition of the conjunction and the parenthetical additions and digressions represent Morgan's thoughts intermixed with the voice of the narrator. The comments on "his vanity" and the "thrill" his mind receives are the narrator passing judgment over Morgan's deliberations. This instance shows how Hubback sometimes borrows Austen's free indirect style and adapts it to the interests of her time. In Austen, free indirect style is often a means to explore a character's inner life with a certain ironic distance. Hubback adds to this a mid-1800s interest in criminality. The expansion of mass print culture and literacy accounts for the Victorians' fascination with crime and punishment, which quickly migrated to the domain of the novel (Maunder and Moore 2004: 1). A good example is the boom of sensational fiction in the 1860s: with a racy subject matter, the genre abounds in bigamy and divorce cases, murders, enigmas, incident and extraordinary coincidences. The influence of the sensation novel on *The Younger Sister* becomes obvious in Morgan's harassment of the heroine and his mysterious drowning and disappearance as a result of a boat accident (3: 396).

Despite her imitation of Austen's craftsmanship, Hubback was a less skilful writer than Austen. This becomes apparent in her rewriting of the original fragment of *The Watsons*. Austen concluded the first of the three sections of the manuscript with Mr. Watson, back

from Visitation, telling his daughters about the attentions of Mr. Howard, who (accidentally) "enquired after one of my Daughters, but I do not know which. I suppose you know among yourselves" (MW 344). This remark intelligently closes the first section of Austen's manuscript, introducing a romantic interest and creating a certain suspense in the novel. Hubback destroys all such effect when her Mr. Watson adds: "I really don't know when I passed a more pleasant afternoon" (1: 62). This is the sort of subtlety that distinguishes Austen's prose from Hubback's: whereas Austen's writing is condensed and elliptical, Hubback's often rambles indiscriminately.

What Hubback's occasional use of irony and free indirect style suggests is that she was not insensitive to the subtleties of Austen's prose. Hubback may not have always succeeded in mimicking them, but the coincidences in their styles indicate that she valued Austen's irony and wit as well as the sophistication of her technique. The Austen-Leighs may have granted Austen a false literary modesty: "I do not think that she was herself much mortified by the want of early success. She wrote for her own amusement," JEAL commented (1871: 106); but the Austen who implicitly inhabits Hubback's novel is a professional writer, careful of her craft.

It is in another form of writing, her private correspondence, that Hubback exhibits a closer engagement with her aunt's refined style. Playfully attempting to scandalise her son from America, the fifty-four-year-old Catherine writes: "I have a very enthusiastic admirer just now, a recent acquaintance who has fallen in love with me." But then, she undermines her own statement by adding "you need not be afraid of scandal as it is only a tall young lady, Miss Leila Kirkham, one of the leading belles of Oakland" (Letter 10, 25 July 1872). In one of her letters, a flirty Jane Austen described a musical soirée to Cassandra: "I was quite surrounded by acquaintance, especially Gentlemen; & what with Mr Hampson, Mr Seymour, Mr W. Knatchbull, Mr Guillemarde, Mr Cure, a Capt Simpson…I had quite as much upon

my hands as I could do" (Letter 25 Ap. 1811). This light-hearted verbal game with the interlocutor is mirrored in Hubback's description of Miss Kirkham, which adds a sting of satire at the expense of Leila's mother: Miss Kirkham "is a little odd and wild, but very clever. Her father General Kirkham whom I don't know, has rather spoilt her – and her mother like other American mothers is of course nothing and nobody – so Leila has pretty much her own way" (Letter 10, 25 July 1872). Hubback is at her most Austenian in a letter to Mary, wife to her eldest son John: after persistently moaning about the living conditions in California, she concludes "I don't think you need pity me for any part of my Californian life unless it is that stockings will wear out so fast" (qtd. in Hopkinson and Hopkinson MS. Chapter 9: 26). This reversal of the reader's expectations, which enhances the trivial and diminishes the important, is characteristically Austenian.

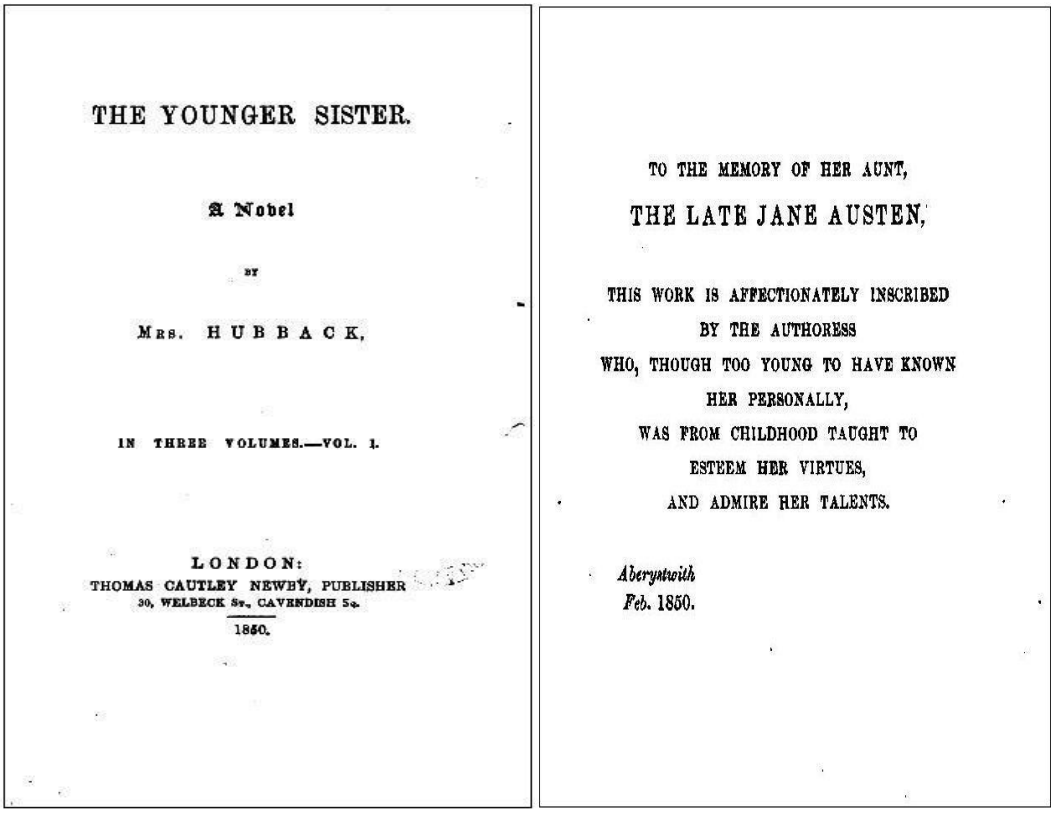
Hubback probably felt freer from the demands of the literary market and the pressure of other Austen descendants in her private correspondence. There, she could give free vent to her satire on her neighbours many years after composing *The Younger Sister*. Hubback may, to some extent, have moved away from Austen in her later fiction, but her correspondence shows how her assimilation of Austen's style in childhood stayed with her for life.

II. Marketing and reception: Austen, Hubback and Austen-Leigh

When read alongside *The Watsons*, *The Younger Sister* illustrates some of the Victorian perceptions of Austen that are not always acknowledged: as a worldly satirist careful of her craft. Yet the marketing of the completion, as Hubback's original work of fiction, undermines this dimension of the novel as a re-interpretation of Jane Austen and *The Watsons*. *The Younger Sister* is a contradictory instance of homage and plagiarism. The opening pages contain Hubback's dedication to "the memory of her aunt, the late Jane Austen:" "This work is affectionately inscribed by the authoress who, though too young to have known her

personally, was from childhood taught to esteem her virtues, and admire her talents." However, nowhere is it mentioned that the early chapters of *The Younger Sister* are based on *The Watsons*; this transforms the completion into an early example of literary plagiarism, of the kind that characterises modern literature. Austen's words are absorbed into *The Younger Sister*, which despite highlighting the family relation was marketed as original. And in a way it was: *The Watsons* would not be published until 1871, in the second edition of JEAL's *Memoir*. Reversing conventional filial relations, *The Younger Sister* simultaneously becomes successor and precursor, post-text and pre-text.

By contrast, Hubback openly marketed herself as Austen's niece. An advertisement of *The Younger Sister* introduced the novel as "The Younger Sister by Mrs. Hubback. (Late Miss Austen)." Her third novel, *Life and its Lessons*, was also presented as "Founded on Fact. By Mrs. Hubback, niece of Miss Austen; Author of 'The Wife's Sister, or the Forbidden Marriage.'" More than eight years after her marriage, Hubback's maiden name is provided here to the reader for no apparent reason, other than to brandish her connection with Austen and, hopefully, sell more novels. If "identities are fictions which are formulated and adapted through narratives and performances" (Brannigan 1988: 61), Hubback's fiction was the stage where she acted the role of Austen's descendant for the benefit of a literary audience. Her contradictory attempts to pay homage to her ancestor, while plagiarising and profiting from the family relation, challenge again any stable, romantic picture of Austen's Victorian reception.



THE YOUNGER SISTER.

A Novel

BY

MRS. HUBBACK,

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LONDON:
THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER
30, WELBECK ST., CAVENDISH SQ.
1850.

TO THE MEMORY OF HER AUNT,

THE LATE JANE AUSTEN,

THIS WORK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHORESS
WHO, THOUGH TOO YOUNG TO HAVE KNOWN
HER PERSONALLY,
WAS FROM CHILDHOOD TAUGHT TO
ESTEEM HER VIRTUES,
AND ADMIRE HER TALENTS.

Aberystwith
Feb. 1850.

Fig.1. *The Younger Sister* (1850), title page and dedication.

Hubback explicitly expressed her design to use the family name and capitalise on her descent from Jane Austen. In a letter to John, she wrote:

> My story has come out in the "Overlander" but I haven't received any money yet. I am *anxious to know how much they pay*. I have two more ready but *I don't write for nothing*. By and bye they can all be put in a volume and published again. I mean in future to have *my name printed as C. Austen Hubback* and *make believe* that A. stands for that. I have never written it at length so nobody knows and Austen is a good nom-de-plume (Letter 3, 24 Sep. 1871, my italics).

Hubback is consciously, and artificially, fashioning herself as Austen's descendant. Born in 1818, the year of publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, she had been baptised Catherine Anne in homage to the two heroines. That is what the "A" stands for. Hubback articulates the economic agenda behind her plan: "I don't write for nothing," she stresses, in a letter that incredibly echoes one of her aunt's: "You will be glad to hear that every copy of S&S is sold," Austen wrote to her brother Francis (Catherine's father) in 1813, "and that it has brought me £140 besides the Copyright, if that shd ever be of any value. – I have now

therefore written myself into £250 – *which only makes me long for more*" (Letter 86, 3 July 1813, my italics). Both Hubback and Austen appear anxious about their earnings in their private correspondence. They had experienced economic difficulties and were concerned about how much they would receive for their next publication – a bond that, perhaps, justifies Hubback's self-promotion.

Austen's and Hubback's analogous economic concerns – as a single woman or the wife of an invalid husband – filtered through their narratives, and marked the way they approached the literary craft. The reader of *Pride and Prejudice* is made aware that, whereas Jane and Elizabeth Bennet have only £40 a year, Darcy receives £10,000 and Bingley, £4,000 or 5,000 (PP 106, 10, 4). Similarly, discussing George Millar in *The Younger Sister*, Jane Watson notes how "he used to allow his late wife more than a hundred a month to keep the table and find herself in gowns," which Robert corroborates: "Aye, George Millar could count thousands for Musgrove's hundreds" (2: 173). Both Hubback and Austen envisaged writing as a business that ought to produce profit: Hubback's money-making philosophy becomes obvious in her self-fashioning techniques. Austen's professionalism, Jan Fergus notes, is shown by her decision to publish *Sense and Sensibility* on commission (at her own risk) and change publishers later in life – from George Egerton to John Murray, the prestigious publisher of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott (1997: 22-24). Perhaps due to these connections, Hubback was able to perceive that Austen, like herself, was a professional author, intent on writing and publishing for money.

However, recent academic criticism has, in my view wrongly, described *The Younger Sister* as a novel driven by nostalgia, rather than by economy. Tamara S. Wagner sees *The Younger Sister* as a novel of "nostalgic evocations," in its longing for the past (2005: 456) – for instance, in a ballroom scene where the narrator comments on the evolution of ball gowns over the centuries (1: 30). Whereas the presence of nostalgia in the text cannot be denied, this

is far from being its main drive (which is clearly a monetary one) or anything remarkable in the context of Victorian fiction, much of which is set forty or fifty years before the time of composition.

Etymologically, the term "nostalgia" originates in the Greek "nostos" (to return home) and the Latin "algos" (pain or sorrow). The OED defines nostalgia as "sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past." This sense of nostalgia as pain (that is, pain in remembering) is only partially present in *The Younger Sister*. Emma Watson suffers, remembering the happy days at her aunt's abode (1: 255), but the narrator's objective comparison of the 1800s and the 1850s is mostly divested of any sense of regret. Hubback's narrator often remarks on the difference between past and present: "*In those days*, Authors and Authoresses were far less plentiful than now" (2: 248, my italics); "his Lordship's devotion was quite evident to the inmates of the still-room, *as it was then called*" (3: 281, my italics). It is part of Hubback's ambivalent attitude towards Austen that her novel alternately regrets what has gone by and reports it objectively. In contrast, JEAL's *Memoir* betrays a much more nostalgic attitude, with expressions like "things which have been long ago swept away" (1871: 66). Describing a castle near Austen's Southampton abode, JEAL laments: "Few probably remember its existence" because "[l]ike other fairy works...it all proved evanescent" (1871: 67). Defining *The Younger Sister* as a primarily nostalgic novel comes close to assimilating Hubback's version of Austen into JEAL's. His sentimental use of nostalgia in the *Memoir* suggests a romanticisation of Austen that Hubback certainly did not share.

It is difficult to assess what percentage of the Victorian Austen readership the *Memoir* and *The Younger Sister* stood for. The *Memoir* elicited mostly flattering reviews from periodicals such as the *Times* (17 Jan 1870) and the *Dublin Review* (July 1871). Yet

confirming my argument that the *Memoir* represents only a portion of the Victorian responses to Austen are the mixed responses it also elicited. A reviewer in the *Anthenaeum* appears dissatisfied with JEAL's "scanty" recollections, and complains that "[a]ll we learn of Miss Austen is that she was attractive in her appearance, that she had a charming face," while very little is said about her method of composition (8 Jan. 1870: 53). In *Blackwood's Magazine*, Margaret Oliphant similarly complains that JEAL limits himself to depicting the romanticised "exteriors" of Austen's life: all he does is "to paint for us somewhat heavily the outside of the house in which she lived, with the honey-suckle and the roses climbing in at the windows" (March 1870: 291).

Reviews of Hubback's novel seem to align themselves retrospectively with JEAL's re-imagining of his aunt. *The Weekly Chronicle* recommended *The Younger Sister* for its domestic qualities and sound moral message. This is a story where evil is punished, good deeds get their reward, and "[f]oolish girls who have too hastily set their caps at the men, are proved to demonstration [sic.] to have acted ridiculously and imprudently." This "foolish girl" is presumably Margaret Watson, a secondary character who ends up tyrannising over her husband, Tom Musgrove. In contrast, the reviewer continues, "modesty, caution, and firmness, are equally demonstrated to be the best policy in all possible respects" (27 Ap. 1850: 6). This partial reading, even misreading, of *The Younger Sister* casts both Hubback and by association Austen as "modest," "cautious" and "firm" – the qualities that apparently appeal to the reviewer's mid-Victorian sensibilities. His reading of *The Younger Sister* is selective, for Hubback's denunciation of the sexual dangers assailing women and her irony about some of the conventions the reviewer outlines escape his notice.

History may have consigned Hubback to oblivion, but *The Younger Sister* and the rest of her fictional output met with relative success at the time of publication. Although *The Younger Sister* was no best-seller, it certainly received reviews and public notice in different

national periodicals: *The Weekly Chronicle* (27 Ap. 1850), *The Spectator* (20 Ap. 1850) and *The Literary Gazette* (4 May 1850). S. Austin Allibone's *Critical Dictionary of English Literature* claims Hubback to be "known as a successful novelist" (vol. 1, 1859: 909). Anthologies and author compilations of the second half of the nineteenth-century often grant her an entry: the Norton's *Literary Gazette and Publisher's Circular* (for 1851 and 1854) and Sampson Low's *The English Catalogue of Books Published from January 1835 to January 1863* (which lists her ten novels). Even Frederic Boase records Hubback's production in his well-known *Modern English Biography* (1892).

There were other Victorian Austens apart from Hubback's and JEAL's. In her *Blackwood* review, Oliphant recognised those aspects of Austen that JEAL was adamant to suppress: her cynicism and satiric laughter. Whereas JEAL claimed that Austen "never mocked her neighbours" (1871: 73), Oliphant highlighted her "malicious, brilliant wit of youth" (March 1870: 303). Austen was "touched with so fine a wit and so keen a perception of the ridiculous" that the picture of her fools remains with the reader long after shutting the novel (Oliphant 1870: 301). Yet Oliphant is trapped between celebrating and justifying Austen's humour, for her cynicism was after all "feminine," meaning "amiable and full of toleration and patience" (Oliphant 1870: 295). Like Hubback, Oliphant celebrates Austen's domesticity (her needlework, 1870: 291), while applauding her penchant for satire and her ability to see "her brother clearly all round as if he were a statue, identifying all his absurdities" (1870: 295), which confirms the contradictions inherent in Austen's mid and late Victorian readership.

Oliphant's review suggests that the appreciation Austen's satiric powers in the second half of the nineteenth century was not exclusive to Hubback. Claudia Johnson (2012) points to the popularity of the Rice Portrait, first published in 1884, as an illustration of the varied Victorian responses to Austen. Drawn by Ozias Humphy around 1792, the Rice Portrait first

saw the light in Lord Brabourne's 1884 edition of *The Letters of Jane Austen.* Like Hubback's novel, it offered the Victorians an alternative image of Austen: Humphry had granted his subject palpable physicality, by depicting her as a robust girl, and had hinted at her sarcastic disposition, by making the sitter dauntlessly confront the viewer's gaze (Johnson 2012: 52). Johnson observes how the publication of this painting gave the Victorian public an image of Austen that was very different from JEAL's ethereal, saintly figure (2012: 50). At the same time, the controversy surrounding the Rice Portrait (its authorship and the actual identity of its subject) ensured that this alternative and less orthodox image of Austen, like Hubback's through her dubious dealings with the original text, remained somehow marginal to the Victorian public. *The Younger Sister* may not have been the best-seller of the century or sold as many copies as JEAL's *Memoir*, but it must have reflected the responses to Austen of part of the Victorian readership, just as Humphry's portrait, which was often reproduced until the 1930s, must have spoken to some Victorian readers about their Jane Austen.

The *Memoir* represents only part of the story of Austen's Victorian reception. Its greater success (for some of the traits it assigned to Austen still survive in the popular imagination) may be because the values JEAL propounded (female selflessness and dependence) appealed to a larger section of the late Victorian readership. That JEAL's *Memoir* was purported to be factual, whereas Hubback's work was fiction, must also account for its success in establishing the "official" picture of their ancestor. This is a question of genre: as a biography, the *Memoir* was predictably more successful than a novel in spreading its reading of Austen. Hubback's ambivalence towards her ancestor, both irreverent and respectful, and her veiling of Austen's authorship to promote her own artistry backfired, making Hubback's reading of *The Watsons* pass unnoticed. Yet, in the relative success of these texts, there is also an undeniable gender bias: as Anne Elliot claimed in *Persuasion*, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story" (P 234). JEAL wrote the

story of the Victorian Jane Austen, so successfully that his narrative ended up erasing other contemporary discourses on Austen for future generations.

Catherine Anne Hubback's completion of *The Watsons* shows how Austen becomes a site of contestation in the second half of the nineteenth century. *The Younger Sister* provides a picture of Austen as an ironist and a professional author, which often clashes with the Victorian novelist envisioned in other forms of writing (some periodicals and the *Memoir*). Rather than the static, ethereal, lady-like figure that JEAL imagined, Hubback's Austen emerges through the hybrid text as a battleground for competing readings: at once ironic, moralistic, sexual, pious, worldly and domestic. *The Younger Sister* demonstrates that continuations of *The Watsons*, from a very early date, are a central mode of textual argument about Austen.

Chapter II

Austen and *The Watsons*, 1923-1928

No completion of *The Watsons* followed *The Younger Sister* until the early twentieth century: L. Oulton's (1923) and Edith Brown's (1928)[22] *The Watsons*. Oulton was an author of melodramatic short stories, some of which were collected in *"Exceeding Pleasant" and Other Sketches* (1913). Brown mostly composed Austenian novels throughout her career: her sequels *Margaret Dashwood; or Interference* (1929) and *Susan Price; or Resolution* (1930) continue the action of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* respectively. She was the grand-daughter of Catherine Anne Hubback and the daughter of John Hubback, a parentage which shows the same branch of the Austen family as gatekeepers of *The Watsons* and its afterlife.

It is no coincidence that, after a vacuum of more than seventy years, two completions were published in the 1920s within five years of each other – closer than at any other point in *The Watsons*' afterlife. This upsurge in demand for Jane Austen, completed by the new editions of her novels examined below, is strongly linked to the early twentieth-century political scene, confirming the continuations as sites of conflict. The catastrophic effects of World War I and their impact on British society are well-known: an average of 7,000 British men were killed or wounded daily (Fussell 1975: 6, 41), and an approximate total of three quarters of a million died during the war (Winter 1995: 266). Under these atrocious circumstances, numerous readers eagerly turned to Jane Austen, whose novels represented a secure traditional environment: the essentially rural world of parson and squire, village greens and manor houses.

[22] *The Watsons* (1928) is advertised as the work of Edith and her husband Francis Brown. However, since it is Edith who signs the preface, dedicates the book to her father and generally speaks in the first person singular, I will refer to the completion as hers in this chapter.

This chapter contends that, in the aftermath of the Great War, the completions of *The Watsons* can be read as war memorials, which invite a political and historical reading of Austen's novels. I am not arguing that Oulton and Brown purposefully set out to build literary war memorials in their completions, but that, in the context of the 1914-1918 conflicts, their novels seem to fulfil very similar functions to more traditional forms of commemoration. It was widely accepted in academic circles that Austen's work was not considered to be political, or Austen herself to have an interest in politics, until the 1970s, when Alistair Duckworth's *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971) and Marilyn Butler's influential *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) introduced political readings of Austen's oeuvre.[23] However, the completions by Oulton and Brown and the other contemporary responses analysed in this chapter suggest that Austen's novels were both being read as political (in the 1920s and/or their own time), and used as political tools fifty years before Duckworth and Butler. After a brief overview of World War I Austen, this chapter examines *The Watsons*' completions as war memorials, and then looks at them in the context of 1920s Austen family records and new editions of her novels.

I. Jane Austen and the Great War

During the war, reading was an important activity, especially in the trenches. The editor of *The War Illustrated* noticed how people on the home front had been "caught unprepared by the clamour for books that rose from the trenches almost as soon as they had been dug" (C.M. 11 Dec. 1915). But soldiers would not read randomly; they wanted "tales of strong domestic interest, and it is worth noting that Jane Austen has taken her fragrant way into a

[23] Both Duckworth and Butler view Austen as conservative: the former reads the estates in Austen's novels as symptomatic of the characters' moral and social values. The latter argues that Austen was reactionary and opposed the individualism of the sentimental novel. Clara Tuite regards Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* as "the first work not only decisively to locate Austen's texts, in their historical contexts, but also to politicize that historical positioning by identifying Austen's texts within a counter-revolutionary context of the 1790s" (2002: 6).

surprising number of dug-outs." In short, soldiers wanted "good humour, good domestic interest, good romance" and "the *friendly companionship* of some good and kindly book" (C.M. 11 Dec. 1915, my italics). Jane Austen apparently stands for all these – humour, domesticity, romance and friendliness. In a chaotic and terrifying environment, her novels attest to the existence of a parallel universe of drawing-room manners that is stable and carefully ordered. Austen's confined world is manageable, unlike war time and post-war Europe, so the famous narrowness of her setting becomes a bonus: if Austen's universe is slender, it is for this reason unthreatening.

The war and its aftermath brought about a redefinition of British national identity. Krishan Kumar (2003) notes that Englishness was formulated belatedly between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, especially after the First World War. This period is what he calls "the moment of Englishness," when the English became unmistakably conscious of their identity (Kumar 2003: 224). This emerging Englishness was predominantly conservative and inward-looking.[24] The British government between the wars was dominated by the Conservative Party, with Stanley Baldwin at its head. In his address at the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of St. George, Baldwin warned of the danger of looking outside national borders: "The Englishman is all right as long as he is content to be what God made him, an Englishman, but gets into trouble when he tries to be something else." After reflecting on the Norman Conquest, Baldwin concludes: "Let that be a warning to us not to ape any foreign country. *Let us be content to trust ourselves and to be ourselves*" (1924: 2, my italics). The English are a calm and peaceful nation that possesses a strong nervous system, useful at times of crisis (Baldwin 1924: 3).

[24] Alison Light argues that this image of a conservative Britain is only half of the story, and reads the Great War as part of a continuous process of modernisation that had been initiated in the 1890s (1991: 9). However, because, as Light herself acknowledges, these social changes did not come to full fruition until the 1950s, I will treat the 1920s as a predominantly right-wing period, as most war commentators, like Robert Graves and Alan Hodge (1940), agree.

It is easy to see how Austen's oeuvre would have spoken to some of these values – Baldwin was, in fact, an avid Austen reader. Her novels are typically English: the action is confined to the limits of the nation, and often develops in one main location. True, most of Austen's heroines travel (the Dashwoods go to London; Elizabeth Bennet, to Derbyshire), but these places tend to be recognisably English. Despite her heroines' visits to Bath or London, Austen's novels remain predominantly rural (all her heroines live in the countryside or a small village). In the Great War, one soldier claimed to be fighting "for England – English fields, lanes, trees, good days in England, all that is synonymous with liberty" (qtd. in Winter 1979: 32). Austen's novels were understandably identified with this image of "green England," in their largely rural settings and their apparent celebration of "English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive" (E 391) – a description which features in *Emma* and echoes the tranquillity Baldwin and the anonymous soldier later extolled.

Austen's oeuvre became essential to the formulation of British national identity during and after the war. Gertrude Stein read Austen's description "of the complete [,] the entirely complete daily *island life*" as "*England's glory*" (qtd. in Southam 1987: 52, my italics). Shakespearean scholar Caroline Spurgeon insisted that Austen was "so characteristically English" that gathering information about her became "of intense and indeed of national importance" (1927: 81). Like Shakespeare, Austen was "intensely English in temperament and taste" (Spurgeon 1927: 99). The Regency was just close enough to allow for the projection of cultural fantasies, so Austen came to be associated, more than ever, with an ideal rural world, a slow-moving universe that was clearly disappearing.

Early twentieth-century recreations of Austen are tinged with nostalgia. A parade of historic carriages in 1920 showed the "curricle, the tilbury and the tandem" driven by "men whom Jane Austen would have recognized...it was in such equipage that the bragging young man in 'Northanger Abbey' terrified Jane Morland [sic.]" (*The Times*, 19 June 1920: 11). The parade is a nostalgic occasion that transports the visitor to the "pages of social history, such as he has read in Regency memoirs and novels." In short, it is "a demonstration of the *picturesqueness of the past*" (*The Times*, 19 June 1920: 11, my italics). There is longing for a lost pre-industrial world in this note, an idyllic "picturesque" past identified with Austen's world that can never be retrieved.

A story about remembering the past, Rudyard Kipling's "The Janeites" (1924)[25] is a striking example of Austen's relevance during and after the war. Set in a British dugout, this is the story of shell-shocked soldier Humberstall, who is accidentally introduced into the secret society of Jane's admirers – her full name is never mentioned. The story works as a microcosm of what was happening in Austen's reception on a larger scale: Kipling's Janeites read Austen's fiction in connection with their own world and reality. For them, the novels become a way of rationalising the irrational world around them. Trying to gain admission to a hospital train after the collapse of the Somme, Humberstall identifies a garrulous nurse with Miss Bates and the head nurse with Lady Catherine: "It was 'er own 'opsital pretty much. I expect she was the Lady Catherine de Bourgh of the area" (1924: 172).

The image of Jane Austen implied in "The Janeites" is contradictory. On the one hand, Austen becomes a signifier of all that is absent from the battlefield – peace and stability. Humberstall and his fellow Janeites read about "girls o'seventeen…not certain 'oom they'd

[25] The term "Janeite" had apparently been coined by Saintsbury in his preface to *Pride and Prejudice* (1894: ix). Originally an honorary label, "Janeite" is nowadays used to designate those whose admiration for Austen is uncritical and indiscriminate.

like to marry; an' their dances an' card-parties an' picnics, and their young blokes goin' of to London on 'orseback for 'air-cuts an' shaves" (1924: 157). This world of polite manners and refinement is what is missing at the frontline. In a misogynistic environment of former divorce lawyers and private detectives, Austen's fiction embodies a more sensitive version of masculinity, opposed to the macho culture imperative on the battleground. Austen's work enables alternative masculinities: Humberstall's celebration of their all-male fellowship introduces homoerotic tones into the story. Jane "was the only woman I ever 'eard 'em say a good word for" (152), Humberstall claims. Whereas all women but Jane are banned from their society, the Janeites revel in each other's company, brought about by their shared admiration for Austen's novels.

On the other hand, Kipling's narrative assimilates Austen into the war scene; her fiction, as absorbed by the Janeites, stands for the war itself. As Claudia Johnson has noted, Humberstall continues reading the novels after the war, not because they are escapist, but precisely because they take him back to the trenches (1997: 216): "I read all her six books now for pleasure 'tween times in the shop; an' it brings all back – down to the smell of the glue-paint on the screens" (1924: 173). For Humberstall, Austen elicits the happy memories of the trenches, a period he remembers with nostalgia: his was "a 'appy little Group. I wouldn't 'a changed with any other" (165). The politicisation of Austen that "The Janeites" conducts is completed by the transformation of her characters into military passwords, "Tilniz an' trap-doors," and the renaming of the guns as "The Reverend Collins," "General Tilney" and "The Lady Catherine De Bugg" (155, 162). In "The Janeites," Austen embodies pre-war and war times simultaneously, probably because, by the 1920s, she had already fully become a symbol of the nation and the nature of the English community – a "password" to English national identity that distinguishes those who are English from those who are not.

II. L. Oulton's and Edith Brown's *The Watsons* as war memorials

L. Oulton's and Edith Brown's reading of the fragment of *The Watsons* and their ways of completing it were shaped by the war. "Built" around the same time as most memorial forms in Britain (1920s), their completions can be read as unusual, and sometimes contradictory, war memorials, which create a narrative of patriotism in the aftermath of the war. Commemoration of World War I set a model for the remembrance of future wars; it was the reason why most memorials were built in Britain. According to an inventory in the Imperial War Museum, there are around 70,000 memorials in the United Kingdom, which often take the shape of a statue in a market square (a village cross or the Unknown Soldier), a war shrine, a plaque or even a building (a hall, a school or a hospital). Although not an obvious form of commemoration, Oulton's and Brown's novels are steeped in political discourse; their creative process was fundamentally political – celebrating and retrieving the ideal of national identity that Austen's novels were often thought to impart. Like more typical war memorials, these completions tend to emphasise old symbols of cultural identity (the country manor, the Englishness of the English soldier[26]) in an attempt to affirm inherited social structures. Although it is not my contention that Oulton and Brown conceived their novels as memorials, there are a significant number of ontological and functional similarities between the completions and more conventional commemorative rituals.

II.1. Ontology: fidelity and commemoration

The flexible definition of war memorial provided by some historians reinforces my comparison. For James Mayo, a memorial is "an artefact that imposes meaning and order beyond the temporal and chaotic experiences of life" (1988: 62). Oulton's and Brown's

[26] Winter notes how British war memorials represent soldiers who are emphatically not German. There is a demonisation of the German and an idealisation of the "Tommy" as a way of reasserting British national identity (1995: 268). As will be shown below, the completions also feature characters who are clearly English.

completions, in their exaggerated fidelity to Austen's novels, are part of this desperate attempt to find meaning in tragedy and enforce order in the midst of chaos. For Bernard Barber, a memorial "can be any war memory that is bound to a place or an artefact" (1949: 63). He did not restrict war memorials to objects (such as those retrieved from the battlefield) or places (monuments, public buildings), for they can be all "the locations at which the sentiments represented may be appropriately and publicly expressed by individuals, alone or in groups" (1949: 65) – in this sense, the completions are an appropriate medium to publicly express the social desire for a safe, traditional order.

One ontological similarity between the completions and standard memorials is that both involve a physical setting. They embody a collective space where people (readers) can gather to commemorate certain ideologically significant concepts (loss, nationhood). Memorials and completions materialise this national sentiment and social purpose. Just as cenotaphs bring a community together in different ceremonies, post-war Austen readers, one can assume, might have been connected through the completions. The novels were certainly part of a publishing concurrence: a reviewer in *The Times* remarked how the publication of Oulton's novel coincided with three new editions of the original *The Watsons* (25 Jan. 1923: 13). The same page in *The Times* contained a note on "War Memorial Candlesticks," which were to be added to the Kitchener Memorial Chapel in St. Paul's Cathedral. This addition commemorated the 1,700 fallen soldiers of the London Rifle Brigade, whose families had donated cups and medals won by their sons to manufacture the altar-pieces. Through the juxtaposition of completions, editions and candlestick memorials, readers, publishers and mourning relatives are brought together on the page. National ideals are granted physicality, transferred to a tangible space (the books, the altar-pieces).

Oulton and Brown attempted to impose some order on the wilderness by not moving very far from the original in their completions. The differences between their two texts are difficult to spot: Emma Watson increasingly socialises with Mr. Howard and his sister – with a dinner party in Oulton and a protracted stay at the parsonage in Brown. Mr. Howard and Lord Osborne fall in love with the heroine: in Oulton, the peer proposes while Emma is staying in Croydon after her father's death; in Brown, he makes his offer during a concert at the castle. In both texts, Lord Osborne is predictably turned down. Mr. Watson's death and Emma's removal to Croydon are also a common development. Lady Osborne is in love with Mr. Howard in the two novels – although in Oulton, Miss Osborne harbours tender feelings for the parson too. The main obstacle towards romantic fulfilment in Oulton is gossip: Howard is put off by Tom Musgrave, who claims that Emma is engaged to an old acquaintance. Brown makes no such excuses for Howard's inaction; her hero is simply jealous of Lord Osborne. The lovers are finally reunited when Emma visits Stanton again, as Elizabeth's guest (Oulton) or Mrs. Edwards's (Brown). Other couples include Elizabeth and her old lover Purvis (Oulton) or his brother Jasper (Brown), Sam Watson and Mary Edwards (both) and, surprisingly, Lord Osborne and Mrs. Blake (Oulton).

The main way in which the completions commemorate older symbols of national identity is through their extreme fidelity to Austen. The novels share an effort to recapture Austen and her universe. In Oulton, it translates into recycling Austenian elements from other novels, especially *Pride and Prejudice* – a preference which confirms the novel's popularity from an early date. For instance, Miss Carr's humiliating suggestion that Emma visit the castle when it is open to the public parallels Lady Catherine's invitation to Elizabeth Bennet to practice the piano forte in the governess's room, where she will be in nobody's way (PP 173). "It is a pity you should not see the Castle, Miss Watson," says Miss Carr; "it is thrown

open to the public every Wednesday – all except the private apartments" (1923: 111-2). Sensitive to the insult like Mr. Darcy, Lord Osborne announces that his mother will wait on Emma. Heroines Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Watson are abused by their female antagonists for their independence of mind – by Miss Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice* (PP 36) and Miss Osborne in Oulton's *The Watsons*: "You do not know her, ma'am; there is a sort of independence in her which I find insupportable," Miss Osborne tells her mother (1923: 121). Both passages are examples of class confrontations, as Miss Carr and Miss Osborne/Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley stress the social differences between a member of the lesser gentry and themselves. But the traditional social order, which firmly divides the aristocracy, the gentry and the lower orders, is maintained in Oulton's novel much more strictly than in Austen's. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Watson does not marry Lord Osborne/Mr. Darcy, but his former tutor, a match which is certainly not as extraordinary as that of *Pride and Prejudice.*

Oulton's continuation concludes by establishing the two sisters, Emma and Elizabeth, at a comfortable distance from each other, which recalls the ending of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*: "Emma and Elizabeth's happiness was complete, now that they were settled so near to each other; and as the years went by, there were many merry games between the children of the Rectory and those of the Manor" (1923: 210). There is a sense of orderliness and contentment implicit here: Emma, a former heiress, marries Mr. Howard, a country parson who has recently inherited a small fortune; Elizabeth, portionless but genteel, marries her old lover Purvis, who receives the parish living in Howard's estate. Lord Osborne's union to Mrs. Blake, although surprising, does not challenge the social order as his union to Emma would have done. Mrs. Blake and her brother occupy a more central position in the middle ranks, so their respective marriages to Lord Osborne and Emma, although to

some extent unequal, do not question the class system. In contrast, subsequent completer John Coates would unite Lord Osborne and Penelope Watson, and Hubback had Lord Osborne marry "a very charming young Spanish lady" of dark eyes (3: 412). In the aftermath of the war, Oulton clearly eschews introducing any foreign element in her resolution – for the perfect match for an English lord is a "proper" English wife.

Oulton attempts to assimilate her voice into Austen's too. The transition between Austen's fragment and her own takes place half-way through chapter six: "Emma was, of course, uninfluenced, except to greater esteem for Elizabeth by such representations; and the visitors departed without her. On the following day, as Emma and Elizabeth were in the best parlour, setting the sofa for their father to lie on, for a little change, they heard a carriage stopping at the garden gate" (1923: 104). The first sentence is Austen's last; the second sentence is Oulton's first. Other completers make the end of Austen's text coincide with the end of a chapter (Hubback, Brown, Coates), so that they can have a fresher start; but Oulton strives to forge continuity, avoiding any disruption between her voice and Austen's.

Interestingly, it is the next few pages of Oulton's completion that contain most examples of "Austenian" language. The first paragraphs after Austen's ending exemplify Oulton's imitation of nineteenth-century diction and grammatical structures, in an attempt to recapture Austen's voice: visiting the Watson sisters for the first time, Mr. Howard and Mrs. Blake recall how "[t]hey had often observed Elizabeth at balls, and had considered her handsome, but they had never before spoken to her, and were at once favourably impressed by her unaffected good-humour and pleasant manner" (1923: 104-5). Apart from its formal and old-fashioned tonality, this passage is an instance of free indirect style, which Oulton occasionally employs. The repetition of the third person plural pronoun and the use of expressions such as "favourably impressed" and "unaffected good-humour" resonate with the

visitors' speech, undermining the division between character and narrator. Joining the group, Lord Osborne observes that the roads were "*monstrous* wet when it rained" (107, my italics). An obsolete term by the 1920s, "monstrous" does not recur in Austen's novels either: it appears only once in *The Watsons* and *Northanger Abbey*, eleven times in *Sense and Sensibility* and never in the rest of the novels. Yet both Oulton and Brown make frequent use of it. The term "monstrous" was mostly in use between the fifteenth and the early eighteenth centuries – for instance, in N. Rowe's 1701 *Ambitious Step-mother* (OED). Oulton identifies Austen's world with a more idyllic image of England than was historically accurate: through her semantic choice, she seems to be emphasising the "picturesqueness" of the past, reconstructing Austen's world not only as pre-war but also pre-industrial, which it was not.

Adding to this romanticisation of Austen and her times is the sentimental tone of Oulton's *The Watsons*. The romantic resolution of the completion is a good example: meeting at a party in Wickstead, Howard snubs Emma, who in her turn faints, like a typical sentimental heroine.[27] When Howard notices the commotion, he "[i]nstinctively knew that it was Emma – and almost immediately, he knew not how, had reached her side. Motioning everyone away, he raised her in his arms, and carried her out of the hall." Once Emma opens her eyes, "there was no mistaking the look of deep joy which flashed into them, as she saw him bending over her 'Emma – my dearest Emma!'" (1923: 204). Oulton's use of sentimental conventions, unlike Austen's, is divested of humour, as her narrator takes the lovers' misunderstandings seriously. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne Dashwood nearly faints when Willoughby ignores her in public (SS 177), but the irony is on Marianne and her

[27] The eighteenth-century sentimental novel was characterised by its emphasis on subjectivity and its turn towards inwardness. In Marilyn Butler's words, the sentimental novel "shifts the emphasis from the action – what a character does – to his response to the action" (1975: 14). Fainting was a common trope in these novels – for instance in Fanny Burney's – which Austen did not adopt in her works. On the contrary, Austen famously parodied fainting women in her juvenile piece "Love and Freindship," where heroines Laura and Sophia repeatedly faint on the sofa (MW 86, 88, 102).

romantic delusions – an effect achieved by the focalisation of the scene on Elinor. Whereas Austen rarely dramatises lovers' reunions, Oulton adds an extra romantic layer to her novel by showing the reader how Emma and Howard finally come to an understanding. This re-direction of *The Watsons* suggests that Austen had become part of a romantic language of national memory by the 1920s, an attitude which also manifests in the mournful sentimentality of Oulton's Lady Osborne.

The dark tone the character of Lady Osborne introduces, unusual in comedy, is a further stylistic difference between Oulton's text and Austen's. The story of Oulton's Lady Osborne has tints of death: when she gives up on Howard, "[h]er bright colour had faded, and there was a look of weariness and lassitude on her face. As in the picture, it was the face of *one who had suffered*, and would yet again suffer, before she had laid her head on the *quiet pillow of her grave*" (1923: 164, my italics). These elements are striking in an Austen novel and if, as Todd and Bree note (2009: lxvii), the fragment of *The Watsons* belongs to the comic mode, they seem out of place in the completion. However, this passage acquires a new meaning in the context of the war: suffering, death and graves link the novel to the war and to more conventional war memorials – which are sometimes graves and normally commemorate the suffering of the living and particularly of the dead.

Edith Brown's *The Watsons* reinforces the ethos of Englishness associated with Austen by being apparently faithful to Austen and her world. She combines the original text of *The Watsons* not with *Pride and Prejudice*, but with her grandmother's *The Younger Sister*. In her preface, Brown appears critical of Hubback's completion, condemning it precisely for its Victorian quality, a historical filtration that she intends to avoid: Hubback "got tired of those lines, and the story did not suit the Victorian atmosphere" (1928: 5) – a notion I refuted in my previous chapter. Brown's intention is clear: "we have tried to disentangle Jane's story from

that of her niece" (1928: 6). Brown adopts numerous passages from *The Younger Sister*, however, sometimes reproducing them almost to the letter. Margaret and Emma's encounter with Howard early in the novel is just an example. Howard declares his sister's intention to visit Emma, although he is afraid to suggest it after witnessing how the heroine rejected Miss Osborne's analogous proposal: "You do less than justice both to yourself and to my friends…I assure you the wish was in truth expressed by Miss Osborne," says Brown's Howard (1928: 87). And Hubback's claims: "You do less than justice both to yourself and to my friends…I assure you, the wish was in truth expressed by Miss Osborne; and though my pupil blundered in making it known, I am certain it was entirely from want of self-possession, not from want of respect." (1: 146). Hubback's Howard is apparently only more verbose.

What matters is which Hubback elements Brown selects for her own completion and which she leaves out. Brown conducts a criticism of *The Younger Sister* through the sections she chooses to reproduce or ignore. Her novel is not simply Austen's fragment in the first half and a condensed version of Hubback's work in the second. Brown (who criticised *The Younger Sister* for containing "Jane Austen incidents in the second [volume]. No connection with Jane Austen in the third") follows closely only Hubback's first volume and the beginning of the second one. These are the sections which she considers "Jane Austen through a haze of memory," those that seem to reflect Cassandra's recollections directly (1928: 6). Brown reproduces what she deems the Austenian elements in Hubback, like the heroine's domesticity: when the Howards first visit the Watsons, the hero's attention is drawn to Emma as she places her father's chair and footstool in the right position and fetches his spectacles and snuffbox (Brown 1928: 93; Hubback 1: 159).

In contrast, Hubback's strong Victorian subtext is totally left out of Brown's *The Watsons*. Brown does not reproduce the sensational incidents from volumes two and three: Morgan's attempted seduction and mysterious drowning. There is no lawsuit episode either, one of the clearest mid-Victorian elements in *The Younger Sister*. All Hubback's social commentary vanishes from Brown's continuation: the dog incident, in which Emma and Margaret are threatened by a fierce dog during their walk, is totally absent. There is no peasant speaking in broken English (the dog's owner who refused to call the animal back) and no subsequent conversation between Howard and Margaret on the merits of the lower orders and their capacity for feeling. Since Brown is affirming old, inherited social structures in the context of a mostly conservative post-war Britain, Hubback's rising professions and complaints about the living conditions of the poor understandably find no room in the 1928 completion.

One element which Brown also leaves out of her continuation is the irony and humour sometimes present in *The Younger Sister*. Hubback occasionally mimicked, and even emphasised, Austen's incisive sarcasm: for instance, when Mr. Watson mocks Tom Musgrove's idleness and pretentions to nobility, Hubback re-ironises Austen's fragment by adding some extra biting comments. After Tom leaves, Hubback's Mr. Watson adds: "There goes a young man, who if he had had to work for his bread might have been a useful member of society. But unfortunately the father made a fortune, so the son can only make a fool of himself" (1: 167). In contrast, Oulton's Mr. Watson notes: "A foolish young man! Did he say some word of sense, I should never know it. I have long withheld my attention" (1928: 94). Mr. Watson's comment here is more directly insulting than mocking or ironically critical. He is harsh where Hubback's character is subtly humorous. Brown takes this final remark by Mr. Watson from Hubback (for Austen's character says nothing), but divests it of its humour,

adding a more violent and aggressive tone that could be read as a vestige of the recent conflict. Brown's decision not to reproduce Hubback's Austenian humour, if read in context, is hardly surprising: laughter is typically absent from commemorative rituals, and in the post-war period, this is probably not the Austen trait that matters most. The post-1918 British readership is more enticed by other values Austen has come to stand for: the social order, calm and peace that Baldwin praised.

Oulton and Brown celebrate British national identity through their portrayal of the landscape. Baldwin lamented England's increasing urbanisation and celebrated what he saw as typical English scenes: "the corncrake on a dewy morning," the "wild anemones in April" and "the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening" (1924: 7). Austen's novels, in their mostly rural settings, clearly embodied these values for 1920s British readership. Her fragment *The Watsons* is set in the town of D. (presumably Dorking) in Surrey, but the Watson family lives in the village of Stanton, about three miles distant. This announces much country walking between Dorking and Stanton (for the Watsons do not own a closed carriage), which Oulton and Brown reproduce. Austen's fragment opens with Elizabeth and Emma "splash[ing] along the dirty Lane" (MW 315); Brown's novel proper begins with Emma and Margaret walking towards the town to meet the foxhounds – also a typically English sport mentioned in Austen's text and expanded in Hubback's and Brown's. Brown's Lord and Miss Osborne seem to cross the park regularly, walking the half mile that separates the castle and the parsonage. This is the same walk that Emma and Howard take to visit the picture gallery at the castle, making a detour to observe the building from a special perspective: "The prospects were fine, and they did not hurry their walk, but enjoyed it to the utmost, even turning aside from the direct ascent to gain a wider outlook" (1928: 112-3). Whereas Brown copies this element from Hubback, she leaves out her grand-mother's careful

exploration of city life. Austen rarely portrayed industrial cities – only Portsmouth and London feature in her texts. Like Hubback, Oulton and Brown set some of their action in towns (Croydon, Guildford), but do not follow Hubback's exploration of the bustle of city life. For instance, Brown does not reproduce Janetta's allusion to the beggars that inhabit the streets of Croydon, or the narrator's remark on Margaret Watson's familiarity with the city when the sisters move in with the Robert Watsons (Hubback 2: 168, 165). In Brown, Robert's travel arrangements are quickly followed by Jane's reception of her sisters-in-law (1928: 154), with no comment on their first impressions of city and Margaret's "feeling of exultation" at knowing "the names of the owners to whom the various houses belonged" (Hubback 2: 165). This omission of life in the industrial city becomes odd after the 1840s, with Britons living in a predominantly urban society, and is a clear evidence of the nostalgia that characterises early twentieth-century responses to Austen.

The two completions' sense of geographical awareness highlights their patriotism. Brown's Emma comments on different regional customs: she "replied that in the County of Shropshire it was on occasion thought unwise to attach full value to the assertions of young men, and she surmised it might be the same in the County of Surrey" (1928: 87). In Oulton's novel, Howard travels between Surrey and Cumberland and extols his native land: "I assure you there is no country more delightful and wonderful than Cumberland in the grasp of winter!'" (1923: 192-3). Jane Watson, her little girl and Emma are sent to an unnamed Southern seaside resort, and Emma later travels between Croydon and Guildford. The information provided about the characters' geographical movements and locations, more detailed than Austen's "town of D.," infuses the completions with a sense of national awareness – about geography, local customs – transforming the novels into a celebration of what goes on inside the borders. Although some of Oulton's characters oddly go abroad (see

below), England is the country where emotional fulfilment is achieved, whereas the rest of Europe is where one suffers or tries to overcome love disappointments (Lady Osborne and her son).

The presence of nature in Oulton adds to the post-war emphasis on Austen and green England. Flowers are, for instance, recurrent throughout the completion: Charles gives Emma "a beautiful bunch of greenhouse flowers" in his first visit to the Watsons and Mr. Howard gives her a white rose at the Castle ball (1923: 104, 124). After the ball, he "drew her to the greenhouse" and "in accents of emotion," begged her to return it (1923: 129). The greenhouse is indeed a significant presence. In Austen, glasshouses are a sign of snobbery, often connected to the foreign and the exotic: General Tilney boasts of his "village of hot-houses" and his pinery (NA 178) and Fanny Dashwood is heavily criticised for chopping down the trees in Norland to build one (SS 226). Never popular in Austen's fiction, the greenhouse seemingly acquires positive connotations in Oulton, as the place where lovers make their initial declarations. The greenhouse acts as a double metaphor in the continuation: first, it can be understood as a metaphor for England, a celebration of its inwardness. Like the greenhouse, post-war England is seen as highly self-sufficient, as *blooming* in its own isolation from more unpleasant surroundings. Whereas England/the greenhouse is the place where love thrives, all danger comes from the outside: Osborne Castle, Lady Osborne or Miss Osborne, who interrupts the love scene by reclaiming Howard's promise to dance with her. A second interpretation of the greenhouse is as a metaphor for Austen and her world in post-war Britain – as artificial reservoirs of old values. It is as if Austen's green England could now only grow under the controlled conditions of a greenhouse. This reading reveals the impossibility of ever fully returning to Austen's world, for this world is just a remnant, restricted by the glass walls of the greenhouse, which can only thrive under artificial

conditions. The dual interpretation of the greenhouse (one more optimistic than the other) and the novel's re-appropriation of Austen's trope destabilise the apparently steady structure of Oulton's completion, exposing some of the contradictory energies that pulse beneath the surface.

Completing Jane Austen in the 1920s is itself an act of remembrance. It is an attempt to retain a measure of the past in the present, using artefacts (the novels) as prompts to memory. Like market square statues or village crosses, the post-war completions are sites of memory. The term "sites of memory," or *lieux de mémoire*, was coined by historian Pierre Nora to refer to those artefacts whose purpose is "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (1989: 19). The completions strive to return the reader to an earlier time, to immortalise an idealised Regency past through their fidelity to the original. The first requirement of *lieux de mémoire* is a will to remember (Nora 1989: 19), which both these novels and traditional memorials fulfil. *Lieux de mémoire* are "created through the interplay of memory and history, an interaction of two factors that results in their reciprocal overdetermination" (Ibid.). The completions, statues and cenotaphs are indeed products of the interplay between memory and history – memory understood as personal and intrinsic to a certain social group; history, as an intellectual production, a reconstruction of "what is no longer" (Nora 1989: 8-9). The completions and other memorials conflate history (the war, the Regency) and personal memory (war experiences, family remembrance).

There is something very personal about the processes of remembering lost loved ones and rereading Jane Austen. Brown's preface to her novel opens with a claim to family inheritance: "*I* will not apologise. *I* like my great-aunt Jane, and she would have liked *me*. She would have said, 'I am pleased with your notion, and expect much entertainment'"

(1928: 5, my italics). Directly ventriloquising Austen, Brown sees the process of reading and completing her ancestor as a personal enterprise that recalls family memories (stressed by the repetition of the personal pronoun "I"). Brown celebrates her branch of the Austen family, claiming that her grandmother, Catherine Hubback, had been a favourite with Cassandra (1928: 5).[28] A few years earlier, Brown continues, as she was dusting some old inherited family books, she stumbled upon *The Younger Sister*: the first volume "fell out of the bookcase on to the floor, and lay there open, and as I knelt I read, and it was of Elizabeth Watson that I read. I carried the three volumes down to read them in peace by the fire" (1928: 5-6). This description matches the idealisation of Austen's world explored above; it creates an intimate and domestic atmosphere, for one reads Hubback/Austen in *peace* by the fireside.

Austen was also being memorialised in the wider world: the 1917 centenary celebrations provide evidence that she was commemorated as a national symbol before the end of the war. The commemoration started when Reginald Farrer wrote to the *TLS* calling for a new, "definite" edition of Austen's works, a *Memorial* edition that would be as "sumptuous, stately, final, and perfect as care of editors, printers, binders, and publishers can make it" (6 Jan. 1916: 9). If Austen is to stand for order and regulation, her texts need to be stabilised; there must be something fixed to hold on to. Curiously, the two adjacent letters in the *TLS* are "Shakespeare's Monument" and "Aeschylus and the War." The first is concerned with tracing the origin of Shakespeare's monument, a quest for origins that resembles Farrer's. The second letter compares some passages from Agamemnon with the current war, such as the speech of the herald and the Dardanelles expedition. The juxtaposition of Austen, Shakespeare and the Great War cannot be accidental; it reveals how the literature of the past becomes a means to overcome the horrors of the present.

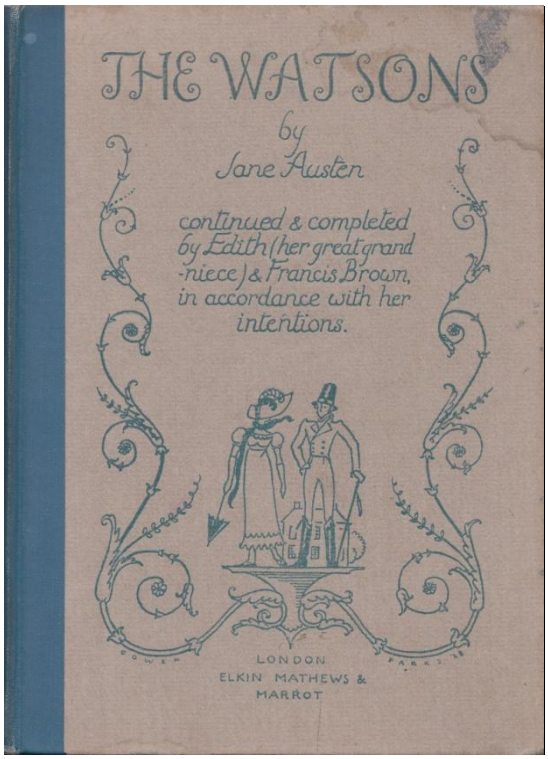
[28] This is the only reference I have found to Catherine Hubback as Cassandra's favourite niece. If it is Brown's fabrication, it would add to her romanticisation of Austen and Brown's own family history.

Austen's death one hundred years earlier provided an occasion to recover the past and formulate a common British identity, while soldiers were still fighting in the trenches. The centenary of her *death* – quite apropos – was celebrated through a series of lectures and a tablet erected at Chawton House, not so different from most war commemorative plaques. A few years earlier, Constance Hill had visited the house, commenting on the excitement of "standing on the very spot where Jane sat at her little mahogany desk and brought into being the gentle Fanny Price, the spirited Emma, and the sweet Anne Elliot" (1901: vii). Austen's belongings, like her texts, were being consecrated; they became relics with a special aura about them not to be violated.

This religious dimension of early twentieth-century Janeitism is shared by traditional forms of war commemoration. War memorials, like the Austen text for Farrer, Oulton and Brown, have for many a quality of sacredness. Barber sees memorials as "vehicles for the expression of sacred sentiments" (1949: 67). Mayo classifies them into sacred or non-sacred, private or public, with low or high utility (1988: 63). Those which are sacred tend to be low in utility – for instance, shrines and statues, where any blemish or vandalism could be regarded as sacrilege, especially by the families of those being commemorated (Mayo 1988: 63). Oulton's and Brown's Austen completions, like these shrines, emerge as sanctuaries in the middle of chaos. They try to establish order (in the text, the landscape, the community), sanctifying those they are remembering and celebrating (Austen, the fallen, the nation).

Oulton's and Brown's idolisation of Austen is evident at the beginning of their volumes. In her preface, Brown establishes her genealogy in the Austen family through her father and grandmother: the novel opens with a dedication to her father John Hubback, which recalls commemorative inscriptions in war monuments. Capitalised and bell-shaped, the dedication intends to *remind* John Hubback of the time when they wrote *Jane Austen's Sailor*

Brothers (1906) together – a volume which explores the lives of Austen's brothers in the Navy and their influence on her fiction. Brown insists she is following her great-grandaunt's intentions; that is, she is as close to Jane Austen as one can get. Even her cover design attempts to take the reader back to a former period: an illustration featuring a young couple in Regency dress – not Victorian or 1920s fashion – situates the audience in Austen's world before opening the volume. Unlike Hubback, Oulton and Brown acknowledge Austen not just as responsible for part of the text, but as the novel's main author. *The Watsons* has simply been "concluded by" Edith Brown, who undertakes the task "in accordance with her intentions," and dutifully owns where Austen's text finishes and hers begins. These completions reproduce Austen's fragment to the letter, simply adding paragraph and chapter divisions to the original; unlike Catherine Hubback or subsequent completer John Coates, Oulton and Brown refuse to "desecrate" the Austen word.



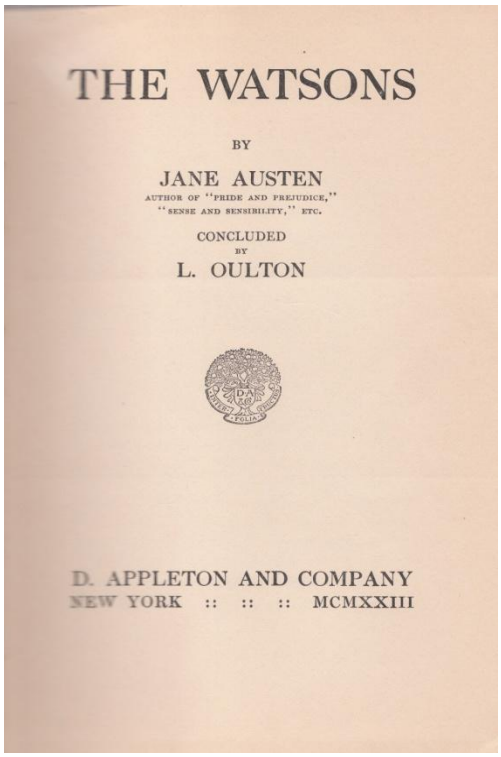


Fig.2. Edith Brown's *The Watsons* (1928), cover illustration. L.Oulton's *The Watsons* (1923), title page.

This refusal to add anything un-Austenian explains the brevity and lack of development of the two continuations. Both texts are extremely short: Oulton's consists of 211 pages out of which 104 are Austen's, 81 out of 183 in Brown – the texts have a different size and formatting. Such haste is certainly unproductive, for it does not allow for a full development of events; on the contrary, it results in two sketchy novels with a mere listing of events rather than a description of the action. In Oulton, Mr. Watson dies, Howard is called away by a dying relative and Mrs. Blake moves to London with Charles – all in the space of one page (1923: 131). From this moment on, the action speeds up, and the next page records Penelope's return, her new situation as a teacher and Margaret's as a companion, Emma's wish for employment and Robert's insistence that she must move to Croydon and find a husband. Elizabeth's marriage to Purvis is also quickly resolved: Purvis is engaged by Howard to take care of the parish during his absence, and if one paragraph explains why Purvis is back in the narrative, the next announces that he will propose to Elizabeth again (1923: 135). It is as if the authors did not wish to take risks and were eager to bring the text to a close. The less is written, the less chance of being disrespectful to the original – by contrast, Hubback's novel is one-thousand pages long in Victorian print.

II.2. Function: therapy and domesticity

Oulton's and Brown's intense return to what might look like "real" Austen is a strong political gesture: their use of mostly rural settings, geographical awareness, respectful adherence to the old class system and romanticisation of the original are the means through which the completions enhance the values that the community wished to memorialise – an old stately England identified with Austen's novels. The completions and traditional war memorials have analogous functions. Most war memorials have a utility, a social purpose – obvious in schools, halls and hospitals. Barber classified the functions of war memorials into

three distinct categories: symbolic (they express and strengthen social values), aesthetic (they may appeal to beauty) and utilitarian (they may be instrumental to achieve social purposes) (1949: 66). Not all functions necessarily manifest in one memorial, but they normally appear in this order, which is mirrored in the completions. Oulton's and Brown's novels have a clear symbolic function in their reproduction of post-war national ideals and the psychological longings of a community. As works of literature, some aesthetic appeal is to be expected; and the novels may also be instrumental in bringing Austen readers together.

The most important functions shared by completions and memorials are political and therapeutic. The political meaning of these novels, mostly explored above, manifests in one more way: through their emphasis on ideas of home and the identification of Austen's novels as home. In Brown's *The Watsons*, the heroine escapes the castle after turning down Lord Osborne's marriage proposal, leaving a note of apology to Lady Osborne, who had invited her to stay overnight. Trying to explain the circumstances to Elizabeth, Emma feels an "extreme longing for home and quiet" and she "only repeated that she must go home" (1928: 139, 142). Once in the carriage, she experiences some relief: "at length they were in the chaise, the door was shut, the horses started, and Emma sat in the darkness holding Elizabeth by the hand" (1928: 140). The interest of this passage is twofold: it may be connected to a post-war longing for home, the desire to go back to the security and comfort of domesticity. It may also represent an element of Austen's biography which pre-empts more recent fictionalisations such as *Becoming Jane* (2007) and *Miss Austen Regrets* (2008). Emma's precipitate escape chimes with the family legend of Harris Bigg-Wither's proposal to Austen, which Edith must have been aware of. At the age of 27, Austen accepted Bigg-Wither's marriage offer while staying at the family estate of Manydown. Reneging on her initial consent on the following morning, Jane rushed away from Manydown with Cassandra, back

to her brother's parsonage at Steventon. Brown's scene reads like a dramatisation of what may have happened after Austen's refusal. This could even be a further attempt to keep close to Austen in the completion, by making her the heroine of her own novel – if only momentarily – adding a passage from Austen's own life to finish off *The Watsons*.

Longing for home was prevalent in the war and post-war period. Paul Fussell argues that Britain had become emasculated after the war, and if masculinity was linked to combat, femininity stood for peace, "the British Sunday, British cooking" (1975: 7). Deidre Lynch describes post-war Englishness as small, cosy and domestic: "England's new rhetoric of a domestic nationality may have granted, concurring with the Austen novel, that real life was at home with the women" (1996: 168-9). That is why the emphasis on home and domesticity in the completions contributes to their political role. Austen herself was identified with these notions: A.B. Walkley talked of her novels as "refuge" and "literature of consolation," a "*house* of rest," which "becomes for those who have once felt the peace of it a *second home*" (qtd. in Southam 1987: 31, my italics).

Homeliness is strongly emphasised in Brown's novel through the elements selected from *The Younger Sister*. Considering the brevity of the continuation, its adoption of much of Hubback's domesticity is certainly significant. Some examples include the contrast between Howard's neat, comfortable parsonage and Mr. Watson's untidy abode (Brown 97; Hubback 1: 172-3) and the potpourri passage, where Howard and Charles fill in the silk bags that Mrs. Blake, Emma and Elizabeth have just sewn (Brown 99; Hubback 1: 180-1). In Brown's novel, Elizabeth is anxious during this first evening at the Howards' because "she was in a house of *strangers*, where *even more alarming strangers* might be announced at any hour." Danger is perceived as coming from outside; as Baldwin warned, it is what is foreign, what is *strange*, that constitutes a threat:

> However, no one was announced; a pleasant visit was paid to the nursery; dinner, despite the vicinity of Osborne Castle, was at an hour no later than that to which they were accustomed, and afterwards, when they were settled in the parlour, helping Mrs Blake to make silk bags, which Mr Howard and Charles filled with pot-pourri, she [Elizabeth] felt almost at ease (Brown 1928: 99).

This passage resonates with Baldwin's speech: it celebrates traditional values (domesticity) and reiterates the inwardness that characterised post-war Britain (the relief that no stranger was announced). Baldwin honoured a traditional England with "the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening" (1924: 7). Brown's characters similarly enjoy their winter evening sewing in the parlour, presumably around the fire. Baldwin's and Brown's concern with the new generations, who will one day rule the country, is represented through the visit to the nursery. Baldwin lamented the loss of cultural heritage for the new generations: "I grieve for it that they [English traditional values] are not the childish inheritance of the majority of people to-day in our country. They ought to be the inheritance of every child born into this country" (1924: 5-6); this, at least, seems the inheritance of Mrs. Blake's children. Interestingly, Hubback handles the same scene very differently, as Elizabeth's fear of the outside is absent from the potpourri passage (1: 180). The silk bags are sewn and filled in before, rather than after, dinner, which creates the feeling that this is a quick occupation to while away the time before the next meal, rather than the protracted, pleasant occupation it is in Brown.

Brown often emphasises Hubback's already developed domesticity. Another example appears when the Howards and the Watson sisters come back to the parsonage after dining at the castle. Hubback's novel is clearly domestic, and concludes the evening with: "The bright fire which was burning in the comfortable little drawing room at the parsonage, irresistibly invited them to enter and draw round it" (1: 229). Although Brown's description is less poetic, it adds homemade food and pleasant conversation, which creates a greater sense of

comfort after a cold drive in the snow: "The warm fire in the Parsonage parlour, cake, baked apples and lively discourse did much to redeem the occasion" (1928: 111). All these comforting elements (the fire, the homemade dessert and the pleasant conversation) are compensation for the cold and the boredom of the evening; they expand Hubback's sense of domesticity – unusual, since Brown mostly compresses *The Younger Sister* in her own completion.

The prominence of domesticity in Brown's *The Watsons* reinforces the image of an "emasculated" or "feminine" post-war Britain. Alison Light argues that, in the 1920s and 1930s, Englishness was redefined as "more inward-looking, more domestic and more private – in terms of pre-war standards, more 'feminine'" (1991: 8). This new Englishness, Light continues, entailed "the picture of 'the little man', the suburban husband pottering in his herbaceous borders," and "of Britain itself as a sporting little country" (Ibid.). Similarly, Brown's Howard takes part in highly domestic and traditionally feminine activities, filling in silk bags with potpourri. Brown's novel, and arguably Austen's, is also "little," both in length and scope. These parallels show how Austen and her completions become a medium to vocalise the alternative masculinities that surfaced after the war – homely and domestic.

The second major function of Oulton's and Brown's completions as war memorials is therapeutic. Austen's novels seem to have provided consolation to post-war readers. Her works were recommended to shell-shocked soldiers, whose minds had been shattered by the stress of warfare: in a letter to the *TLS*, Martin Jarrett-Kerr alluded to his former Oxford tutor, H. F. Brett-Smith, who had been employed by military hospitals during the war. There, Brett-Smith advised on literary material for mentally wounded soldiers: "His job was to grade novels and poetry according to the 'fever-chart'. *for* [sic.] *the severely shell-shocked he selected Jane Austen*" (3 Feb. 1984: 11, my italics). Austen's novels had a soothing effect for

the civilian population too. Before the outbreak of the war, A. C. Bradley anticipated their emollient properties: they make "exceptionally *peaceful reading*. She troubles us neither with problems nor with painful emotions, and *if there is a wound in our minds she is not likely to probe it*" (1911: 204, my italics). The 1920s completions share the restorative powers of Austen's fiction. Their faithful reproduction of Austen's well-ordered society, the fixity of their world and their refusal to add distracting characters or subplots support their endeavour to create a novel with the same comforting powers as the original.

Similarly, most war memorials have a therapeutic function. Kirk Savage notes how they are necessary for psychological closure (2010: 655). There has recently been a shift towards a therapeutic model of commemoration: "Once the burden of the public monument is no longer to confirm the righteousness of the state over and again, but to help its own citizens recover from traumas of one kind or another, the monument opens the floodgates to all sort of victim groups" (Savage 2010: 656). A good example is Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington which, simultaneously reflecting the viewer and the fallen, leaves the spectator to reckon the magnitude of the loss (Savage 2010: 654). Savage reads the war memorial as an elegy, a funereal song transferred from printed page to stone (2010: 640). Oulton's and Brown's continuations allow an analogous reading: war memorials, Savage claims, fulfil an elegy's traditional functions (consolation, substitution, closure), which appear simplified in the form of a public monument (2010: 637). Closure is certainly present in two novels which *conclude* what Austen never finished. They are substitution, not for the fallen, but for the text we will never have, thereby providing consolation to Janeite readers.

It is the idea of loss that most closely links completions and war memorials. Memorials typically register loss: the loss of millions of lives as a result of the war, the loss of green England. Edith Brown lost her younger brother in the war; Francis Hubback died at the front

in France, aged 32, which brings personal and textual loss together in her novel. Loss is intrinsic to the completions: they mourn the loss of the Austen text, the novel we might have had, but never will. Like bronze depictions of soldiers, the completions attempt to make up for what has been lost, but most unsatisfactorily. Soldiers may be depicted returning home in market squares, but that will never bring the dead back. Similarly, Oulton and Brown may attempt to conclude *The Watsons* "according to" Austen's intentions and with Austenian elements, yet the "real" novel will never be finished. Some other war memorials are artefacts rescued from the battlefield, akin to the remains of the text – and the manuscript of *The Watsons* is a collection of fragmented remains, part of which has ironically been lost.[29]

II.3. Problems and Implications

My reading of the 1920s completions as war memorials may elucidate why these novels have not survived the passage of time. Mayo notes how the meaning of a war memorial often fades as the society around it changes (1988: 73). Attitudes towards Austen and her novels have significantly evolved since the 1920s, towards more imaginative retakes and appropriations. Oulton's and Brown's completions are topical works, which could not have been written at any time other than the 1920s. Their national meaning is lost to modern audiences, who probably just see two sketchy and undeveloped novels – another reason for their demise. Many of the memorials that commemorated World War I, Mayo continues, have lost their meaning. In the 1920s and 30s, they were supposed to celebrate the war that would put an end to all wars and start a state of permanent world peace, but this aspiration clearly faded at the onset of World War II (Mayo 1988: 74). Likewise, the national ideal the completions embodied gave way to disappointment in the 1940s, as Chapter Three will examine.

[29] See Introduction, pp.16-17.

Another reason why these completions may not have survived is that they do not fit into any literary movement, belonging fully neither to the nineteenth nor the twentieth century. They are out of tune with the stream of consciousness, anti-linear narratives and other technical innovations typical of the 1920s. Kathryn Sutherland notes the discord between modernism's agenda and Janeitism: whereas modernists questioned old art forms and traditions, Austen was *the* tradition. "It was as if Austen were motivated by a simple desire to reproduce the world visible around her, as if *her* world were *the* world…she appeared to give what modernism refused…lost England or Austen-land" (Sutherland 2005: 16). Whereas modernists struggled to innovate and break with convention, Oulton and Brown revelled in this convention (social and literary), which may explain why the completions have not aroused the interest of literary critics.

Reading the continuations as war memorials is not unproblematic. They stand as unusual forms of commemoration that force the audience to read between the lines. Typically, war memorials evoke memories of the war. However, the war, any war, is absent from these novels – only Oulton includes a number of sailors, which indirectly points to the Napoleonic Wars (Captain Conway, Margaret's unnamed husband and little Charles). There is even an effort to erase any explicit conflict from the texts. Oulton has the Osbornes travel around Europe: together, they visit Italy; Howard then continues to Spain and Portugal; and, after Emma's rebuff, Lord Osborne escapes to Paris. This is an anachronism, for at the time the novel is set, the 1800s, it would have been impossible to travel throughout Europe due to the Napoleonic Wars. Austen's brother Edward was, in fact, one of the last young men to take the fashionable Grand Tour of Europe in 1786-8, right before the onset of the French Revolution.

Oulton may not have been aware of the Napoleonic Wars (although this seems unlikely), but her insistence on evading conflict is remarkable. The war is only represented through indirection; it is the gap in the middle of the text. In a sense, Austen authorises this gap, since her novels do not comment on the war directly. But Oulton pokes this hole and enlarges it by erasing, rather than avoiding, the 1800s troubles, when her Osbornes and Howards go sight-seeing around Europe. Oulton seems to be struggling to recreate Austen's world as more safe and peaceful than it actually was.

This is not the only contradiction about the completions. Despite Oulton's and Brown's insistence on writing the "real" Jane Austen, contemporary issues occasionally filter into their novels. Lord Osborne travels to "the gay world of Paris" where "he will have everything to distract him" (Oulton 1923: 193); yet the 1800s were never the time of "gay Paris" – these were the 1920s. This sort of historical leak, to some extent, brings the completions back to life: rather than being merely flat representations of Regency England through the sugar-coated lens of the 1920s, the completions become interesting precisely when Oulton and Brown go wrong. Their period mistakes and paradoxes prevent the continuations from becoming stilted and monolithic texts.

Another anachronism is the seeming influence of the female emancipation that followed the war, which had its origin in the New Woman phenomenon of the turn of the century. The war had contributed to the liberation of women, who had taken up the jobs men left behind, and sometimes worked as ambulance drivers, medical auxiliaries and writers of government propaganda. Alison Light (1991) argues that the war gave birth not only to new notions of masculinity, but also of femininity. The war marked the entrance into modernity for many women, but this was still a time of "conservative modernity," where freedom and innovation were mostly limited to private interiors (Light 1991: 10). The completions of *The*

Watsons can be read in the light of this "conservative modernity" or "conservative feminism:" Oulton's Robert Watson brutally scolds his sister when he discovers that she has rejected Lord Osborne. After this incident, Emma leaves the house and travels to Guildford on her own, where she intends to live with her younger brother Sam (1923: 183). Not only does Oulton picture her heroine taking the coach alone – and as *Northanger Abbey* reminds us, this was neither pleasant nor acceptable for Regency women – she also imagines her living with two single men, Sam and his master Mr. Curtis.

This apparent modernity is also present in Brown's completion. The conclusion announces that Emma and Howard will produce no offspring, at a time (the 1800s) when families of ten or more were the rule and motherhood was seen as the most pleasurable part of woman's existence (Hughes 1994: 14). The final paragraph is most disturbing: "Mrs. Jasper Purvis and Mrs. Samuel Watson had the most wonderful and beautiful and charming children, and Emma was their beloved Aunt" (1928: 183). Emma ends up as aunt to Elizabeth's and Mary's children but does not bear any of her own. This ending could be read as veiled homage to Austen herself, Edith Brown's "beloved" great grandaunt – an additional trespassing of the border between author and character that leaves the reader wondering if Emma will not turn to writing novels. Brown purposefully divests matrimony of its traditional associations with fertility. Her novel announces the de-centralisation and eventual rejection of the marriage plot that will surface in subsequent completions (see Chapter 4), but at the same time, does not challenge the patterns Austen established in her texts (the marital ending). In this sense, Brown's completion adheres to the conservative (and contradictory) feminism that Light identifies as a post-war development.

I am not arguing that Oulton and Brown consciously set out to depict recent feminist developments or contemporary Paris in their novels – on the contrary, I think this filtering accidental. What they set out to represent was Austen's world as closely and faithfully as possible, to write the novel Jane Austen might have written. It is for this reason, due to their emphasis on Austen's green and well-ordered England, that I think the novels grant an interesting reading as war memorials. Yet Oulton's and Brown's occasional "failures" to follow this philosophy make their novels all the more interesting – "flawed" but alive. Below the surface, the continuations straddle a tendency to make Austen's novels more "Austenian" than they actually were (representing a statelier and more ideal time than Austen did) and an awareness (albeit repressed) of early twentieth-century social discourses. Instead of exhibiting a polished, homogenous surface, the completions become problematic texts with various cracks – revealing the 1920s attempt to reconstruct old England, while warning of the inevitability of the present.

III. The 1920s completions in the context of other Austen retakes

If not overtly political, Oulton's and Brown's novels have undeniable political connotations. The idealisation of Austenland during the war and post-war period was part of a political movement to recapture an earlier social order. Used as therapy and consolation, Austen's novels became imbued with patriotic feelings. The uses of Austen's universe as consolatory utopia, for wounded soldiers and post-war British society, were reproduced in the completions, which carefully mimicked and "completed" Austen's England. Other contemporary Austen renditions participated in this transformation of Austen's fiction into a political instrument to reassert national identity. Like the completions, the family recollections and new editions of her novels, examined below, invite a reading of Austen and her novels as political in the 1920s and/or in her own time.

III.1. Family recollections: John Hubback and Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh

John Hubback's *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* (1906) and Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (1920) are not very well-known among Janeites. Although John Hubback's essay was written a few years before the war, I have brought it into the discussion because, with Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's, it encourages a historical reading of Austen's novels. Both Hubback and Austen-Leigh read their ancestor in the 1800s political context, refuting the truism that Austen was ignorant or careless of the Napoleonic Wars. Despite the efforts of Austen scholars during the last thirty years,[30] this notion still persists in the twenty-first century: in an interview, Salman Rushdie emphasised how the only function of the military in Austen's novels "is to look cute at parties," because "she was able to wholly, profoundly explain the lives of her characters without reference to the Napoleonic Wars" (2005: 558).

John Hubback wrote *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* (1906) in collaboration with his daughter Edith Brown. The essay follows the lives of Austen's two brothers in the Navy, Charles and Francis (the Hubbacks' own ancestor). It narrates their experiences: their years as midshipmen, the battles they fought and the ships they commanded. *Sailor Brothers* constitutes an atypical Austenite narrative in its exploration of the hardships of life at sea – battles, executions and promotions. If only because two of her brothers were sailors, Hubback and Brown imply, Austen must have been aware of the continental troubles. Charles and

[30] The dominant trend in Austen studies since the 1970s has been historicist: taking issue with Duckworth and Butler, Claudia Johnson sees Austen as progressive in her volume *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (1988) (see Chapter 4). More recently, David Galperin (2003) has tried to "re-historicize" Austen by presenting her as neither consistently conservative nor progressive. Galperin relates Austen to her romantic contemporaries and to the theorists of the picturesque, emphasising how she still maintains her independence from both groups. Clara Tuite has similarly re-evaluated Austen's novels in a Romantic context, arguing that, like Wordsworth's, her works participate in the period's strategy of naturalising the countryside (2002: 100). In contrast, Peter Knox-Shaw (2004) sees Austen as the heiress of Enlightenment philosophy and the sceptical tradition of the second half of the eighteenth century. (See Chapter 5 for a larger discussion of Austen's presumed Augustan versus Romantic alliances).

Francis had a strong influence on Austen's life and work, as some passages from her novels confirm: Wentworth's discussion of the Laconia in *Persuasion*, for instance, reveals Austen's familiarity with naval experience and European politics (Hubback and Brown 1906: 77). *Sailor Brothers* also eulogises the strong patriotism of the Navy, transferred to Austen by association: "when it came to fighting for their country[,] men and officers alike managed to forget their grievances;" the popularity of the profession "was the effect of a strong feeling of patriotism" (1906: 30, 37). There is a sense of admiration for the Navy, which connects with Austen's work (*Persuasion*) but also speaks to the early twentieth-century contingencies.

Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (1920) is even more interesting in its overt depiction of a politically-minded novelist. Austen-Leigh draws on Austen's childish annotations in her copy of Goldsmith's *History of England*. This marginalia mostly reflects Austen's love for the Stuart royal family and her distaste for Cromwell and the parliamentarians in the English Civil War. Far from being indifferent to politics, Austen-Leigh argues, Austen had strong feelings on the topic, as her scribbled comments (sometimes quite emphatic) denote. For instance, when Goldsmith condemns those responsible for "Stunning mankind with a cry of Freedom," Austen addresses Goldsmith claiming "My Dear Mr. G –, I have lived long enough in the world to know that it is always so" (1920: 28). Austen-Leigh implies that her ancestor had Whig sympathies, in contrast with the post-war frequent fashioning of a conservative writer whose novels epitomised a traditional social order. At the conclusion of Walpole's speech, Austen writes: "Nobly said! Spoken like a Tory!" – a remark that Mary Augusta deems "slightly ironical" (1920: 27). Austen-Leigh's insistence on making Austen less of a Tory than her twentieth-century contemporaries believed she was constitutes another example of the conflicting positions Austen is often deemed to stand for.

Austen-Leigh draws a parallel between Austen's world and ours, between the Napoleonic Wars and the 1910s conflicts. She equated Jane and Cassandra's experience with that of two imaginary sisters going through the Great War. Explaining why Austen could not have mentioned the turmoil in her correspondence, Austen-Leigh claims:

> Our war of five years' duration is just over; how many sisters, when a lapse of two or three years had familiarised them with the thought of its existence would have discussed it, in its public bearings, in letters to each other devoted to home details?... But to Jane Austen, war, far from being a new and unheard of horror, was an almost normal state of things. Her England had during a large portion of her short life been constantly at war. The gravity of the situation could never be forgotten, but the recent excitement of our own country, fed as it has been by telegrams and journalists, did not exist a hundred years earlier, when intelligence of battles was often long before reaching England (1920: 46-7).

Far from being unconcerned, Austen was inured to a war that had lasted for too many years, just as many twentieth-century women must have felt that their war would go on forever. Austen-Leigh draws a direct connection between the early nineteenth and twentieth century, between an Austen who was politically concerned during her lifetime and an Austen who had become a national emblem in the 1920s.

Personal Aspects re-imagines a patriotic Jane Austen too, contributing to her transformation into a national symbol in post-war Britain. She "remained to the end of her life *a firm patriot* and a strong believer *in the superiority in the ways and the merits of her native country* over those of other lands" (1920: 45, my italics). Austen-Leigh quotes one of Austen's letters as evidence of her strong patriotism: "I hope your letters from abroad are satisfactory. They would not be satisfactory to *me* I confess, unless they breathed a strong spirit of regret for not being in England" (Austen qtd. in Austen-Leigh 1920: 45). The feelings Austen-Leigh ascribes to her great grandaunt are inevitably connected to the 1910s hostilities: they are feelings of distaste for the foreign compared with home and of a strong sense of the superiority of the English race. The aftermath of the war explains Austen-Leigh's

urge to depict a patriotic Austen: if Austen was being held as a symbol of what it means to be English, she *had* to care about the affairs of the state and the future of the country.

This explicit politicisation is the main difference between the family recollections and the completions. Oulton's and Brown's completions employ Austen's novels as political tools and badges of nationhood during the Great War and its aftermath. *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* and, especially, *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* read the novelist as politically-aware in her own time, which helps validate the 1910s and 1920s patriotic use of her novels. Interestingly, Austen was read as political by lay readers who were, after all, amateur writers, before this notion reached the academy. The canon of English literature, and Austen's position in it, was in the process of construction, but it would take more than fifty years for it to welcome the idea that Jane Austen was concerned with the events of her time. The view proposed by Hubback and Austen-Leigh suggests the avant-gardism of popular Austen readers, who pre-empted the academy. It also breaks down the sometimes artificial division between high and popular culture – and, as my thesis shows, this break down is not unusual in Austen's afterlife.

III.2. New editions: R.W. Chapman and the Clarendon Press

Establishing a national literary canon had become a major preoccupation in the post-war years. There was an obsession with setting up a canon of English texts that would define a common national identity, for "[p]articipating in the social practice of novel reading can give readers the sense of participating in a nation that they imagine to be the product of consensus" (Lynch 1996: 4). Jane Austen's novels became paramount in the constitution of this national canon, primarily thanks to Chapman's editorial efforts. R.W. Chapman started contemplating his edition of Austen's novels while stationed in Macedonia. In a 1917 essay written from Kalinova, he complained about modern editions, which did not pay due

attention to Austen's original volume division – especially relevant to the plot of *Mansfield Park* (1917: 52). In the following decade, he would enter literary history as the "official" editor of Austen's texts. His 1923 Clarendon edition of the novels is still the benchmark for Austen studies, reputed to have initiated the professionalization that F.R. Leavis subsequently continued. Most importantly for English literary studies, this was the first complete scholarly edition of any English novelist – either male or female.

Chapman's editorial policy resonates with Oulton's and Brown's treatment of the Austen text. There is an emphasis on standardising Austen's novels, already exemplified by Reginald Farrer's pre-centenary letter. Chapman's aim was to provide a *correct* body of texts – or rather, *the* correct body of texts – in an edition that should be accurate, responding to the emerging feeling of national pride. Not only did Chapman try to homogenise variant texts into *the* Austen text, he also accompanied his edition with additional period material in the form of notes, appendices and indexes, as well as plot chronologies, Regency fashion plates and reproductions of the original title pages.

Like the completions, Chapman's editorial work was an unacknowledged political act. Kathryn Sutherland has noted Chapman's unconsciousness of the textual fashioning he was conducting. He never acknowledged that editing is partial and leading, as the editor's choices and decisions contribute to the final textual product (Sutherland 2005: 329). By imposing this forceful control over the novels, he did away with textual ambiguity and established rigid boundaries within the text. Yet this is part and parcel of the political nature of Chapman's editing process: if the aim was to present the "genuine" Jane Austen to the world, editing could not be identified as process, for there was only one Jane Austen to be rediscovered rather than reconstructed. Jane Austen was Chapman's Jane Austen.

Chapman's edition also resembles the completions in the pervasiveness of the idea of loss. Chapman applied the standards and scrupulousness of Greek manuscripts to Austen's work, and based his edition on the last version of the text revised by the author.[31] There is a parallelism between the traditional classical texts Chapman and his fellow Oxford scholars originally studied and the formation of a body of English classics. Like the remains of a dead civilization, Austen's novels became self-contained ruins, perfect in their state, which is why the two contemporary attempts to complete *The Watsons* are brief and undeveloped. It is in fact in the 1920s that the Austen fragment was published independently for the first time. Issuing Austen's *The Watsons* in a book format, A.B. Walkley (1923) treated the fragment as a piece of writing in its own right, worth of an individual volume. Standing on its own, the text underlines the loss, the absence, of Austen's words.

Loss is also part of the history of the Austen Oxford edition. Katherine Metcalfe, later married to Chapman, was the initiator of the project that Chapman took up. She edited the 1912 Clarendon edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, which shows her awareness of Austen criticism and editorial matters by returning to the three different editions of the novel published during Austen's lifetime. It exhibits a sophisticated scholarly apparatus, with an appendix about Austen and her time, the original title-pages and Regency typeface. R.W. Chapman based his subsequent editions of the remaining five novels on Metcalfe's, and his 1923 *Pride and Prejudice* is that edited by his wife, a contribution he never acknowledged. Originally a tutor at Oxford, Metcalfe vanished into scholarly obscurity after her marriage to Chapman in 1913. Metcalfe's story, like Hubback's, intimates that many female contributions to the early history of Austen's reception have given way under the pressure of the male story.

[31] That is, the second edition in the case of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*. Although *Pride and Prejudice* had gone through three editions, Chapman decided to use the first one, since he perceived the other two as "mere reprints, in which the author had no hand" (Preface 1923: ii).

The 1920s are all about memorialising Jane Austen: in completions, family essays and new editions of her novels. These renditions are political in their own time and some begin to recover a more political Austen, at an earlier date than is normally acknowledged in Austen scholarship. The idea of loss is pervasive in these responses – the loss of Austen's words and of an old, pre-industrial England – although probably nowhere so obviously as in the completions. To celebrate Austen's England, Oulton and Brown strove for fidelity to the original, but also "Austenised" it – presenting the world of *The Watsons* as more idyllic and statelier than it actually was. They underlined the pastness of the past, but at the same time unconsciously reflected some of the social revolutions of their present. The 1920s completions read as complex war memorials, which, like many of the memorials to British soldiers in town squares, continue to hover between past and present.

Chapter III

Austen and *The Watsons*, 1940-1960

The authors of the next two completions of *The Watsons*, John Coates and David Hopkinson, had served during World War II, as staff officer and member of the Educational Corps respectively. John Coates was the successful author of nine other novels and two plays, some of which were highly praised for their light-hearted humour (*TLS* 20 Dec 1957: 769). In 1958, he wrote a continuation of *The Watsons* which was reprinted in 1973 and reissued in paperback in 1977, becoming the first completion to go through several editions and republications. David Hopkinson's *The Watsons*, itself a rewriting of *The Younger Sister*, was published in 1977 too. For the first time, two completions were out at the same time, a novelty in the history of *The Watsons*' afterlife.[32]

The experience of World War II had been very different: rationing, blackout, bombing and the threat to the civilian population transformed the conditions of life in the city. Between June and September 1939 around 3,750,000 people were evacuated to supposedly safe areas in the countryside; by November of the following year, 410 raiders had dropped 538 tons of high explosive over London, causing the death of 400 civilians and 900 serious injuries (Calder 1969: 35, 168). The horrors of World War II undermined the solid and secure world that Austen's novels had come to represent in the 1920s. English cultural heritage was seriously under threat: historic cities, such as Bath and Canterbury, famous for the beauty of their architecture, were the deliberate target of German raids. In 1942, Bath was attacked on

[32] I have mostly left Hopkinson's completion out of my study for several reasons: the novel belongs neither to the post-war Austen renditions analysed in this chapter nor to the feminist appropriations examined in the following. Despite having been written in the late 1970s, it seems uninfluenced by the sexual revolution. Hopkinson mostly plagiarises *The Younger Sister* in his completion, but the result is uninteresting from a critical and literary perspective. Valentine Cunningham harshly described the continuation as "sub-Victorian rubbish of the worst kind. Reproaches fail one. It's lower than Brontë-juvenile; it's a sub-Disraeli plot with no redeeming smartness of chat...What this *The Watsons* amounts to is a travesty, a Mona Lisa with moustaches" (1977: 498).

two consecutive nights, and Canterbury was heavily raided by German bombers with the apparent intention of destroying its cathedral (Calder 1968: 287).

The war brought about a second redefinition of Englishness. Angus Calder calls the end of 1941 "the moment of truth for Britain," when she realised that "she could no longer imagine herself the supreme world power, and the empire on which her pretensions had been based was now, in the Far East, visibly on the road to ruin" (1969: 266). This realisation, together with the loss of Singapore at Japanese hands, was a heavy blow that seemed "enough to undermine all faith in the British Empire itself" (Calder 1969: 274). A feeling of ambivalence towards socio-cultural inheritance ensued: the British ideal of a harmonious, well-regulated society was undermined by post-war figures such as the "spiv," an opportunist who, living on the margins of the law, attracted the sympathy of the general public (Hughes 1963: 72).

This complex social mood seemed widespread: Christian Dior's 1947 new collection was described as "very typical of the late nineteen-forties. It was *aspiring towards the future*, but at the same time it was *gazing nostalgically back towards the past*. It was interpreting hopes for the unknown in terms of memories of the known" (Phillips 1963: 136, my italics). This description typifies post-1945 responses to Austen: at one level, there was a move towards modernity and creativity in Austen productions; at another, readers were still turning their gaze on the past, embracing the apparent sanity and stateliness of Austen's universe. John Coates's *The Watsons*, I argue, encompasses these dilemmas over Austen and what she presents in a new world of shattered illusions. His completion is the new Dior outfit on the Austen catwalk – simultaneously looking backwards and forwards. It reflects a defining moment in Austen's reception that has mostly gone unnoticed: the rejection of the ossification of the Austen text that had followed World War I. Austen scholars (Lynch 1996; Johnson 1997) have mainly focused on the relevance of Austen's fiction during the Great

War, probably aided by Kipling's "The Janeites." Yet the impact of World War II on ways of reading Austen, inaugurating more imaginative approaches, has scarcely been studied.[33] After presenting an overview of Austen's reception during World War II, this chapter examines the dissensions within Coates's *The Watsons* and later sets the novel in the context of other contemporary retakes.

I. Jane Austen and World War II

Reading remained an important activity during and after World War II. Two reports in *Mass Observation*, "Book Reading in War Time" (1940) and "Wartime Reading" (1940), record publishers', librarians' and booksellers' agreement that book reading was on the increase. Booksellers capitalized on the War to boost their sales: Valerie Holman notes how booksellers were trying to take advantage of the blackout and the amount of time people spent indoors (2008: 25). Harrap, for instance, promoted his books with the slogan: "Light reading for Black-outs" and "Carry on! Always carry your gas mask! Always carry a book!" (Holman 2008: 25). But the scarcity of the paper available – first 60%, then 40% of that used before the war – imposed important limitations on book production, leading people to borrow rather than buy books. Improvised libraries were often established in bomb shelters: St Marylebone controlled around 50 shelter libraries and St Pancras operated a mobile library, carrying books in a van around London (Holman 2008: 29).

Yet more had changed than the material conditions of reading: this time reading choices were eclectic. The desire to escape to a carefully ordered world (through Austen's novels) combined with an interest in the chaos and wildness of the present. Among the classics, Trollope and Austen were still favourites, for they provided "restful" reading and a "stable,

[33] Claudia Johnson has only recently developed the connection between Austen and World War II. In *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*, she conducts an interesting analysis of how Austen's presence in Bath evolved during the war years, especially after the Baedeker raids (2012: 136). Yet Johnson does not focus on the feeling of cultural ambivalence I analyse here, or on the post-war completion of *The Watsons*.

firmly-rooted world, a static picture of society, which has survived the test of time and reassures us that life has a meaning" (Lewis 1944: 22). The Brontës, never popular during the Great War, were now sought after: Elizabeth Belsey was reading *Wuthering Heights* during one of the air raids (Hartley 1997: 4). There was curiosity about current affairs, as people endeavoured to make sense of their present: Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was in great demand,[34] and novels about the home front, such as Doris Leslie's *House in the Dust*, were often a publishing success (Hartley 1997: 16). All these different authors and genres were sometimes consumed by the same readers: in *The Bookseller*, Christina Folye selected a mixture of English classics and modern literature, from Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope to Aldous Huxley, as her reading choices during the blackout (Holman 2008: 26).

During World War II, Austen's fiction was still valued for its emollient properties. Winston Churchill read *Pride and Prejudice* while suffering from pneumonia: when the doctors advised him to rest, Churchill "decided to read a novel. I had long ago read Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility, and now I thought I would have Pride and Prejudice...What *calm* lives they had, those people!" (1952: 377, my italics). Similarly, Janet Teissier du Cros, a Scottish woman living in occupied France, read Austen's novels to keep her mental sanity, for they were a sign that Hitler's world would not endure:

> Jane Austen lives, and makes you live, in a luminous world whose characters are never evil and where even the vulgar are civilised...You had only to establish a link at any point between Jane Austen's England and the world Hitler was forging to know that Hitler's world was a nightmare which could never last. My favourite link was to imagine Miss Bates being roused from bed at five in the morning by the Gestapo. I have lived the scene again and again, from the alarmed opening of the door by a round-eyed Pat in her nightgown, to the appearance of Miss Bates in curl-papers volubly thankful that her mother is a little deaf. At the mere image my world would right itself (1962: 189-90).

[34] In 1940, a Worcester librarian noted how *Mein Kampf* had been repeatedly borrowed and reserved ("Book Reading" 1940: 28), a fact corroborated by a librarian from Barnstaple, who observed that there had been a waiting list for *Mein Kampf* since April 1939 ("Wartime Reading" 1940: 5).

The first half of this passage resonates with earlier responses to Austen: her novels create a "luminous world" that guarantees the existence of a better, parallel reality. Like soldiers in the trenches, Du Cros was reading Austen's novels for reassurance that the old order would at some point be re-established. However, the tone changes in the second half of the quotation: Du Cros's vivid description of Miss Bates hurried downstairs by the Gestapo is an amusing exercise of the imagination, hard to come across after the Great War. Miss Bates in curl-papers, bullied by the Gestapo but still finding something to be thankful for, creates a hilarious image despite its crudeness. It dovetails with the view of Austen as a merciless satirist that critics D.W. Harding and Marvin Mudrick would put forward in the 1940s and 50s, when they claimed that satire was the defining quality of Austen's style. Du Cros's juxtaposition of the Gestapo, a round-eyed Pat and a garrulous Miss Bates is certainly ludicrous, and points towards a re-appreciation of Austen's caustic wit that was primarily absent from 1920s responses.

Du Cros's Austenian appropriation, together with the eclectic reading choices of the 1940s, confirms a change in the ethos of Englishness. The 1910s had doted on images of green England, English homes and cooking; but the 1940s only found disappointment at home. Whereas England had been the earthly paradise soldiers in the trenches read about, this home was now being blasted. Patriotic feelings were far more complex, for there was a fear that the outcome of the Great War, with its massive unemployment, would be repeated. Young men refused to be tricked as their fathers had been: in 1919, Prime Minister Lloyd George had promised them "Homes for Heroes," but at their return, the heroes only found the same old world (Calder 1969: 53). Old notions of England survived alongside the disillusionment with the Empire. This conflict can be observed in the *TLS* as early as 1939. A page in the periodical juxtaposed R.W. Chapman's "Jane Austen's Letters" and the note "Disillusioned Germany." The first celebrated the recovery of some original Austen papers

which corrected Chapman's previous dating of Cassandra's drawing. The second lamented the effect that the Great War had had on German art and culture (28 Jan. 1939: 57). The page was completed by various notes on Dr. Johnson, Restoration comedy and an advertisement of new books as varied as *The Germans and Africa* and *Nelson's Wife*. This amalgamation of past and future, old English grandeur and contemporary disenchantment, was a feature of the 1940s and 1950s that Coates's completion would absorb.

II. John Coates's *The Watsons*

Readings of Austen, the symbol of Englishness *par excellence* in the first quarter of the century, were obviously affected by the social reforms brought about by the 1939-1945 hostilities. The old pre-industrial world associated with Austen's novels seemed dead now: the loss of the empire, the levelling of classes and the new scientific developments (the nuclear bomb) had contributed to Britain's demystification of its past. "Nobody after the war wanted ideals;" rather than reviving the past, what they wanted was "change and movement and life" (Hughes 1963: 80). This is the modern outlook that the heroine of John Coates's *The Watsons* (1958), Emily Watson, embodies. When her aunt calls her back to their old home, Everleigh, after a failed marriage, Emily realises that "[t]he past, however, cannot be recuperated…It was clear to Emily that more was changed at Eversleigh than the outward appearance of things…Things would not be as they had once been, in spite of her return" (1958: 158). This passage sounds like the typical post-war realisation that the old order would never return, that the old civilisation was dead. Britain in the 1940s and 1950s "has been searching, and is still searching for a new identity in a new world" (Spiering 1992: 169). The only solution in both cases is looking forward: whereas Mrs. O'Brien still wishes to restore the past and hopes they will be able to lead the same sort of peaceful existence at Eversleigh, Emily realises: "Would not both of them…be as restless and as unsettled in the future as they

had been calm and contented in the past?" (158). Like Dior in his new collection, Emily wishes to move forward and "aspire" towards the future.

Coates's heroine represents what Nicholas Dames calls an "assimilable self," the subject who easily absorbs trauma and is capable of real transplantation (2001: 46). Hers is a flexible self that gets over the various mishaps in her life: namely, her aunt's initial rejection, her new strange home and Mr. Howard's affronts. Emily is successful at creating a home first at Stanton Parsonage and then at Stanton Lodge, where she moves with her aunt: "for what we achieve there [Stanton Lodge] will always be in contrast to its present condition, whereas what we achieve here [Eversleigh] must always be set against the perfection we both remember" (168). Emily possesses a revisionary conscience, able to discard the past in favour of the future; she can abandon Eversleigh, now empty of furniture and semi-ruined, like a bombsite.

John Coates's *The Watsons* (1958) materialises as the battleground for competing readings of Austen and her fragment. Like an "assimilable" self, the novel simultaneously revisits the past and adumbrates the liberties with the Austen text that pervade the twenty-first century. Coates's completion, like Oulton's and Brown's, encourages a political reading of the original fragment, but unlike them, sometimes offers a glimpse of a progressive, rather than conservative, reading of the parent text. This shows the ability of the completions to absorb contradictory readings of Austen's fiction, which unsettles any harmonious history of Austen's afterlife.

II.1. Elements of subversion: plot and characters

The plot of Coates's *The Watsons* reveals the movement from "ideals" to "change" that Hughes outlined. Heroine Emily, not Emma, Watson attends Lord Osborne's foxhunting expedition accompanied by her sister Elizabeth, where they make Lady Osborne's

acquaintance. This event, and other subsequent balls and dinners, improves the acquaintance of all the parties, introducing Emily's two suitors, Lord Osborne and Mr. Howard. The peer proposes and, being rejected, encourages the heroine to expose his faults so that he can correct them and become a suitable partner in the future. His plan for self-improvement consists of paying various attentions to Emily's family, formerly neglected by the Osbornes. Penelope, back from Chichester and still single after rejecting old Dr. Harding, becomes Emily's confidante.

An unexpected incident occurs when Captain O'Brien is murdered in the streets of Dublin (a possible reference to Irish unrest), and after some hesitation, Aunt O'Brien summons her niece in Eversleigh. There, she awaits Emily with Mr. Jones, the girl's old tutor, who was left destitute after Captain O'Brien refused to grant him the local parish living. Life is not the same in Eversleigh, and Emily decides they should move to Stanton Lodge, a property close to her father's parsonage. Their removal transforms the life of the whole family. Mrs. O'Brien gets over past disappointments, and promises to assist her nieces and younger nephew. Thus, Sam is able to buy a partnership from Mr. Curtis, which allows him to marry Mary Edwards, and Elizabeth receives £4,000 on her marriage to the diffident but good-hearted Mr. Jones. Penelope marries Lord Osborne: falling victim to a horse accident on the castle grounds, she becomes the Osbornes' patient. At this point, the peer realises his love for her, but since he still feels bound to Emily, Osborne renews his addresses. The situation is solved to everyone's satisfaction: Mr. Howard, tricked by Tom Musgrave, had snubbed Emily in public, but now he realises his error and runs to the castle to confess his love.

This plot development illustrates Coates's emancipation from the Austen text. He is the first completer clearly not to follow Austen's presumed intentions for *The Watsons*: there is no flirtation between Howard and Lady Osborne – an element that both Hubback and Brown

exploit; far from it, Lady Osborne in any case neglects her parson, for Coates rarely depicts them together. The second violation of Austen's scheme is Mr. Watson's "refusal" to die. His indisposition is explained as more emotional than physiological, and he increasingly recovers his health after Aunt O'Brien moves to Stanton. Mr. Watson first goes as far as London to visit Emily and Mrs. O'Brien, and once they have settled in Stanton, he readily accepts their invitations, to Emily's astonishment (1958: 183).

The absence of Mr. Watson's death in Coates has two important effects. First, it creates a more cheerful and jovial novel, depriving it of the mournful tone that would inevitably ensue from the death of the heroine's father. Hubback had her heroine grieve over the loss of her father, and Oulton and Brown quickly "disposed" of the corpse. By avoiding Mr. Watson's death, Coates eschews the element which, according to many a critic (Pinion 1973; Norris 1986; Heldman 1986), prevented Austen from continuing the novel – for it entailed revisiting the death of her own father through the heroine's. Second, Mr. Watson's survival has important consequences for the novel's action. The Watson sisters are not left destitute and forced to move to Croydon with Robert and Jane, as was presumably Austen's plan. In fact, the Robert Watsons play a minimal role here, and Robert's labours as a lawyer are not at all developed. The Watsons, with the help of Mrs. O'Brien, thrive in the village of Stanton: Penelope makes a stupendous match and Elizabeth and Sam get respectable positions with their aunt's assistance. By improving their economic circumstances, Coates evades what JEAL considered Austen's reason to put the fragment aside: the heroine's low position, which was only likely to degenerate further (1871: 296). Coates's interpretation clearly contradicts JEAL's reading of the fragment.

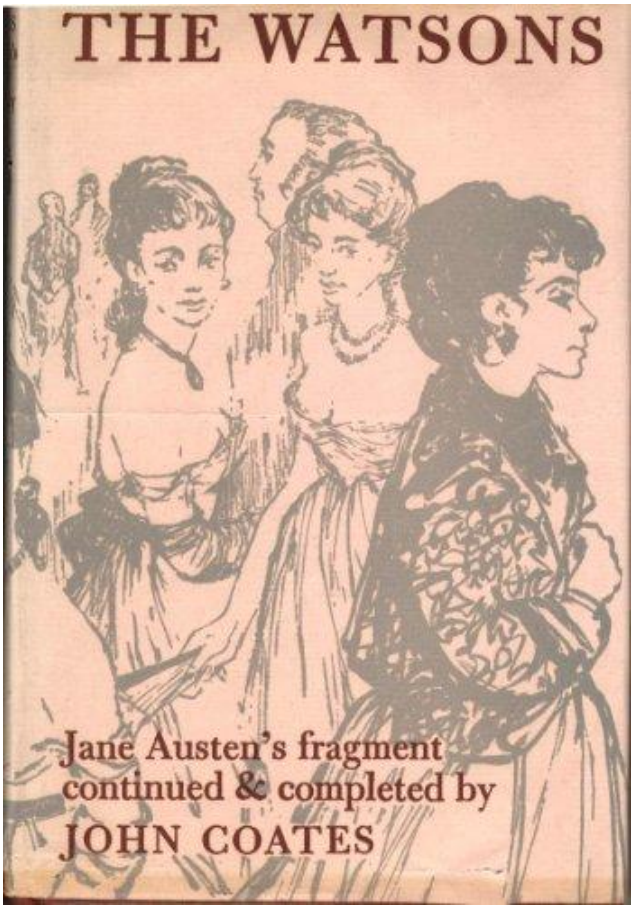


Fig. 3. John Coates's *The Watsons* (1958), cover illustration.

Coates's *The Watsons* deviates from Austen's work in its dealings with the original fragment and its imaginative recreation of certain characters. Coates's liberties begin on the cover, where his name is capitalised, and hence emphasised more than Austen's (without capitals). Whereas Oulton and Brown stressed Austen's authorship to the detriment of their own, Coates, at least, equates his own name with Austen's; this is a case of shared authorship, rather than a process of digging and bringing into light what Austen may have written. The frontispiece of Coates's novel suggests a move from the fashions of Austen's time: no attempt is made to represent characters in the dress of the original date of composition. The illustration has a strong flavour of *Gone with the Wind*, the film that had become a box office

success nearly two decades earlier, and whose aesthetics had been mimicked in the first film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.[35]

In his "Advertisement by the Author," Coates passes judgement on Austen's artistry: "the fragment is *a false start* rather than a sketch" and "[a]s it stands the fragment is *a trifle pedestrian*" (1958: 314, 316, my italics). Clearly, the Austen word is no longer sacrosanct, for Coates finds room for improvement. His is a fully developed novel that takes off from Austen's fragment. It is much longer than the 1920s continuations – 313 pages versus Oulton's and Brown's approximately 200. The original manuscript was even longer, but Coates's publisher forced him to cut down some of its 160,000 words, which included a whole chapter on Mr. Jones's adventures in London. Although this chapter seems to have disappeared, Coates's decision to examine life in the city is intriguing: given that Austen preferred to portray the provinces, Coates's exploration of the deprived areas of London (for Mr. Jones is at this point destitute) is another symptom of the 1950s rejection of an ideal past for the harshness of the present. Yet the publisher's decision to suppress this chapter, together with Coates's avoidance of Croydon, paradoxically realigns the final product with Austen's green England – and in fact, most of the action in the completion is confined to the village of Stanton.

Austen's fragment is heavily rewritten in the completion. Coates inserts new passages in the original sections, including Mr. Edwards's superstitions before setting off for the ballroom: "It was some moments before Emily realised that the cause of his [Mr. Edwards's] displeasure was the day's date – the thirteenth of the month" (18). Mr. Edwards is here an irrational individual, who having "stumbled over an old shoe in the passage this morning"

[35] Robert Leonard's 1940 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* tried to capitalise on the success of *Gone with the Wind* one year earlier, by showing the Bennet girls in heavy Victorian costumes. Coates's frontispiece is probably a similar attempt, which shows how Coates/his publisher was more concerned with following fashion to make a profit than with being "truthful" to Austen and her times.

believes that "no harm will come to anyone of *this* household through the balls" (18). Ranking with Austen's fools like Mr. Collins, Edwards enhances the comic tone of the novel, at the same time that he provides additional information. Before travelling to the assembly rooms, he tells Emily about his youthful friendship with Mr. Watson and Aunt O'Brien, filling in the background of these characters (17, 20).

Even more than Hubback, Coates redrafts and adds to the original fragment. His treatment of the source text presents Austen as emendable: Coates inserts what he deems missing from the original, adding data (Mr. Watson's youth) and redirecting some of the strands of Austen's narrative (the Lady Osborne subplot). One of the differences between the contexts in which Hubback and Coates were writing is that, by 1958, it was clear that a previous Austen text existed, for *The Watsons* had already been published by JEAL (1871) and Walkley (1923), among others. Austen was widely read in the 1950s, which saw an abundance of new editions of her novels, especially cheap paperback and illustrated editions. [36] Coates's palimpsest of the source text would have been obvious to his contemporaries, and was perhaps for this reason more subversive than Hubback's.

Substantial divergences from the original are obvious in the way Coates recreates his characters. His first license is the heroine's name, which becomes Emily, a form of appropriation that grants Coates the artistic freedom to create his character to some extent anew. There is an additional reason for the change: Emily, unlike Emma, is not the name of any Austen heroine. Another famous Emma (Woodhouse) already existed, and Coates was determined not to "repeat" Austen characters (1958: 315). In his postscript, he confesses this to be one of the reasons for his alterations, since as the fragment stands, most of the

[36] David Gilson notes how, once printing restrictions were over, many publishers found it profitable to reissue the classics. In 1948, Allan Wintage issued all the Austen novels, including *The Watsons* and "Love and Freindship" – which reinforces my reading of the fragment's relevance at times of trouble. Other post-war editions of Austen include the Penguin English Library (1965) and the Norton edition (1966) (Gilson 2005: 151).

characters run the risk of becoming too much like existing Austen characters. Mr. Watson is likely to turn into a nasty Mr. Woodhouse, and Penelope, a mixture of the two Miss Steeles (316). But Coates wanted "both characters and incidents...to be fresh, and not pale imitations of characters and incidents that occurred in existing Jane Austen books" (315). His Emily is more of a moralist than Emma Watson ever was. She sets strict rules about social behaviour which, in courtship, translate into the Richardsonian notion that no young woman should show her affection until sure that the man returns it (38). The function of Emily's dogmatism is to construct a flawed heroine. Critics have traditionally found the Austen heroine wanting in this sense, believing that, because Emma Watson is too perfect, she cannot possibly grow or develop (Mudrick 1952; Southam 1964). However, through an exaggeration of her original self-righteous potential, Coates creates a character who still has to learn flexibility and open-mindedness. This practice becomes another example of how the completions can not only anticipate but also challenge some of the issues raised by Austen scholarship.

II.2. Elements of conflict: politics and humour

These imaginative changes of plot and characterisation expose Coates's subversive attitude towards the tradition that Austen had come to represent in the 1920s. His Jane Austen, as implied in the completion, is not the emblem of an old, idyllic England, but a creative satirist with liberal tendencies. Yet this reading of the completion is complicated: in Coates's novel, there is a constant negotiation between the conservative and the progressive, past and future Austens, represented through Coates's handling of politics and humour. These two elements, respectively stressed by previous and subsequent generations of Janeites,[37] reflect the conflicting responses to Austen's fiction that the continuation stands for. Only

[37] Chapter 2 showed that the 1920s completions underlined the political to the detriment of the ironical. Chapter 5 will address how twenty-first-century appropriations prioritise the humour of Austen's novels over other elements.

occasionally does Coates's novel openly favour a reading of the fragment as modern and progressive.

The political alliances ascribed to the original fragment of *The Watsons* through the processes of rewriting and completion are not always consistent. Captain O'Brien, Aunt O'Brien's second husband, has been murdered near the waterfront of Dublin, being "robbed, stabbed, and thrown into the waters of the Liffe…His body was recovered the following morning and is now decently interred in the grounds of the Protestant Cathedral" (79). A Protestant burial, given Ireland's Catholic majority, points to the religious tensions as a possible cause for Captain O'Brien's premature death. Writing to her niece, Aunt O'Brien continues her discussion of the conflicts: "I had often cautioned him on the dangers of late journeys to such parts, for since the July troubles these attacks have been only too frequent" (79). This is probably an allusion to the Emmet Rebellion, which took place in July 1803 – a possible date for Austen's composition of *The Watsons*. Thomas Emmet had been negotiating with Napoleon to obtain his support for the Irish cause, but the rising, due on 23 July 1803, was a total failure. This historical allusion is clearly related to the Irish troubles of the early twentieth-century, including the seizure of the centre of Dublin in 1916, which culminated in the independence of a part of Ireland in 1920. Coates's narrator seems to side with the English, since the incident, in a letter from Mrs. O'Brien to Emily, is narrated from the aunt's (English) point of view – the Irish are never given a voice. Aunt O'Brien is only too happy to leave Ireland, "still a *foreign* country," once she realises the fraud her marriage had constituted – for before his death, the Captain planned to leave her penniless a few months after their wedding (97, 141, my italics). The narrator's implicit defence of the status quo (the English domination of Ireland and the stereotype of the Irish as criminals) suggests a re-interpretation of Austen's work as conservative, both from a nineteenth and twentieth-century perspective: whereas Aunt O'Brien suffers a disastrous marriage and is robbed in Ireland, her

fortune and mental sanity are recovered in England, thanks to the efforts of her cunning *English* lawyer.

This celebration of Englishness, reminiscent of a former era, is strengthened by Coates's portrayal of the landscape. In the original and the completion, Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrave call on the Watsons unexpectedly. Coates adds to Osborne's conversation with Emma/Emily a eulogy to the English countryside:

> I myself have a great love of Surrey...I am seldom so happy as when riding in its lanes, or across its hills and heaths. There is a greater variety within a small compass in Surrey than I think you will find elsewhere. In a few minutes you can pass from a valley where all is cultivated, to hills that support but timber and sheep, or to moorlands which give sustenance only to birds and heather (1958: 48).

Coates's addition, voiced by Lord Osborne, recalls and expands Emma's comparison of Surrey and Shropshire in Edith Brown's completion (1928: 87) – which Coates confesses to having read and disliked due to the absence of Austen's wit (1958: 314-15). In *Emma*, Austen had similarly extolled the "rich pastures, spreading flocks, orchard in blossom, and light column of smoke ascending" near Abbey Mill Farm (E 360). Passages like this had encouraged the connection between Austen and traditional English values in the 1920s, which Coates reinforces through his own description of the countryside, absent from the original fragment. This old England of well-defined values is also celebrated in the completion through Coates's transformation of Lord Osborne into a responsible aristocrat. In the original, Austen satirised Osborne's conceit, describing him as "a very fine young man; but there was an air of Coldness, of Carelessness, even of Awkwardness about him, which seemed to speak him out of his Element in a Ball room" (MW 329). In contrast, in the completion, Lord Osborne is a responsible landlord, highly aware of his duties as a peer of the realm. In the same expanded conversation with Emily, Osborne claims "your Welsh mountains take up too much space. They usurp that part of the landscape that should be set

aside for meadows, cornfields and farmsteads" (1958: 48) – a remark that defines him not only as emphatically English, but also as a responsible landlord.

In its discussion of improvements and the duty of landlords, Coates's completion connects to Alistair M. Duckworth's *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971), a study which would not be published for over a decade. Duckworth argues that the estate in Austen's novels is indicative of social and moral character. He classifies improvers into two groups: those who respect the past and for whom improvement is a natural development, and those whose improvements are senseless and who enjoy innovation indiscriminately. Edmund Bertram's few rational improvements to Thornton Lacey belong to the first group, whereas the large-scale, fashionable alternations Henry Crawford suggests belong to the second (Duckworth 1971: 50-53). Coates's Lord Osborne clearly fits into Duckworth's group of sensible improvers; he is a responsible landlord who hates to see abandoned land: "I think it a crime that a man should own land – good farm-land – and not cultivate it properly. Such behaviour destroys the economy of the country" (1958: 49). In contrast, Coates's Tom Musgrave stands for a different sort of improver: writing to Emma, Penelope expresses her surprise that Tom's new home is being improved sensibly, but attributes this to Osborne's influence. In *Northanger Abbey*, General Tilney boasts of his hothouse pineapples (NA 178) and, in Coates's completion, Penelope notes how Tom's meadows are surprisingly "to support neither Italian peach-trees, Guernsey cattle nor Havana tobacco: They are to grow corn and turnips and hay, and feed Shorthorns like the rest of the land hereabout" (1958: 166). Through Penelope's letter, Coates opposes the same two types of improvers that Duckworth would delineate a decade later. In this sense, the completions, again, pre-empt Austen scholarship, advancing innovative readings of her work. Coates, like Hubback, emerges as a cunning Austen reader, sensitive to the complexities of her text.

Coates's concern with rational improvements (a recurrent term in the novel) indicates a reading of Austen's work as politically conservative. Duckworth contended that Austen was a Burkean conservative, because, like Edmund Burke, she conceived the country estate as representative of the whole nation (1971: 45). The gentry depends on its land as a source of identity and, at a wider level, depends on inherited social forms and relationships (Duckworth 1971: 2-4). In her novels, Duckworth continues, Austen sides with those who respect the past, and sets herself against senseless architectural innovations. *Mansfield Park*, for example, links innovation to vanity and deficient religious character (Duckworth 1971: 54). Similarly, Coates's narrator favours rational improvers like Lord Osborne, who marries the heroine's favourite sister – not the vain Tom Musgrave, who weds the spiteful Margaret Watson.

However, Coates's apparent interpretation of the original fragment as conservative, in the context of late eighteenth-century politics, clashes with his own creative "building" techniques. His obvious disrespect for the past when it comes to completing the fragment (adding characters, changing the source text and deviating from Austen's presumed intentions) aligns Coates with those innovative improvers who, like the Crawfords, do not adhere to the tradition. There is a subversive, anti-Burkean potential in a continuation of Austen's work that alters plot and main characters at will. This simultaneous reinforcement and undermining of the tradition, of England's cultural heritage, unsettles the reading of the completion.

The character of Lady Osborne adds to this instability: Lord Osborne may metamorphose into a responsible landowner, but his mother becomes a non-aristocratic aristocrat. Austen's Lady Osborne "had all the Dignity of Rank" (MW 329), but Coates's is "small, had a very red face, and was almost entirely without the customary elegance of rank" (1958: 25). She is reminiscent of Austen's Lady Denham, who had been "born to Wealth but not to Education" and is happy to discuss the price of the butcher's meat (MW 375, 393).

Like Lady Denham, [38] Coates's Lady Osborne questions the traditional social order (aristocracy, gentry, lower classes) embodied by Coates's Lord Osborne, the true English peer of the realm. The alterations in Lady Osborne could be related to the class-consciousness of the post-war years.[39] World War II had been a great leveller of class: in towns, there was an erosion of class barriers, partly induced by the mixture of people in bomb shelters; in the countryside, evacuations often promoted the mixture of classes – for sometimes middle-class children were sent to the cottage of labourers and the other way round (Calder 1969: 41-42). Coates's Lady Osborne happily mixes with those below her; she is indistinguishable from Mrs. Edwards, a member of the upper-middle classes: "A closer inspection only heightened Emily's first impression. Lady Osborne's gown was less fine than Mrs Edwards's; her voice was loud and masculine" (1958: 25). Lady Osborne consults Elizabeth, even lower on the social ladder, about cooking recipes and domestic management, and enjoys discussing dogs and horses. Not only is the fixity of class challenged here, but also of gender: the character of Lady Osborne, with her "masculine voice" and traditionally masculine interests, questions gender stereotypes too, continuing a trend budding in Oulton and Brown and anticipating the feminist completions analysed in Chapter 4.

Coates's Lady Osborne, a rough and quarrelsome neighbour, is one of the novel's comic characters. Humour adds another discordant note to Coates's *The Watsons*: on the one hand, it harks back to Austen's light-hearted parody; on the other, it connects with the modern literary development of the theatre of the absurd, implying a re-interpretation of Austen's work as a critique of the status quo. In the source text, Tom asks Emma what she

[38] Warren Roberts reads *Sanditon* as a comment on the disintegration of the old social structures due to the rise of capitalism (1979: 64-65). For B.C. Southam, *Sanditon* is different from Austen's other works in its wider social awareness; Austen depicts a more extensive picture of society, including the working classes: Lady Denham's gardener, the milliners, the shoemaker (1964: 11). In his sense, it is not surprising that the post-World War II completion connects more clearly with Austen's *Sanditon* than *The Watsons*.

[39] Social barriers were significantly blurred when the Labour Party won the national election in 1945. Contemporary socialist tracts frequently claimed: "Democratize the Empire," "Privilege Must Go," "End Poverty and Insecurity" (Calder 1969: 253). Hartley notes how the ration book introduced by the government also created a sense of egalitarianism and community in post-war Britain (1997: 33).

thinks of Lord Osborne, to which she answers: "He would be handsome even though he were *not* a lord, and perhaps, better bred; more desirous of pleasing and showing himself pleased in a right place" (MW 340). This is the sort of incisive sarcasm Austen has become celebrated for. Coates reproduces Emma's judgement of Lord Osborne (1958: 36), and although his humour is generally less poignant, Coates shares Austen's mockery of the idiosyncrasies of speech.[40] Stopping in London on her way to Eversleigh, Emily stays with Mrs. Seymour, a relation of her late uncle:

> [I]n the past fourteen years Mrs Seymour had grown as fond of Emily as it was in her nature to be of one who was in no way essential to her comfort. That is to say, she was pleased to see Emily arrive, not sorry to see her go; frequently found herself admiring Emily's looks and behaviour when she was present, and seldom thought about her at all when she was absent (1958: 151).

This paragraph echoes the contradiction and self-justification of Mrs. Seymour's speech. It reveals the discrepancies between the apparent and the real through free indirect style, which marks the narrator's ironic distance from his subject. Like Austen, Coates often mocks social convention. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth tells Darcy during their dance: "It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy – *I* talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples" (PP 69). In a similar vein, Coates's Penelope mockingly reproves Lord Osborne, who is visiting the Watson sisters in London: "You are come from the country, my lord…The first duty of a neighbour in such circumstances is to tell us the gossip which we have been so unfortunate as to miss" (174). She takes this further: "I will swiftly inquire whether the business that brought him to London is successfully concluded, which gives him the opportunity of describing that business if he so desires, or briefly answering yes or no if he prefers" (175). By making social

[40] An obvious example in Austen is her characterisation of Miss Bates. See Mary Lascelles's analysis of Miss Bates's speech: Lascelles argues that, despite the idiosyncrasies of her speech, or because of them, Miss Bates is the character that reveals the intricacies of the plot of *Emma* (1939: 93-95).

convention explicit, Coates, like Austen, breaks down these stilted practices, exposing their absurdity.

Humour in Coates's *The Watsons* is completed by his imaginative rendition of Penelope Watson. She is entirely his own, for in Austen's fragment Penelope remains off-stage. This fact grants Coates more room for manoeuvre, although the allusions to Penelope in Austen do not match Coates's character. In the source text, Elizabeth claims: "There is nothing she [Penelope] would not do to get married. She would as good as tell you so herself. Do not trust her with any secrets of your own, take warning by me, do not trust her; she has her good qualities, but she has no faith, no honour, no scruples, if she can promote her own advantage" (MW 317). However, on Penelope's first appearance, Coates informs the reader that she has just turned down Dr. Harding because she could never bring herself to love him. But typically, she transforms it into a joke: "It is sad indeed," Penelope answers Margaret's tease, "[b]ut the memory of his gout, his advanced age, and the inescapable suggestion of good port that clings to him even on breezy days in the open air, may in time allow me to recover something of my former spirits" (1958: 87). Coates justifies these changes in the character of Penelope claiming that "I wanted a foil to my rather correct heroine, and Penelope as she now stands is *my creation*" (1958: 316, my italics). His changes to the character of Penelope emphasise the sisterhood that Austen's novels would be celebrated for (Kaplan 1992; Tuite 2002), creating a novel that is potentially more "feminist" than the original.

Adding to this feminist undertone, Coates's novel makes Penelope the heroine's confidante, rather than a competitor for male attention. Penelope's function, apart from introducing laughter, is to educate Emily: because these are two contrasting characters (a typical eighteenth-century device), they will educate each other. By the end of the novel, Emily has learnt to be more tolerant, and will tease Mr. Jones into marrying Elizabeth. One of

the amendments to Austen's fragment is that the hero does not educate the heroine – as happens in *Emma* and *Mansfield Park*. It is her female double who exerts the greatest influence on the protagonist. Because Howard is a weak character in Coates, in need of personal development himself, the task of teaching the heroine falls on a female character not much older than herself. Considering the length of the novel, Howard's role is less significant than in *The Younger Sister*, the other "properly" developed completion. This erasure of the hero could be read as an announcement of the sexual revolution that was soon to follow, or of the eventual disappearance of the hero in Joan Aiken's completion of *The Watsons* (Chapter 4).

Penelope's sense of humour is her most distinctive trait; the other comic characters are not on a par with her. Meeting in the lanes, Lord Osborne asks Emily for two dances in the second local ball and Tom does the same with Margaret, who repeatedly boasts about it. Penelope pokes fun at Margaret by claiming that Lord Osborne's horse, the only other member of the party, and herself found each other very attractive too (96). At another ball, Lord Osborne seeks to distinguish the Watson family and make up for past neglects. Since Emily is at Eversleigh by this time, Penelope describes the assembly for her as follows: "Lord Osborne stood up with Margaret, Mary Edwards and myself – in turn, of course. I believe if Sam had been there he would have stood up with him, to show his feelings towards the family" (166). Comical moments like these are certainly absent from Oulton's and Brown's orthodox novels, which feared moving away from Austen by adding too much to the text.

Coates selects an element from Austen (contempt for empty formulas) and gives it a mid-twentieth-century spin, moving *The Watsons* fully into the 1950s. Whereas the ridiculous characters in Austen are measured against certain social standards (Mrs. Bennet is measured against the refined behaviour of Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley), in Coates these standards are beginning to disintegrate. The theatre of the absurd emerged as a response to the world of lost

certainties that followed World War II: while the basis of the nineteenth-century well-made play was "the implicit assumption that the world does make sense, that reality is solid and secure," the plays of the absurd "express a sense of shock at the absence, the loss of any such clear and well-defined systems of beliefs or values" (Esslin 1965:12), that is, the sort of conservative principles that Austen was deemed to represent in the 1920s.

It is in the character of Mr. Jones that the influence of the theatre of the absurd becomes more palpable in the completion. This genre was driven by social anxieties: playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter often sought to portray the cruelty and violence of society, trying to provoke a critical attitude in their audience. Bullying is similarly represented in Coates's *The Watsons*: unfairly deprived of the position he had been promised, Mr. Jones is reduced to beggary, first in Eversleigh and then in London. Yet he pathetically praises the man who took up his living, commenting on his "most melodious voice" and his striking "reading of the lesson on Sunday" (157), a duty which should have been his. This is where the absurd in the novel stems from: the incongruous blending of gratuitous cruelty and underserved commendation. The world of Coates's completion is certainly not the safe, harmonious Austenian universe Oulton and Brown extolled.

Like the plays of the absurd, Coates's novel often expresses the loss of the certainties of the past through a devaluation of language.[41] Mr. Jones's speech is frequently broken or incomprehensible: "I do not deserve –" he stammers when Emily praises him (253), and when Elizabeth offers to sew his coat, Mr. Jones loses all linguistic skill: "I do not know if you have noticed – I see no reason to suppose –" (216). It is when he receives praise that Mr. Jones is at a loss for words and often responds by systematically blowing his nose; this inability to process kindness is suggestive of past cruelty and abuse which, as in Beckett's

[41] Martin Esslin notes how, in the theatre of the absurd, "dialogue seems to have degenerated into meaningless babble," as it sometimes does in Coates's novel. A case in point is Harold Pinter's work, which often "reveals that the bulk of everyday conversation is largely devoid of logic and sense, is in fact nonsensical" (Esslin 1965: 7).

Waiting for Godot, must have taken place offstage. At other times, Mr. Jones's chatter is quite nonsensical, consisting of the most absurd clichés in the English language – another way of criticising the tradition often deployed by Pinter. When Mrs. O'Brien complains about their old neighbour, Lucy Waterman, Mr. Jones is ready to defend the young girl:

> We must not judge too hastily. It is not my place to contradict you, dear madam, and I must agree that Miss Lucy did not perhaps have quite the easy manner of her brothers and sisters, for none of us is cast in the same mould. But I owe too much to the whole family, and particularly of course to her dear departed father, not to add that Miss Lucy felt keenly for the poor of the parish, and herself twice brought soup to my lodging when I was ill last winter (155).

This speech is formulaic almost in its entirety: "We must not judge too hastily," "Miss Lucy did not perhaps have quite the easy manner of her brothers and sisters" and "none of us is cast in the same mould," to look just at the opening. Mr. Jones's talk can be quite nonsensical and often degenerates into meaningless prattle. Austen's polite and refined language, one may infer, seems senseless in the post-war world of the 1950s – although Austen also mocked the babble of characters such as Miss Bates or Mrs. Jennings, a connection that complicates any straightforward reading of the completion. Mr. Jones uses old-fashioned language, like that identified with Austen's novels in the twentieth century, but taken to such a rhetorical extreme that it becomes ridiculous and parodic. And perhaps the old world *was* a parody after 1945: Coates's attacks on the comfortable certainties of the past align his novel with the socialist tendencies of the playwrights of the absurd, thus refuting earlier readings of Austen's fiction as conservative and static.

As a playwright, Coates embraced absurdist drama and its social anxieties to a larger degree. His play *Tomorrow's Child* (1947), a cross between social and absurd theatre, opens with Utility Richards, one of the flat girls, sitting in the living-room when "A Voice" out of nowhere interrupts her: "Good evening! Good evening...Be sure to leave the door open so the

fresh air can get right inside...Now what about a nice glass of Vita-Milk to give us our daily quota of calories" (1947: 6). The "Voice" turns out to be the community warden talking through the loudspeaker, which in this Orwellian world monitors the lives of the block inhabitants and insists on the benefits of "standardisation." This disturbing opening is followed by Peter's proposal to Elizabeth, the other flat girl, which the "Voice" again interrupts: "Good evening, again, good evening. I'll just run through the evening's leisure programme for the benefit of those who missed it last time" (1947: 16). As a play and an original piece, *Tomorrow's Child* embraces the tradition of the absurd more openly than the completion: it contains a larger number of pauses, silences and repetitions, and stresses some of the post-war social concerns of the continuation (violence, insensibility, lack of standards). *Tomorrow's Child* reveals where the ridiculous in the completion was coming from: the absurd is a post-war development that propels Austen's *The Watsons* into the second half of the twentieth-century.

Austen's *The Watsons* is particularly receptive to theatrical influences. Walton Litz noted the role of dialogue in the fragment: Austen's reliance on the dramatic method here is her greatest technical departure from previous novels (Litz 1965: 90). A good example is the opening dialogue between Emma and Elizabeth Watson, where "the entire burden of exposition is placed on dialogue" and the characters "emerge from the long dialogue between the sisters" rather than from narratorial description (Ibid.). The importance of dialogue in *The Watsons* and its already absurd characters, such as Tom Musgrave, make of the fragment the ideal source for an absurdist playwright. Coates's completion underlines the special porosity of *The Watsons*, showing how the text can migrate to other genres and come to stand for opposing principles simultaneously.

Coates's deployment of irony and humour in his completion connects with some of the subversive trends in Austen criticism of the 1940s and 50s. The two most striking pieces of

the time, D.W. Harding's "Regulated Hatred" (1940) and Marvin Mudrick's *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952), encouraged this appreciation of Austen as an ironist. Harding and Mudrick challenged or ignored the more "comforting" readings of Austen and her work, represented by critics such as Lord David Cecil. In his biography of Austen, written later in life, Cecil delineated an accommodated writer, little concerned with politics or the future of the nation (1978: 12). The 1950s were also the decade of formalism – with Leavis's *Great Tradition* (1948) – and the interest in Austen's use of structure continued well into the 1960s.[42] Yet the mid-twentieth century also saw a new focus on Austen's use of irony as a means to undermine the social values that her novels seem to affirm. According to D.W. Harding, Austen wrote with hatred of the same society which now celebrates her achievements: "her books are, *as she meant them to be*, read and enjoyed by precisely the sort of people whom she disliked; she is a literary classic of the society which attitudes like hers, held widely enough, would undermine" (1940: 6). But labeling her practice as satire, Harding notes, is a misconception, for it lacks a didactic intent; it is rather an "eruption of fear and hatred into the relationships of everyday social life" (1940: 10).

In *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery*, Marvin Mudrick regards irony as the defining principle of Austen's artistry. Her ironic detachment from society enabled her to expose its follies: her "compulsion, and genius, is to look only for incongruity; and it delights her wherever she finds it" (1952: 2). This opinion certainly clashes with JEAL's claim that his aunt never mocked her neighbours (1871: 296) and Cecil's subsequent hagiography (1978). Mudrick analyses the evolution in Austen's use of irony: from its function as the defensive and organising principle in the juvenilia to a more sophisticated use in *Pride and Prejudice*, where irony is finally integrated into the narrative (1952: 125). Mudrick's intention is to break with the "family adulation...and nostalgic latter-day enshrinements of the

[42] See for example Andrew Wright's *Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure* (1953) and Joseph Wiesenfarth's *The Errand of Form: An Assay of Jane Austen's Art* (1968).

author as the gentle-hearted chronicler of Regency order" (1952: vii), which he does through his concentration on irony.

Harding's and Mudrick's work reveals changing attitudes towards Austen. The 1950s partly envisage Austen as a writer capable of hatred and social satire, as Hubback had, to some extent, done one hundred years earlier. The 1920s had mostly neglected Austen's sense of humour in favour of adulation of her English times and textual recuperation. It is in the 1950s that Coates releases *The Watsons* from the textual imprisonment enforced by Chapman, celebrating Austen's humour while rejecting the editorial rigidity of the previous period, just as Harding and Mudrick were doing in the academy. Yet two decades later Duckworth would openly disagree with their argument that Austen challenged stable social structures in her fiction (1971: 7). Coates's alternate alignment with Duckworth (retrospectively) or Harding and Mudrick in his novel suggests the completions' special ability to harness disruptive energies.

The intricacies of Coates's text, and its inconsistent reading of *The Watsons*, are symptomatic of the complex responses to Austen in the 1940s and 50s. The completion's relative success, going through several editions and republications, intimates that Coates was not alone in this conflicting perception of Austen. Changes in social values and the concepts of Englishness and patriotism relate to the violation of what decades earlier had been the sanctity of Austen's oeuvre. Yet there is evidence in the reviews his novel received that Coates's revisionary approach was not unanimously appreciated. Chapman was outraged at what he perceived as Coates's desecration of the original: the change of the heroine's name, to begin with. "The contrasts are alarming," Chapman cried, "[t]he conservative Austenian who may regard the change [of name] as unwarranted is warned that he will have much to swallow" (13 June 1958: 324). In contrast, reviewer Melvin Askew described the completion as "an interesting literary experiment and exercise of the imagination" (1959: 356). *The*

Watsons (1958) is a funny and eminently readable novel, of literary value if only for its wit and sense of humour – even Chapman had to admit that "the result is surprisingly readable" (13 June 1958: 324).

III. Coates's *The Watsons* in the context of other Austen retakes

This is not, of course, the whole story of Austen's post-World War II afterlife: other responses expressed similar contradictory readings of her oeuvre, but unlike the completion, they tended to position themselves on one side or the other of the debate (traditional/conservative or imaginative/liberal), rarely on both. Whereas periodicals persisted in presenting Austen's work as sacrosanct, sequels and new editions imaginatively reconsidered her fiction, sometimes even disrupting chronology and adding avant-garde illustrations. That these renditions seldom encompass the tensions within experimentation as successfully as Coates's novel suggests the completions' greater sensitivity to alterations in Austen's reputation, contrasting with other forms of afterlife.

III.1. Sequels: John Coates and Dorothy Bonavia-Hunt

The creative Austen productions of the mid-twentieth century include new fictional versions of her novels. It is true that imaginative rewritings were not anything new: in 1913, Sybil Brinton had interwoven characters from different Austen novels in her rewrite *Old Friends and New Fancies*. Yet rewriters, like the disrespectful improvers of an Austenian estate, had never been so independent from their source text. John Coates's own *Here Today* (1949), a novel that pre-dates *The Watsons* (1958), toys with Austen to a greater degree than either *Old Friends* or Coates's own completion. *Here Today* is a novel of time travelling whose protagonist, Sandy Pinkington, has the ability to visit other eras, "borrowing" the body of one of the locals – and therefore disrupting this past from within. Sandy travels to Regency England, becoming Frederick Rolestone, a country rector whose family wishes him to marry

his unattractive cousin Lucy. But life changes dramatically when a carriage passing the parsonage suffers an accident. It contains no other than Mr. and Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane – in a clear recreation of the opening of *Sanditon* that nearly alters Austen's biography.

Here Today highlights the experimentation present in Coates's completion. Dorothy Bonavia-Hunt's *Pemberley Shades* (1949), also a creative rendition, continues *Pride and Prejudice* as a thriller. The mystery at the core of the novel is the real identity of Mr. Acworth, Pemberley's new rector, who seems to bear a grudge against Darcy. Mr. Acworth denounces how Darcy "represents all that is directed against such as myself....What would he be without his money? It is that alone which enables him to cut a figure, to pick and choose among the best this earth has to offer" (1949: 133). Like Coates's completion, *Pemberley Shades* illustrates a shift away from the fixity of the old world: Acworth, who has risen by his own efforts, defines Pemberley as "an idle beauty, a trivial, heartless elegance, a decaying order" (1949: 209). There is a feeling that the old world is in decay: Bonavia-Hunt's attack against the unwarranted privileges of the upper classes and the struggles between birth and merit challenge the traditional, established social order that Oulton and Brown had emphasised two decades earlier.

The 1958 completion's greater capacity to encompass the subtleties of Austen's post-war reception has to do with the nature of a completion itself. Coates's is a controlled departure from the Austen text – creative but closer to the original than Bonavia-Hunt's or Coates's own in *Here Today*. Continuations, which conclude what an author left unfinished, are harder to "liberate" from the spectre of that same author. Time and setting can hardly be altered; the seeds for the different plot strands have already been sown, and the most a writer can do is to invent new characters and incidents, as Coates does in his continuation. It is because a completion inherently allows less room for manoeuvre that Coates's *The Watsons* stands as a novel of conflict and transition, absorbing contemporary tensions in responses to

Austen: a surviving need for fidelity to the old world and a growing movement towards modernity and experimentation. Due to the internal encounter between two authors' words, completions are more sensitive to the outer clash between different readers' views. Conflict, tension, is part of a completion's DNA.

III.2. Periodical notes

In contrast to the creativity of sequels and, to a lesser extent, completions, post-war periodicals persisted in reading Austen and her fiction as the epitome of the eternal truths about England. Even through the 1950s and 1960s, they insisted on conceiving her novels as sacrosanct and the family heirlooms as relics. Numerous articles of the period celebrated the discovery of an unknown letter or family portrait. Shane Leslie, for instance, wrote to *The Times* rejoicing in the restoration of the Austens' donkey-cart: "Everybody will be delighted to read in *The Times* that the 'Janeites' have housed Austen's donkey-cart at Chawton." Leslie continued to grieve over a "more reverential occurrence:" the family occupying the Steventon manor had "broken up the original box pew of the Austens which was later used as a kind of vestry. Worse still, the ancient font where Austen was baptised had been replaced by a modern one" (14 July 1950: 7). The religious veneration of Austen pervades this note, which ends by calling for the restoration of the Baptismal font: "What has happened to it, and can it be found and restored?" (Ibid.) – like a quest for the Holy Grail, this seems a work of religious archaeology.[43]

The greatest Janeite event that mid-twentieth-century periodicals celebrated was the purchase of Chawton House. The Jane Austen Society of Great Britain, established in 1940, launched an appeal for funds in 1946, which resonates with Constance Hill's comments

[43] Other periodical notes of the period record the acquisition of Cassandra's sketch of her sister by the National Portrait Gallery (*The Times* 5 June 1948: 3), the sale of three family portraits (*The Manchester Guardian* 6 Dec. 1952: 3) and the discovery of some letters from Jane's mother to Anna Lefroy (Grigson 19 Aug. 1955: 484).

earlier in the century (1901): "acquisition of the property would assure the use of a large room (identified by the blocked-up window) to be used for *housing relics of the novelist*, and form the nucleus of a *place of pilgrimage*" (*Times* 10 Dec 1946: 6, my italics). Acquiring this property to house Austen's memorabilia was considered of strong national importance: a note in the *Times* 1949 observed the urgency of collecting Austen's relics in the Chawton Museum before they flew to America, as had happened with some locks of Jane Austen's and her father's hair, later donated to the Society and therefore back in Britain (25 July 1949: 4). Austen in the periodicals is still an important symbol of national identity, which should not escape island boundaries or be polluted by foreign contact.

This conservative attitude relates to the mid-twentieth-century notion that Austen was upper-class. In 1953, D. J. Greene published his essay "Jane Austen and the Peerage," which explored Austen's use of aristocratic names and emphasised her personal connection with the peerage through the Lefroys of Ashe.[44] This highborn Austen differs from the vulgar author Lady Knatchbull described. If Coates and Bonavia-Hunt had started to democraticise Austen's world in their rewrites, the Jane Austen Society had a tint of exclusivity. The Society was a semi-aristocratic enterprise: the seventh Duke of Wellington was its president and Lord David Cecil, son of the Marquess of Salisbury, one of its most active members. This membership explains the periodicals' reluctance to assume a new and more liberal view, for after all, most of their contributors, such as Chapman (active until his death in 1960), were often members of the Jane Austen Society. Such clash between a "titled" and a democratic Austen adds to the conflicting ways in which the novelist was re-imagined in the mid-twentieth century.

[44] Greene insists that the Lefroys connected Jane Austen and Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, as Brydges's sister, Mrs. George Lefroy, was one of Austen's intimate friends (1953: 1040).

III.3. New editions and illustrations

Finally, the 1940s-50s editions and illustrations of the Austen novels exemplify the new, more liberal, attitudes towards her fiction. Textually, the open approach of these editions contrasts with Chapman's straitjacketing of the Austen text. Chapman had religiously issued the last version of the novels as revised by the author, because he thought it more faithful to her intentions. Mid-century editors were, however, more flexible: a 1952 edition of *Pride and Prejudice* by Collins conflated two of the three published versions of the text (from 1813 and 1817), adapting some of the spelling to modern usage (Gilson 1982: 326). F.C. Danchin's *Jane Austen: Chapters from her Novels* (1949) broke the divide between the different Austen novels by combining chapters from five of her complete works, connecting them through narrative summaries.

Editorial attitudes had changed: rather than persisting in safeguarding the "ruin" of Austen's text, as Chapman had, post-World War II editors, and completers, set about building it up through the conflation of several textual versions, varied illustrations and textual decorations. It is true that Victorian editions of Austen's novels, like Bentley's, had already been illustrated. Some of them, such as George Allan's *Pride and Prejudice* (1894), had even exhibited imaginative and "whimsical" illustrations (Halsey 2012: 113). Chapman's simply contained images taken from Regency fashion plates and other Regency sources, rather than artistic interpretations of the novels from the 1920s. An undated memorandum in the Clarendon Press' files (c.1915/16) states: "The publishers are bitterly *opposed to any imaginative illustrations*, and would cheerfully have no illustrations at all. But they would be in favour of a few *objective illustrations*" (qtd. in Gilson 1982: 296, my italics). Chapman preferred drawings contemporary to Austen, because these were supposedly more "truthful" and "objective."

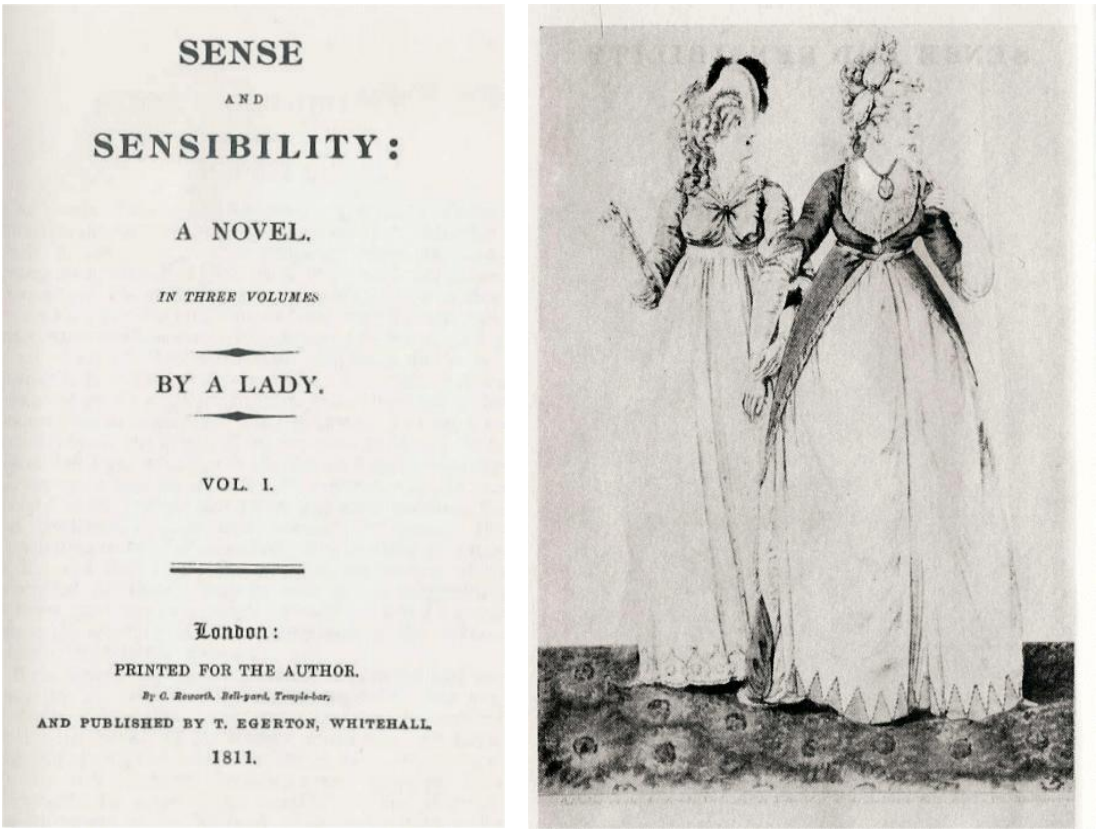
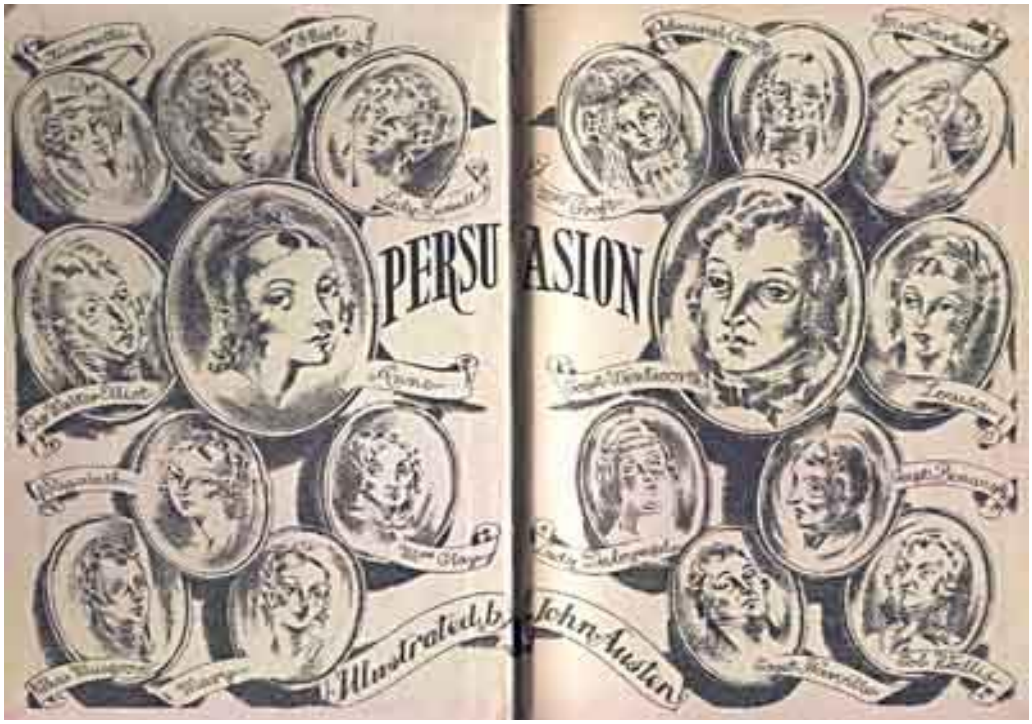


Fig. 4. Cover and authenticated illustration from *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by R.W. Chapman (1923).

In contrast to the rigidity of Chapman and the Clarendon Press, post-World War II editions burst with varied illustrations. Some of these, like Joan Hassall's for the Folio Society edition of the novels (1957-62), were nostalgic engravings that took the reader back to the nineteenth century. Others integrated modern artistic developments into the Austen volume. A case in point is John Austen (no family relation) and his modern illustrations for the Avalon Press *Persuasion* (1944). John Austen's costumes may still be Regency, but there is something modern about his style and delineation of the human figure. His work embraced the Art Deco movement, which had itself received the influence of Cubism and Surrealism, and shied away from traditional pictorial forms. The Avalon *Persuasion* opens with a series of miniatures of all the main characters, so readers come to the novel with a pre-conceived image of Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot, who looks more attractive than Austen leads the reader to imagine. Interspersed with the text are illustrations of certain passages (Mary

Fig.5: Left: *Northanger Abbey* (1960) illustrated by Joan Hassall. Right and below: *Persuasion* (1944) illustrated by John Austen.



Musgrove as an imaginary invalid, the Elliots in Bath), which also denote John Austen's interpretation of the scene, and guide the reader in his/her perusal. Where Chapman had been adamant to reproduce the original title pages and chapter formatting, the Avalon *Persuasion* added textual decorations by John Austen: ornaments on the title page, headpieces to some chapters and ornamental initials to others.

After the alterations in the national ethos following the war, Austen's fiction was no longer the untouchable relic it had been thirty years earlier. Preserving the "ruin" of Austen's text was no longer the chief prize at stake in the 1940s and 50s; what mattered was adding bricks and mortar to the text and sometimes giving it a new shape. This attitude applies to the new completion of *The Watsons*: for Oulton and Brown, *The Watsons* was almost perfect in its unfinished state; for Coates, it is a ruin that must be reconstructed. The existence of one or two continuations in the decade following both wars reveals the importance of Austen's piece in relation to the conflicts, either as a Greek ruin or as the foundation for a different edifice. The need to finish off the text in the 1950s parallels the reconstruction process following the war. David Hopkinson, author of the 1977 completion, commented on this: "In the Middle East I had sensed a surge of feeling about post-war reconstruction. This was bound to grow stronger at home...an active role in rebuilding might be open to me" (2004: 110). Coates's *The Watsons* exists in a state of transition, of permanent re-construction, presenting Austen as a heritage site that is being both preserved and developed – in the same way many National Trust properties, including Chawton Cottage, were in this period. His novel paves the way for subsequent, postmodern renditions and for the feminist rewritings that will be examined in the following chapter. Like Christian Dior's New Look, the completion may gaze at the past, but simultaneously *aspires* towards the future.

Chapter IV

Austen and *The Watsons*, 1990-2005

The late twentieth and early twenty-first century saw two more completions of *The Watsons*: Joan Aiken's *Emma Watson* (1996) and Merryn Williams's *The Watsons* (2005). Better-known for her children's literature, especially *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962), Joan Aiken is the author of six Austen derivatives. Merryn Williams, daughter of Raymond Williams, is responsible for non-fiction and academic volumes, such as *Women in the English Novel, 1800-1900* (1984) and *Effie: A Victorian Scandal* (2010), a biography of John Ruskin's wife. In their fiction, both Aiken and Williams enact a "feminist" transformation of the Austen novel. A good example comes from one of Aiken's sequels, *Mansfield Park Revisited* (1984). The novel compares its new heroine, Susan Price, to the old one: "You are Fanny, but a more forceful Fanny," claims Mary Crawford (1984: 80). Susan has no qualms in speaking up to Tom Bertram, the new Sir Thomas, with a self-confidence that her sister never possessed. The question here is: why do readers and writers need a "more forceful" Fanny Price? Was the old one not resolute enough for late twentieth-century tastes?

Like *Mansfield Park Revisited*, the continuations of *The Watsons* are characteristic of the contradiction inherent in feminists' agenda: in the 1990s, feminist critics, writers and readers attempt to celebrate Austen as their feisty foremother, while at the same time feeling the need to extrapolate what seems implicit in Austen's texts – for instance, giving female characters, such as Susan Price, a very modern active role and voice.[45] Aiken's and Williams's continuations share a number of seemingly feminist traits: autonomous heroines, inefficient heroes and a questioning of traditionally patriarchal institutions such as the family.

[45] Although specially pronounced in the late 1990s, the tendency to instil modern gender politics into Austen's fiction still persists in the twenty-first century. A good example is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), analysed in Chapter 5.

This trend toward transforming Austen into an icon of modern feminism was widespread in the late 1990s and early 2000s. An article in the *Daily Mail* complained about women's unequal earnings in 1995, opening with the line "Jane Austen would not have been surprised" that only one in ten women earns as much as her husband (Hopegood 22 Nov. 1995: 40). In this way, other media appropriated Austen's name to demand equality between the sexes.

This chapter examines how Aiken's and Williams's completions articulate conflicting discourses about the way Austen handles gender in her novels. They force the reader to confront the inherent dilemma between appropriating Austen for the recently established tradition of women's literature (after the efforts of 1970s feminists) and the apparent need to heavily rewrite her novels to do so. *Emma Watson* (1996) and *The Watsons* (2005) capture this unresolved double bind more effectively than the most successful Austen productions of the period, the film adaptations, whose feminist transformation of Austen is often more naive and one-dimensional. For the purposes of this chapter, "feminism" will be understood as "a political perception based on two fundamental premises: (1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, by which women suffer systematic social injustice, and (2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences" (Morris 1993: 1). Because the term "feminism" was not used in this sense until 1895 (OED), calling Austen a feminist is itself anachronistic. But this chapter looks at modern appreciations of Austen's "feminism," some of which read Austen as a feminist from the present era (in terms of current needs), while some others ground her presumed "feminism" in the possibilities of her time. Before beginning my analyses of *Emma Watson* (1996) and *The Watsons* (2005), I will briefly contextualise Austen feminist scholarship and the feminist rewritings of the literary canon produced in the 1980s and 90s. I will then show how Aiken's and Williams's redrafting lends itself to contradictory feminist readings of Austen. Finally, I

will briefly analyse the 1990s boom in film adaptations to conclude that these works are not always as disturbing in their gender perceptions of Austen as the completions, partly due to differences of audience and media.

I. The Austen Feminist Debate

Jane Austen's positioning in the gender debate has long been a site of contestation. Early feminist critics either ignored or condemned Austen's affiliations. Elaine Showalter mostly overlooked Austen, choosing female writers publishing between 1840 and 1880 as her first target group. These were for Showalter the first truly professional women authors (1978: 19-20) – no matter that in her letters Austen had longed for more money from her publications (Letter 86, 3 July 1813). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar allowed Austen more room in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), but still branded her fiction as conservative. In their *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985), Gilbert and Gubar included only one passage from Austen's juvenilia, illustrating her criticism of fashionable manners – the rest of her oeuvre was apparently not radical enough. Another of the "mothers" of modern feminism, Mary Poovey, felt uneasy with the marital closure of Austen's novels, and lamented their contribution to "the inescapable system of economic and political domination" (1984: 237).

The turn came with Margaret Kirkham's *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (1983), the first full volume devoted to Austen as a feminist. Kirkham connected Austen with the eighteenth-century tradition of female moralists, particularly Mary Wollstonecraft. Austen's subject matter was that of Enlightenment feminism: the moral stature and status of women, female education, marriage and the family. Her treatment of all these topics was very similar to Wollstonecraft's in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1983: xi). Kirkham sees Wollstonecraft and Austen as feminist moralists of the same school, which Mary Astell had also belonged to in the seventeenth century (1983: xi). This school is concerned "with

establishing the moral equality of men and women and the proper status of individual women as accountable beings" (1983: 3). For this reason, Kirkham openly claims Austen as a feminist for the first time: Austen insists on seeing women as "rational creatures," and like Wollstonecraft, objects to the sentimental treatment of girls (1983: 44).

Claudia L. Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (1988) is the second milestone in the tradition of Austen feminist criticism. Austen's novels were influenced by popular debates on the French Revolution: Austen, Johnson implies, had Jacobin sympathies, and in her novels, shied away from Burke's conservative ideology. For Burke, the family unit was a microcosm of the nation, which meant that the chastity of wives was the only means to ensure the continuity of ancient social structures (1790: 68). However, in Austen's novels, Johnson believes, this patriarchal philosophy fails: *Mansfield Park* demystifies patriarchal figures such as Sir Thomas Bertram, and *Sense and Sensibility* shows how "female modesty is no guarantee of female safety" (1988: 100, 60). This is what makes the texts feminist and progressive: whether one behaves modestly or daringly, as Elinor and Marianne do respectively, the patriarchal institutions which are supposed to protect women will irremediably fail and disappoint them (Johnson 1988: 100).

Johnson's argument on Austen's feminism is far from one-dimensional. At one level, she views Austen as a feminist who criticised family structures and the place of women. At another, Johnson admits that Austen composed conservative fiction, which soon became the only form of fiction possible at all: "In none of her novels can conservative ideology be entirely overcome, but in all…its basic imperatives – benevolence, gratitude, family attachment, female modesty, paternal authority – are wrested from their privileged claims" (1988: 166). Austen's strategies of indirection neither confirm nor openly disrupt reactionary tenets, Johnson claims, which is why her relationship with feminism remains controversial.

Feminist Austen critics do not always see eye to eye, even when defending Austen's presumed subversion. Johnson and Kirkham, the champions of Austen's feminism, disagree with Marilyn Butler: for Johnson, Butler's division of British society into Jacobins and anti-Jacobins is simplistic (1988: xxi); for Kirkham, her disregard of Austen's writing context is flawed (1983: 171). Kirkham argues that Austen did not wish to be associated with the Wollstonecraft sexual scandal (1798), and this is what made her novels less radical than they would otherwise have been. Evidence of the feminist controversy, even within the same camp, is Mary Evans's reading of Austen. Although claiming Austen both as feminist and progressive, Evans selects the opposite argument from Johnson's to make her point. Austen, Evans argues, demonstrates that "individuals are often poor judges of what will make them happy, and that the individual pursuit of happiness and of perceived needs will frequently bring unhappiness on innocent others" (1987: 16). In this way, Evans continues, Austen was indirectly criticising the behaviour of men like the Prince Regent, whose extra-marital affairs suggested that everything was legitimate to ensure one's happiness (1987: 15-16). For Johnson, Austen upholds the individual pursuit of happiness, the main example being *Pride and Prejudice*. The pursuit of personal happiness in this novel opposes Burke's anti-Jacobin philosophies, which claimed that the family was a microcosm for the state and that private worth could secure national survival (Johnson 1988: 77-80).

Austen feminist scholarship became even more nuanced in the 1990s and early 2000s. In *Jane Austen Among Women*, Deborah Kaplan (1992) argues that Austen's novels are trapped in a framework of cultural duality: the culture of the gentry and women's culture. Genteel domesticity was an instrument of sexual oppression, which "assigned to women a devalued role and only that role;" this was perpetuated through "the reproduction and acculturation of children and through the orchestration of family appearances" (1992: 41). Women's culture, in contrast, allowed them to voice their discontent and to help and support

each other. Kaplan argues that women's culture was the engine that enabled Austen to write, especially after settling down in Chawton with her mother, Cassandra and Martha Lloyd. She "couldn't have lived or written the way she did without the gentry's or women's cultures," but "the women's culture was, paradoxically, not just 'against' but also 'within' the gentry's patriarchal culture" (1992: 85, 203). Kaplan's ascription of feminism to Austen's novels, like Johnson's, is limited: Austen's novels are seen as part of a genteel patriarchal culture, and this is what makes them "only partially ours" (1992: 205).

Along the same lines, Clara Tuite (2002) claims that Austen's was a conservative feminism. There are numerous contradictions in her novels: although concerned with vindicating the female subjectivity associated with writing and the novel, Austen's works inevitably end in one or multiple weddings (2002: 11). Tuite recognises the conflict between the "formulaic romance ending" and "the bourgeois-aristocratic class compromise it effects" (2002: 171). Yet all forms of female social mobility are regulated in the novels. Ultimately, they are an example of conservative feminism: like Kaplan, Tuite notes that Austen's novels vindicate female solidarity, but at the same time do not disrupt the class and status boundaries within which these relationships are inscribed (2002: 159). Feminist, conservative, or feminist with a footnote, Austen originated a controversy that would only become more complicated when transferred to the fictional arena of popular rewritings.

II. Feminist rewritings of the canon

Aiken's and Williams's completions can be seen as part of the 1980s' and 1990s' urge to revisit and expand the old literary canon. The work of Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter and Michèle Roberts inaugurated a feminist strategy: women's texts reworked the (male) canon in an attempt to disown their sources. Adrienne Rich defined the practice of re-vision as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new

critical direction" (1972: 18). Re-vision is for Rich "an act of survival," which will allow women writers to alter the future: "We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (1972: 18-19). But why do we need to know Austen differently? In the light of Rich's words, *Emma Watson* could be read as an implicit criticism of Austen's gender "traditions:" like many feminist revisions, Aiken's completion alters the presumable ending of the original (coming close to an escape from the marriage plot) to allow for cultural change (the flight from compulsory heterosexuality, to continue using Rich's terminology).

Feminist revisionism tends to have a clear political agenda: it challenges the literary establishment and the culture it legitimises. Rachel DuPlessis notes how "the messages, political knowledge, or alteration of spiritual consciousness from the 'other side of everything' are tools to transform hegemonic society and the tale it tells" (1986: 122). Aiken's sequel *Eliza's Daughter* focuses on this "other side" by making the third Eliza from *Sense and Sensibility* its heroine. *Eliza's Daughter* is also a novel about power, and male abuse of power, in its exploration of the Napoleonic Wars and the abuse women suffer at the hands of the militia. DuPlessis has identified some of the strategies twentieth-century female writers deploy to delegitimise earlier romance plots and "write beyond the ending:" reparenting in invented families, fraternal-sororal ties, emotional attachment to women in bisexual/lesbian love plots and female bonding (1985: xi). Aiken adopts some of these schemes, creating new family structures and emphasising female bonding: *Eliza's Daughter* concludes with the heroine bringing up her child in an all-female household; Emma Tennant's sequel *Emma in Love* (1996) depicts Mrs. Knightley's infatuation with a female visitor to Highbury.

Reading Aiken and Williams in this context suggests a need to rectify Austen's gender politics. Revisionism is a matter of revisiting the past in order to project new futures, as Rich claimed (1972: 18-9), or to demythologise the past, in Angela Carter's words (1983). But what new futures? And demythologising what? Contrary to the apparent feminist reading of Austen the completions imply, the urge to radically change her novels intimates a view of Austen as "myth," "canon" and "tradition." In Ostriker's words, the main action of feminist rewriting is, indeed, "the challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth" (1982: 73). Aiken's novels clearly belong in the context of the 1980s and 1990s feminist revision of the canon: Austen's works are canonical; Aiken's are feminist novels that exhibit strategies typical of feminist revisionism. The difference between Aiken and other feminist rewriters lies in the identity of the original. Feminists rewrote myth (Margaret Atwood) and the male canon (Jane Smiley); Aiken rewrote canonical texts by a female author, whose gender politics have long been a site of contestation.

III. Modern completions: Joan Aiken and Merryn Williams

Most of the examples of Austen rewrites above belong to *Eliza's Daughter*, rather than the completions *Emma Watson* (1996) and *The Watsons* (2005). The reason is that the completions, as feminist rewritings, hardly lend themselves to one single, unitary reading. They deploy some of the strategies typical of feminist revisionism (emphasis on female friendship), but never so fully as sequels such as *Eliza's Daughter*. The relation between source and target text is, of course, different: a sequel's or rewriting's attitude towards its original is normally more evident than a completion's. Because a sequel engages with a whole work of art, the judgement it passes on this work is usually apparent; in contrast, a completion often comments on a fragmentary work of only a few pages.

The current section explores the ambiguous reading of the gender politics of Austen's fragment emerging from *Emma Watson* (1996) and *The Watsons* (2005), and compares them with that of *Eliza's Daughter*, Aiken's most successful sequel. The completions of *The Watsons* add to the Austen feminist controversy, raising questions about the consistency between reading Austen as a feminist of the late twentieth century and heavily redrafting her novels to do so. Aiken's and Williams's revision implies that *The Watsons* is indeed too conservative to stand as a modern feminist text, often treating it as one of the texts of the male tradition that need significant rewriting.

III.1. Joan Aiken's *Emma Watson* and *Eliza's Daughter*

No earlier sequel or completion had constituted such a trenchant critique of the patriarchal tradition as Aiken's *Emma Watson* and *Eliza's Daughter*. At one level, Aiken deploys some of Austen's plots and techniques to create her militant texts (strong female characters, rejection of marriage proposals). At another level, her extensive alterations to the Austen text, in terms of plot and characterisation, call the presumed progressive quality of the original into question. The order in which Aiken wrote her Austen sequels may constitute a critique of her antecedent's gender politics. The distribution of Aiken's sequels is quite uneven: *Pride and Prejudice* may be a general favourite, but it was Aiken's last choice for expansion (2000). She wrote two sequels to *Mansfield Park* (1984, 1998), a completion of *The Watsons* (1996), and a sequel to *Emma* (1990), *Sense and Sensibility* (1994) and finally *Pride and Prejudice* (2000). Interestingly, *Mansfield Park* is the only novel Aiken continued twice: in *Mansfield Park Revisited* (1984) and *The Youngest Miss Ward* (1998), which invents a fourth Ward sister for Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Price. Was *Mansfield Park* felt to be in dire need of rewriting? Was it thought Austen's most conservative novel? Roger Sales believes that its resolution "highlights the way in which society itself punishes women rather than men like Henry Crawford for being involved in scandals" (1994: 123).

The double standards *Mansfield Park* exposes may have been one of the reasons leading Aiken to continue the novel twice. Another motive may have been the need to rewrite its heroine, whom Lionel Trilling believes no one could like (1955: 212) – a problem readers rarely seem to have with Elizabeth Bennet.

Emma Watson (1996), the sixth completion of Austen's fragment, opens with Emma and Elizabeth's great wash, interrupted by the newly married Penelope and Dr. Harding. Mr. Howard and Emma initially conduct a slight flirtation, but since he is Lady Osborne's puppet, Emma soon puts him out of her mind. Captain Freemantle is more successful in his suit: a learned sailor with a vocation as a historian, he visits Mr. Watson one evening, but due to the excitement of their conversation, Emma's father dies overnight. Consequently, Elizabeth becomes Penelope's housekeeper and Emma moves to Croydon to tend little Augusta. Receiving a note from her aunt's maid some months later, Emma leaves Croydon for Epsom, where she joins Aunt Turner, now seriously ill.

In the meantime, Tom Musgrave has fallen into public disgrace: he was driving Mrs. Blake and young Charles when they suffered an accident, which resulted in the death of mother and child. Elizabeth rejects Tom for her old lover Purvis, now a widower with an orphan child. Margaret elopes with Dr. Harding's man of business, Mr. Thickstaffe – whose name is probably a feminist joke hinting that he is sexually well-endowed. Sam becomes the accepted suitor of Mary Edwards, after Aunt Maria reveals that Mary and Lord Osborne could never marry since they are half-siblings. Mary is the illegitimate daughter of the late Lord Osborne and Mr. Edwards's sister. By the end of the novel, Emma is reunited with Captain Freemantle – another allegorical name indicating that there will be *free*dom in their union – while Tom, Lord Osborne and Aunt Turner happily establish themselves as the most successful horse breeders in the country.

Aiken's rewriting of the fragment shows her ambivalent reading of its gender politics. The conversation between Emma and Elizabeth that opens Austen's text takes place in *Emma Watson* during the great wash, rather than the drive to the Edwardses' as in *The Watsons*. The way Aiken rewrites this conversation contradicts the feminist criticism that reclaimed the centrality of female friendship in Austen's novels (Kaplan 1992; Tuite 2002). Austen's Elizabeth Watson relates the story of her old lover Purvis to Emma, explaining how the match did not succeed due to Penelope's interference: "Every body thought it would have been a Match...she [Penelope] set him against me, with a veiw [sic.] of gaining him herself, & it ended in his discontinuing his visits & soon after marrying somebody else" (MW 316). Aiken's Elizabeth Watson is much more vocal and forceful in her accusations of Penelope: "Everybody thought it would have been a match. But I am sorry to say that our sister Penelope set him against me. She told him untrue tales about me, that I had a flirtatious disposition and had formerly been plighted to Jeffrey Fortescue – which was wholly untrue – and so – and so – that was the ruin of my happiness" (1996: 9). Aiken's character is more violent and explicit in her protest than Austen's. There is no solidarity between women, original and completion suggest, but the latter's more emphatic protest intimates that Aiken does not position Austen in the feminist camp on account of her depiction of women's culture. This reading is confirmed by Emma's response: "Could a sister do such a thing? – Rivalry, Treachery between sisters! – I shall be afraid of being acquainted with her," Austen's heroine answers, before trying to justify Penelope: "*but I hope it was not so. Appearances were against her*" (MW 316, my italics). In contrast, Aiken's Emma adds to the sororal feud: "It is the most shocking story I ever heard! I do not like the sound of Penelope. I shall be afraid of her. *I hope she does not return home for a long time*" (1996: 10, my italics). Rather than extrapolating potential feminist elements from the original, Aiken expands some of its anti-feminist ingredients, thereby underlining the conservative tone of the fragment.

The views on marriage expressed during this conversation are more conservative in the completion than in the original. In Austen's *The Watsons*, after the explanation of the Purvis story, the conversation turns to Margaret's pursuit of Tom Musgrave, leading Elizabeth to conclude: "I could do very well single for my own part," even if acknowledging the pressure on portionless women to marry (MW 317). Curiously, Aiken does not reproduce this declaration; instead, her character consoles Emma after Elizabeth's off-putting love story: "But still, you need by no means despair of forming an eligible connection – considering your looks, and fashionable appearance, and well-bred way of speaking. Only think what an impression you have already made on Tom Musgrave and Lord Osborne!" (1996: 10). Aiken's Elizabeth Watson holds more traditional views on marriage as women's sole career path than Austen's. Emma's famous feminist speech is ignored in the completion: after hearing about Penelope's unscrupulous pursuit of Dr. Harding, the original heroine cries "I would rather be a Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like" (MW 318). This speech is again absent from the continuation.

Aiken's decision to set this conversation on washing day instead of the night of the ball is worth noticing. Her choice of a coarse domestic activity, instead of a polite and refined occupation, may point to a view of Austen as lower-class, rather as some Victorians saw her. Conversely, it may be a criticism of what is absent from Austen's novels: the lives of those working-class women who, unlike Austen's heroines, had to do their own washing, those who, as Virginia Woolf claimed, could not attend lectures (or balls) because they were washing up the dishes (1929: 148). Aiken shows Austen's heroines getting their hands dirty: Emma carrying "a large bundle of table-linen in her arm" and Elizabeth stirring "various tubs of laundry soaking in solutions of household soda and unslaked lime" (1996: 7). Aiken's detailed depiction of washing day in chapter one recalls Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poem "Washing Day" (1797). Both authors explore what can go wrong on "the dreaded Washing-

Day." Barbauld's poem complains against "the friend/ Whose evil stars have urged him forth to claim/ On such a day the hospitable rites;/ Looks, blank at best, and stinted courtesy,/ Shall he receive." In the novel, Elizabeth frowns upon the visitors who flow to the parsonage as soon as they start spreading the sheets over the clothes-lines: first Mrs. Blake and her children, then Penelope and Dr. Harding and, finally, Tom and Lord Osborne. The similarities between Aiken and Barbauld do not necessarily mean that Aiken was familiar with the poem. Yet they establish an unusual connection between an eighteenth and twentieth-century female author, similar to that sought by second-wave feminists (Elaine Showalter 1978) who, like Woolf, insisted on the need to "think back through our mothers" (1929: 99).

Aiken's first chapter is more openly critical of patriarchy than Austen's. The original heroine mildly criticises Tom Musgrave after the opening ball: "I do *not* like him, Eliz: – I allow his person & air to be good – & that his manners to a certain point – his address rather – is pleasing. – But I see nothing else to admire in him" (MW 342). In contrast, Aiken's heroine aggressively dismisses Elizabeth's comments on Osborne and Musgrave: "And what use is that [their admiration], pray, when they are such worthless beings?" About Tom, she adds: "Well, whomever he chooses is quite welcome to him. *I* think him no better than a rattle" (1996: 11). Whereas Austen's heroine tries to tone down her criticism through polite appraisal, Aiken's has no qualms in speaking her mind in a manner closer to the twentieth than the nineteenth century. Aiken adds an explanation for Tom and Osborne's unexpected visit to the Watsons: drunkenness, for as soon as they step in the new Emma perceives "a strong aroma of sherry" that "emanated from one or both" (1996: 26). The rudeness of the visit, which interrupts the Watsons' early dinner, is clear in Austen's fragment, but Aiken adds the explanation which may be missing in the original and which shows patriarchy in no favourable light.

The way Aiken rewrites Austen's fragment in her first chapter does not offer a unitary, straightforward interpretation of the original. Emma and Elizabeth's conversation obliterates some of the feminist potential of *The Watsons* (its protest against mercenary marriages), enhancing instead its anti-feminist elements (the absence of sisterhood), but also criticising patriarchy more strongly (Osborne and Musgrave). *Emma Watson* is characterised by more disruptive energies than sequels such as *Eliza's Daughter*: most of chapter one is emphatically conservative, whereas the rest of the completion is clearly more subversive than the original *The Watsons* announces its story will be. By underlining the anti-feminist potential of the fragment, Aiken suggests that *The Watsons* is too conservative for modern taste. Then, she struggles to "correct" this traditional gender politics in the sections that are clearly her own creation, in the same way that a feminist revisionist like Jane Smiley tried to amend Shakespeare.[46] The combination of a more conservative beginning with a more subversive middle and end may be the ultimate form of feminist revisionism: one that first passes judgment on its source, by emphasising those elements it aims to criticise, and then openly alters and rewrites them. Below, I shall analyse how the rest of *Emma Watson* and the whole of *Eliza's Daughter* enact this feminist renovation of the Austen text. I focus on their portrayal of masculinity and femininity, the marriage plot and politics and colonialism. In this depiction, Aiken's novels favour and expand potentially subversive elements from Austen's text.

[46] In *A Thousand Acres* (1992), Smiley transferred *King Lear* to 1970s America, retelling Shakespeare's story from the point of view of one of the evil sisters, Ginny/Goneril. Smiley revised the relation between Larry/Lear and his three daughters, adding incestuous liaisons and child abuse as the explanation for Ginny/Goneril and Rose/Regan's mistreatment of their aging father.

III.1.1. New Austen men and women

Eliza's Daughter (1994) goes further than *Emma Watson* in its remastering of *Sense and Sensibility*. The heroine is Willoughby's illegitimate daughter, Eliza Williams, whom Austen discreetly secluded in the countryside. Raised by her selfish step-mother Hannah Wellcome, Eliza's life is one of adventures, as she moves from nursing Lady Hariot's baby girl Triz, to visiting the Delaford Parsonage and to a school in Bath, where she eventually becomes a music teacher. Physically deformed, for she has an extra-large hand and a surplus finger, Eliza knows from childhood that a married life is not for her. The novel follows Eliza's attempts to discover her identity, which lead her to become the adopted daughter of her mother's lover, the Duke of Cumbria, and to visit post-Napoleonic Portugal to rescue Lady Hariot. There are also meetings with Willoughby, Elinor Ferrars and Marianne Brandon.

The feminist turn in *Emma Watson* and *Eliza's Daughter* becomes obvious in their portrait of resolute and determined female characters, in this sense following and updating Austen's models closely. Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood are perceptive heroines; Elizabeth shows her independence of mind when she walks the three miles that separate Longbourn and Netherfield, disregarding rules of propriety (PP 32). Aiken's Eliza Williams takes this further: "When I am a woman and have money of my own, I will travel," she reflects at the age of six or seven; "I made great plans for earning money; I would write plays and tales and verses…I would have my tales published and make a fine name for myself" (1994: 33). Eliza envisions her adult self as a professional woman, financially and emotionally independent. This is a radical gesture in a Regency context which, as Kaplan notes (1992: 21-22), systematically constrained genteel women to a domestic existence of dependence, whether married or not.

Equally extraordinary is the fact that Aiken's heroines engage in active, remunerated work. In the nineteenth-century, a successful businessman might achieve the status of a gentleman, but a professional woman would soon lose status through paid work (Hughes 1994: 12). The few occupations open to women, like governessing, placed them on the margins of gentility.[47] Jane Austen wrote about the governess hired by her brother Edward: "I like your opinion of Miss Atten much better than I expected, and have now hopes of her staying a whole twelvemonth. By this time I suppose she is hard at it, governing away. Poor creature! I pity her, though they *are* my nieces" (Letter 72, 30 April 1811). None of Austen's heroines takes up salaried work; only Jane Fairfax comes close to becoming a governess in *Emma*. In contrast, Aiken's Emma Watson works as a music teacher after her father's death and descends to the borders of propriety when she advertises her lessons on a baker's window, as Robert makes sure to tell her (1996: 185). She is extremely successful and soon can afford larger lodgings for herself and Aunt Maria. Emma is able to support herself and her aunt and pay for the latter's medical treatment, which includes weekly baths to soothe her swollen joints (185-6). What is more, Emma enjoys her work and continues teaching even when circumstances improve. In conversation with Sam, who has invited her to move in with him and Mary when they marry, she states:

> But I enjoy giving music lessons...And I am very sure that wealth will not make you give up your surgical practice? Living at home, for a woman – for anybody – is too quiet; too confined; at home there is no company but one's feelings, and they prey upon one. My music lessons are a means, for me, of keeping open a window to the world. Sometimes the lessons are arduous, troublesome; the prospect through the window is not a pleasant one; but it *is* a prospect, and I am enlarged by it. I learn some new thing (202).

[47] In *The Victorian Governess*, Kathryn Hughes (1994) examines the ambiguous position of the governess later in the century. Although the experience varied, depending on the young woman's qualifications and the family's social status, this was by no means an ideal position: a paid dependant, akin to a high servant, the governess was a vulnerable figure who often occupied a difficult and undefined position in the household (Hughes 1994).

This is one of *Emma Watson*'s strongest feminist speeches. Emma begins by exposing the unfairness of gender divisions (if Sam is not giving up his practice now that he is rich, why should she?); women have a right to professional fulfilment as much as men do. Remunerated work becomes "a window to the world," that is, to the *public* world from which women have been traditionally banned. Throughout her tirade, Emma demands a larger sphere of action for women. Her speech echoes Anne Elliot's vindication of women in *Persuasion*. Like Emma Watson here, Anne complains about the restrictions imposed on women's lives: "We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You [men] are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately" (P 232). Aiken expands Austen's feminist speech by adding a specific professional dimension and a clearer plea for gender equality. Interestingly, this is not the only ingredient from *Persuasion* that Aiken adds to her literary broth. There are many sailors and sailors' wives in her novels: Captain Freemantle and Mrs. Blake in *Emma Watson*, and Mrs. Osborne in *Mansfield Park Revisited*, who talks animatedly about the giant turtles in the Galapagos to Lady Bertram (1984: 149). The end of *Emma Watson* announces the heroine's future: sailing the high seas (1996: 221) as Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth presumably do in *Persuasion*.

Aiken's borrowings from *Persuasion* intimate a modern perception of this novel as Austen's most progressive work – Aiken, in fact, did not write a sequel to *Persuasion*. In the same decade *Emma Watson* was published, Robyn Warhol conducted a feminist narratological analysis of the Austen novel. She considered *Persuasion* a feminist text because of its representation of the heroine's access to knowledge (through the act of looking) and to pleasure (through the novel's concern with bodily matters); no other Austen novel has so much of its action filtered through the heroine's mind (1995: 6). Rebecca Dickson read Anne's argument with Captain Harville, recycled by Aiken in the quotation

above, as the most clearly feminist speech in all of Austen's novels (1998: 49). Post-war readers may have preferred *Emma*, a novel in "[t]he true English style" which shows "the best fruit in England" (E 99, 324),[48] but in the 1990s, the target seems to construct *the* feminist Austen rewrite, and for that, the key lies in *Persuasion*.

Writing is a recurrent female employment in *Eliza's Daughter*, not in *Emma Watson*, which confirms the more open feminist turn of the sequel and the negotiations that take place within the completions. Literature becomes the pursuit of Eliza Williams, who like Emma Watson has previously worked as a music teacher. Women in this sequel are story-tellers, raconteurs: "She loved me to tell her stories," Eliza says about Triz earlier in the novel (58). The import of women's writing had been one of the main contentions of second-wave feminists. In 1976, Hélène Cixous insisted that "[w]oman must write her self;" female writing is essential, because it will give woman "back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (1976: 885, 880). This inextricable connection between female writing and the body is present by the end of *Eliza's Daughter*, when the heroine declares her intention of becoming a writer at the same time that she announces her pregnancy (1994: 316). Cixous explained that a woman writes "in white ink," for there is "always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk" (1976: 881). Pregnancy, and its consequent bodily changes, seems connected with Eliza's decision to become a writer:

> But I can tell you this. My child will be a child of the wild. All she will derive – all she will *need* – from her father, will be freedom. And that freedom in her I will defend, so long as it lies within my power, from society's jealousies, ambitions and rancours (1994: 316).

[48] As Chapters 2 and 3 suggest, post-war completions tended to identify with the image of "green" England exposed in *Emma*. Claudia Johnson (1989: 125) and Peter Smith (1997) have recognised the patriotism of this Austen novel. For Smith, the chief topic in *Emma* is "England, England's weaknesses, the dangers inherent in those weaknesses, and the choices that might still be made to secure the nation's future" (1997: 238-39).

This confession is followed by Eliza's resolution to become a novelist only two paragraphs below, hinting that literary creativity is the consequence of her condition. Eliza's declaration reproduces the feminine bodily language that Cixous called *écriture féminine*, or feminine writing.[49] For Cixous, *écriture féminine* comes in floods and waves; it is the means by which woman will be able to express "the fantastic tumult of her drives" and the "unheard-of songs" of her body (1976: 876). The ending of *Eliza's Daughter* exhibits the linguistic experimentation associated to *écriture féminine*: through rhyme ("child," "wild"), this paragraph evokes the rhythmical breathing of mother and child; through repetition ("freedom") and recurring syntactical addition ("all she will *need*," "And that freedom"), it highlights the vitality and continuity of an emerging life. *Écriture féminine* often works at the level of the signifier: Cixous enjoys playing on the French language, noting how "voler" (in French both "to fly" and "to steal") becomes a symptom of women's ambiguous position as birds and robbers (1976: 887). Similarly, Aiken sports with the word "will" at her conclusion: repeated five times in three sentences, this term points to a feminist future where Eliza's daughter *will* be able to act upon her *will* – and, pushing it further, maybe outgrow male canonical figures such as "Will" Shakespeare. The ending of *Eliza's Daughter*, as an instance of *écriture féminine*, could be seen to perform a double act of liberation: through Eliza's bodily writing, it simultaneously frees the heroine, whose first person narrative voice permeates the sequel, and Joan Aiken, the actual author of the novel. Expanding this notion, Aiken's *écriture féminine* also appears to liberate Austen and her text from its rhetorical rigidity and usual elliptical quality, favouring instead the continuity, repetition and metaphoricity that come with the reproduction of female bodily pulses.

[49] Although some of Cixous's examples of *écriture féminine* are male (James Joyce), she still admits that women have a greater capacity to admit the "other" in their writing. The reason for this is partly historical and partly biological, for woman's physiological capacity to give birth, to literally include the other within her, makes it easier for her to admit this other in her texts (1976: 881-82).

Emma Watson also contains instances of *écriture féminine*, whose more moderate deployment adds to the ambivalence of the completions. Emma Watson becomes infuriated with Purvis and Howard, who regularly visit the household to help Mr. Watson publish his sermons. When Purvis oversees Elizabeth in the orchard during one of his visits, he accidentally mistakes her for her old aunt:

> As she [Emma] watched the two men ride away down the lane, her heart was full of anger. Against whom this anger might be directed, she would have found it hard to specify. It is all very fine for them, she thought rather confusedly, to come here and perform their kind deed; they are not going to be turned out of their homes, they are not subject to the whims of husbands who spend their money and behave unkindly; they are not arbitrarily deprived of their assured place and future (77).

Emma's outburst here is indeed a forceful piece which, through parallel rhetoric and anaphora, emphasises Emma's frustration with the limitations put upon women. The question is the source of Emma's anger. True, her sister has been insulted unwillingly, but Emma's response seems unwarranted and excessive. She has to calm herself down, reminding herself that after all Purvis has an ailing wife and Howard is subject to Lady Osborne's whims (77). Clearly, her speech is more radical and aggressive than Anne Elliot's gentle protest. Although a less clear example of *écriture féminine*, this passage possesses the poetic quality valued by Cixous, and in its repetitions and accumulation of clauses, it mimics the bodily waves of Emma's growing anger. Writing and the body are again intertwined: the conflict starts with Mr. Watson' sermons, which Emma, rather than Purvis or Howard, will ultimately select and edit for publication. This passage is also an instance of free indirect style, as it reports Emma's thoughts by echoing her own words ("the whims of husbands"), but without completely abandoning the objective narrative voice. That Aiken is able to develop Austen's characteristic technique into *écriture féminine* allows a different reading of Austen as the antecedent of feminine writing. Thus, *Emma Watson* simultaneously reads *The Watsons* back

as a novel to be significantly updated (and "liberated") and an avant-garde text that announces late twentieth-century developments in feminist philosophy.

What emerges from Aiken's novels is a model of femininity that extends and develops the potentiality of Austen's – instilling it with modern sensibilities – but does not simplify it. Masculinity, in contrast, seems more one-dimensional and further removed from the original: Austen's heroes are reliable and trustworthy – Mr. Darcy, Mr. Knightley, Henry Tilney and Edmund Bertram are all paragons of morality. However, following some feminist rewritings of the canon, Aiken's men are not heroic, but alternatively cruel, weak or deceitful. In Smiley's revision of *King Lear*, all male characters are cruel and misogynistic: Larry/Lear rapes his teenage daughters; Jess/Edmund abandons Rose/Reagan and her children; Ty/Kent makes disdainful comments on women's inability to understand farming. Similarly, Aiken's novels denounce male cruelty against women *because* they are women. In *Emma Watson*, Captain O'Brien sexually harasses the heroine: she has heard "shocking tales of his flirtations with other ladies; and once or twice he has given me such a pinch, or such a look, that I would by no means venture myself alone with him in a strange country" (13). Clearly, this element does not belong in Austen's fragment.

If men are not cruel or deceitful, they are weak and feeble. In *Emma Watson*, Mr. Howard has become Lady Osborne's puppet, always ready to abandon his duties for her. He is often depressed and in low spirits, so when Emma bumps into him in Epsom and invites him to meet Aunt Maria: "Mr Howard had been looking rather pale and dejected…[he] looked a little crestfallen" (189-90). Emma finally rejects this passive "hero," whom she marries in all the previous completions, telling her aunt that she likes men who have more power of decision: "He does not have the resolution that I like to see in a man. He was for too long at the beck and call of Lady Osborne, who is a detestable female. I like a man who is deedy, and makes up his own mind" (191). Aiken's sequels enact the disappearance of the

hero hinted at in Coates's *The Watsons* (1958). Coates depicted a weak and undeveloped Howard, who was unable to assist the heroine's maturation. Aiken goes further when she makes her heroine reject Howard's tentative overtures, disregarding Austen's presumed intentions for the novel. Emma constructs here a model of masculinity (resolution, action, independence), but most men fall short of this ideal – Howard and Purvis certainly do. The only man who comes close to embodying it is precisely the man who is absent from the novel: Captain Fremantle briefly appears twice, but spends most of the narrative offstage in his ship.

The Duke of Cumbria in *Eliza's Daughter* is a more extreme example of the emasculation Aiken's men suffer, in this case quite literally. A former "lover" of Eliza's mother, the Duke tells the heroine that she should not fear any romantic overtures from him, for "with the best will in the world, I can't get it up" (218). For this reason, he planned to get an heir for his estate by encouraging the affair between Eliza's mother and his favourite nephew (218-9). This sexually explicit commentary could not be more un-Austenian; it is textual impropriety in more than one sense – which adds to Aiken's playfulness and humour at the expense of male characters. As in feminist rewritings of the canon, men in Aiken's novels prove lacking or disappointing, congenial relations between the sexes being rarely achieved. Whereas Smiley just highlights the male cruelty latent in Shakespeare, Aiken both exposes and acts upon it, by refusing most of her male characters the sexual power traditionally coveted by patriarchy. Her novel may be again the ultimate form of feminist revisionism – as a sequel/completion that denounces gender inequality, but also weakens the power of those it identifies as potential oppressors. In this scenario, Austen's famous marital solution is obviously to be eschewed.

III.1.2. Unwriting the marriage plot

Jane Austen's apparent adherence to the marriage plot, traditionally a key patriarchal institution, has been one of the main reasons why critics have questioned her feminism. Mary Poovey (1984) deprecated Austen because all her novels conclude in the heroine's wedding: "marriage remains for Austen the ideal paradigm of the most perfect fusion between the individual and society" (1984: 203). Similarly, Ellen Moers argued that "marriageship" is the real subject of Austen's novels: "the cautious investigation of a field of eligible males, the delicate manoeuvring to meet them, the refined outpacing of rivals, the subtle circumventing of parental power (his and hers), and the careful management, at the end of the story" (1976: 71).

Other critics have read the marital solution in Austen's novels more subtly. Susan Lanser (1985) and Ruth Perry (1986) suggested that Austen was not truly committed to the courtship plot that structures her novels. For Lloyd W. Brown, marriage appears simply as a literary convention, which Austen employs to question assumptions rooted in a restrictive view of woman's identity (1973: 336). Marriage is not a goal in itself, but "a symbolic event in the denouement of the novel," for there is a "relative lack of emphasis on the marital experience as such" (Brown 1973: 336). More recently, Deborah Kaplan has claimed that the Austen novels, which have charmed generations of readers, should not be reduced to a simple portrait of matrimony (1998: 184).

Aiken's emphatic displacement of the marriage plot in her rewritings could be seen to confirm either reading of Austen, feminist or anti-feminist. On the one hand, Aiken apparently expands what Lanser, Perry and Brown saw as Austen's lack of emphasis on marriage and her critique of restrictive assumptions of womanhood. On the other, in her radicalism, Aiken could be seen to challenge the "marriageship" that, for Poovey, dominates

Austen's work. That Aiken's post-texts allow this double interpretation is part of the ambiguity of sequels and, especially, completions. Aiken's novels stray far away from the conventional courtship novel. *Emma Watson* could have been a predictable comedy of manners, but is not. Aiken deliberately plays on the courtship plot to unsettle the reader's expectations: at first, Emma and Howard's interaction seems conventionally romantic, leading up to future marriage. For instance, at the end of her first call at Stanton Parsonage, Mrs. Blake says that her brother wishes to be remembered to Emma, for their two dances together were his most pleasant memory from the ball. The heroine blushes dutifully, mumbling: "It is of no consequence – I mean – I am greatly obliged to Mr Howard" (17). This reads like the beginning of one of Austen's flirtations: Catherine Morland feels similarly embarrassed by Henry Tilney's questioning, and her self-conscious attraction for him, during their first meeting in the Lower Rooms (NA 29).

However, Aiken delights in frustrating the reader's anticipations by redirecting her plot. A key passage is Emma and Howard's meeting by the Stanton duck-pond. Emma has walked to the pond with Aunt Maria's dejected letter a few months after her marriage. The heroine cannot help being moved by her aunt's unhappiness and is crying bitterly when Howard appears:

> Mr Howard, riding up the lane on his grey cob, had his first view of Emma in profile, as she sat in seeming idleness on the bench near the water, with her hands clasped in her lap, the empty basket at her feet. Only when he came closer did he observe the tears coming continuously down her cheeks. *She* did not observe him at all, had not heard his approach, for the clamour of the ducks fighting over crusts, had drowned the thud of his horse's hoofs on the grassy track (70).

This seems a lovers' rendezvous, and raises evident romantic expectations. It is also a very cinematic description, with the "camera" first focusing on the hero and then shifting to the heroine, as if following his eyes. The camera zooms in as Howard approaches the heroine and is able to see her tears. Readers "view" the scene through Howard – its cinematic quality

possibly deriving from the 1990s boom of Austen adaptations. Despite such a romantically promising start, things soon go terribly wrong: Emma asks Howard for advice about her aunt but finds him wanting. He offers his help as a priest, because it is his duty, not as a friend, and starts preaching on marital obligations. Emma quickly rejects all his arguments, engaging in mental repartee: "She may exaggerate. Let us hope that matters are not as bad as she describes," Howard claims and Emma mentally answers "Why should we hope so?…I see no justification for such an optimistic outlook" (72). When Howard continues: "The pair have not, after all, been married very long. Adjustments may need to be made," Emma furiously reflects: "On whose side?...I know more about married relationships than you do, my good sir. I have lived with a married pair for fourteen years" (72-3). Aiken's heroine refutes the judgement of the presumed hero, preferring her own. While Austen's heroines frequently learn from older and wiser beaux (Henry Tilney, Mr. Knightley), here, as in Coates, the wisdom and educative potential of the love interest is invalidated. Following Austen, the completion may open as a courtship novel, but it quickly stifles all the romantic expectations it raises.

Aiken moves away from the comedy of manners as she weaves different genres into her novels. She frequently adopts the picaresque in *Emma Watson* and, especially, in *Eliza's Daughter*, reappropriating a traditionally masculine genre for the feminist tradition. From the sixteenth century, the picaresque had been a highly masculine genre, famous examples being the *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742). These novels follow the adventures of a roguish hero, Lázaro or Joseph, who survives by his wits in an unpleasant environment. Likewise, Eliza deceives her step-mother to avoid housework (12) and escapes from rape in Bath by violently slapping her aggressor Lord Harry (129). *Eliza's Daughter* adopts the typically episodic structure of the picaresque, as the heroine goes through different scenes and stages: Nether Othery (where she grows up), Delaford Parsonage, Bath, London,

Zoyland (the Duke's property) and finally Portugal. Eliza's adventures serve as a critique of the hypocritical society that surrounds her, particularly of the double standards applied to men and women – for whereas Lord Harry and his friends falsely boast of the rape and escape punishment, Eliza loses her reputation and her job as a result. Aiken's amalgamation of literary genres takes her sequels away from the traditional courtship novel, making them also much more experimental than earlier twentieth-century completions.

Part of the gender ambiguity of *Emma Watson* derives from the fact that the flight from the marriage plot is never complete. The heroine marries Captain Freemantle, but their story is very different from that of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy's protracted interactions in the drawing-room. Captain Freemantle appears only twice in the novel: first at Stanton, and then at the Derby where, after several months, Emma and Freemantle reencounter one another. Courtship takes comparatively little narrative time and space, and if Lloyd Brown claimed that marriage was not the focus of Austen's novels (1973), this is definitely true of *Emma Watson*, which protracts the lovers' reunion till the last page. Aiken concentrates instead on the heroine's survival in an unpleasant environment, as she becomes first Penelope's servant and then Jane's, following her father's death. Freemantle is also different from Austen's heroes: far from possessing Captain Wentworth's implied physicality, as a weather-beaten sailor who has struggled with human and natural forces alike, Freemantle, like the Duke of Cumbria, is one of Aiken's emasculated men. He has lost an arm in battle, and his extreme thinness suggests little physical vigour. [50]

Eliza's Daughter goes further – probably because as a sequel it allows Aiken greater freedom than a completion. Where *Emma Watson* only hints at an escape from the marriage

[50] In this sense, Captain Freemantle resembles the blinded Mr. Rochester: feminist Brontë critics, like Elaine Showalter (1978: 75), have noticed that the hero has to be emasculated by the fire for Jane and Rochester to become equals. Rochester's final emasculation is one of the reasons why Charlotte Brontë's works have been considered more progressive in gender terms than Austen's (Gilbert and Gubar 1979). Curiously, this Brontëan element surfaces in Aiken's feminist rewritings of Austen.

plot, *Eliza's Daughter* departs from it altogether. By the end of the novel, Eliza is well provided for and therefore has none of the common inducements to matrimony. At his death, the Duke of Cumbria bequeaths her a fortune, but not his Zoyland estate, which goes to Hoby (Eliza's childhood friend) in the expectation that they will marry (1994: 308). Colonel Brandon, also dead now, has bequeathed Delaford Manor to Eliza, since he felt guilty for his past neglect (313). A wealthy heiress, Eliza refuses Hoby, who once said that he could not marry her because Eliza's stained reputation would hinder his career: "And no, again, reader, I shall not marry Hoby. He has lost his chance" (316). What she plans to do is to move to Delaford with Lady Hariot and Pullet, the female servant who accompanied Eliza to London and Portugal. The heroine will bring up her child in this female household – a plot development that resonates with the ending of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), one of the key texts of the women's movement and itself a rewriting of *Jane Eyre* where Jane and Bertha end up friends.

Eliza's Daughter has an unprecedented ending in the story of Austen sequels: it closes with a female commune that replaces the conventional marital solution, and in this sense, the novel contrasts with the early chapters of *Emma Watson* and dovetails with the emphasis on sisterhood of some Austen feminist critics (Kaplan 1992; Tuite 2002). Like Kaplan (1992), Aiken proposes an alternative universe in *Eliza's Daughter* where female bonding, or women's culture, is the main engine in the characters' lives. Aiken takes Kaplan's idea of same-sex friendship several steps further: Kaplan suggests that women's culture and the culture of the gentry were indivisible, for there was a relationship of mutual dependence between them (1992: 204). Aiken, rather than emphasising this cultural duality, shows women's culture as a viable, exclusive formula to structure female existence. Yet the pronounced contrast between this radical turn and the conservative reworking of the opening

of *The Watsons* emphasises how only after intense work of rewriting and re-inscription do Austen's novels properly support the aspirations of modern feminism.

III.1.3. Race and Politics

Aiken rewrites the gender politics of Austen's novels in one more way: in her sequels, the sexual becomes evidently political. The idea of sex being political was one of the main tenets of the women's movement, especially after Kate Millet entitled her book *Sexual Politics* in 1970. Millet understands the term politics as any "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another;" therefore, sex is clearly "a status category with political implications" (1970: 23-4). For Millet, "[c]oitus can scarcely be said to take place in a vacuum," but is related to notions of power and ascendancy (1970: 23). Joan Aiken's works encompass a number of political allusions: her references to the Napoleonic Wars are a way of denouncing female exploitation. In her novels, politics becomes sexual politics.

The connection between politics and sexuality is evident in *Eliza's Daughter*. Part of the novel is set against the background of the Napoleonic Wars, more specifically Napoleon's invasion of Portugal. Lady Hariot writes a moving letter to Eliza from Amarante asking for her help to bring Triz back to life, since she has undergone a major mental breakdown after being sexually abused. When the war was over, Lady Hariot explains, one troop of brigands broke into the nunnery where they had taken refuge. The untrained militia was bent on the idea that the French had buried a treasure there, but when they could not find it, they vented all their anger and frustration on the female inhabitants. In her letter, Lady Hariot describes this occurrence in explicit terms:

> Two [nuns] were bayoneted outright. Perhaps they were the lucky ones. No doubt they are now in Paradise...They merely tied me with ox-hide ropes to our own loom in the dovecote, where I was obliged, for hours, to listen to the screams of their victims. Among whom was my daughter...Thérèse I found cut, bruised, battered, almost entirely drained of blood...my child has never recovered. She is palsied from the waist down, and cannot move her legs. She does not speak, only tears pour from her eyes (256).

The obvious implication is that Triz has been repeatedly raped, probably with a sharp object, a knife or a gun, which has caused such serious and permanent injuries. By using a tool of their profession, the idle militia transform the act of rape into a military act, explicitly bringing together sex and politics, sexual and political aggression.

In *Emma Watson*, sexual politics appears differently through the heroine's killing of her father. True, she does so inadvertently, but this is a Freudian gesture of sexual liberation unimaginable in Austen's novels. While Elizabeth Watson goes to the second local assembly, Emma stays at home to nurse her father, and receives the visit of Mrs. Blake and Captain Freemantle. The sailor and Mr. Watson engage in lively conversation, but the excitement of their historical discussion and the cocoa with rum Emma prepares prove fatal for the invalid (113). The whole Watson family blame Emma for their bereavement and the busybodies in Croydon and Stanton pronounce her a murderess; even the apothecary concludes in favour of this charge (116). A heroine who kills her father cannot, in the post-Freudian, post-feminist context of the 1990s, pass unnoticed. This is not simply an innocent act of clumsiness or forgetfulness. After all, the family, Millet claimed, is the core patriarchal institution (1970: 33), and in Johnson's view (1988), the (patriarchal) family in Austen is always found wanting. Johnson read Austen's novels as progressive in their demystification of familial figures, but in *Emma Watson*, Aiken takes this criticism of paternal authority to its ultimate conclusion.

Some of Aiken's novels are post-colonial rewritings that encompass explicit commentary on slavery and racial difference. The postcolonial reading of Austen and her

novels largely originates in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said argues that *Mansfield Park* and other pre-Imperialist novels are implicated in the rationale behind British Imperialism (1993: 84). Taking issue with this notion, B.C. Southam positions Austen and Fanny Price with the abolitionists, due to Fanny's curiosity about the slave trade in a post-abolitionist context – the Slave Trade Act was passed in 1807 (1995: 15-16). In Aiken's *Emma Watson*, Lord Rufus Bungay, a cousin of Lady Osborne's, has just returned from Antigua. Whereas Lord Rufus has made a great fortune in sugar, Lady Osborne herself has lost money since the abolition of the slave trade, as her daughter openly tells Emma (186) – which suggests that Aiken dates the original fragment in 1807 or later. True, this is no news in Austen, for *Mansfield Park* famously alludes to Antigua and its plantations. Yet Austen's allusions are never so overt and extensive: when Fanny Price asks her uncle about the slave trade, "there was such a dead silence!" (MP 198). *The Youngest Miss Ward* goes even further: when Lord Camber comes back to Britain with a Native American wife, one of the servants claims "I'll lay the gentry around about Master Harry's kin give her a hard time – they won't want to know her. An Indian savage!" (1998: 311). Austen may have alluded to slavery, but racial difference is scarcely shown in her novels.[51] There is also an implicit critique of 1800s social hierarchies and the stateliness of Austen's texts in the servant's comment and Lord Camber's marriage outside both the aristocracy and the gentry.

The connection between women and racial minorities, as marginalised groups, is long-standing.[52] Aiken's reworking of class, race and gender suggests these are the Austenian elements that need revision and correction to fit modern sensibilities. Their alteration or addition reveals late twentieth-century preoccupations – also what appears to be missing in

[51] Two exceptions are *Emma*, which depicts a gang of gypsies, and *Sanditon*, which includes a West Indian heiress.

[52] Early feminist critics were interested in the connections between Eastern and Western forms of female sacrifice; Mary Daly (1978), for instance, analysed the cultural practices of footbinding in China and suttee, or the burning of widows, in India.

Austen for modern readers. Aiken's sequels share the postcolonial theme with Patricia Rozema's film adaptation of *Mansfield Park* (1998). Rozema radically revises Austen's novel both in racial and sexual terms: hers is a sexually active Fanny Price who spies on Tom's drawings showing the abuse suffered by blacks in Antigua. Like *Eliza's Daughter*, the film brings sex and politics together by depicting Sir Thomas's debauchery in the West Indies. Rozema's adaptation, released two years after *Emma Watson* and the same year as *The Youngest Miss Ward*, points to a common sentiment among late twentieth-century audiences: Austen's all-white, middle-class society, like her patriarchal gentility, calls for a rewriting.

III.2. Merryn Williams's *The Watsons*

Both Aiken and Williams share part of a revisionist mechanism that looks back upon Austen's nineteenth-century novels, not always with satisfaction. But Merryn Williams's completion of *The Watsons* is not so daring in its feminist and textual reworking of the original. The tension between authorial action and intention gets complicated: to the inconsistency between branding Austen as a feminist and the textual changes necessary to do so, one has to add the inclusion of further conservative elements from Austen's novels, which, like at the opening of *Emma Watson*, co-exist in Williams with a more progressive gender discourse.

Some of the strategies Williams deploys derive from feminist revisionism: vindications of women's rights and celebrations of sisterhood. Williams's feminist tirades are, however, less frequent than Aiken's and voiced by characters other than the heroine. Mrs. Blake expresses the dreariness of social frustration, much as Aiken's characters do: "See how helpless we women are, Miss Emma! I would rather have gone out as a governess than be a burden on John – my brother – but the children must have bread and an education. I try to keep a comfortable home for him; that, at least, is in my power" (2005: 60). A destitute

widow, Mrs. Blake has few options in life if she wants to remain within the domains of respectable gentility. Mr. Howard defends women's intellectual powers when Margaret Watson protests that she cannot understand astronomy: "But why not, Miss Margaret?...Not because you are a woman, I am sure" (2005: 65). In this sense, Williams seems to go a step further than Aiken: rather than constructing a feminist completion by demonising male characters, Williams writes a feminist hero and gives him one of the novel's vindications of women. He is the true new man. Williams abandons the angry feminism of the second half of the twentieth century in favour of a more modern attempt to re-establish harmony between the sexes.

An innovative feminist element in Williams is the allusion to eighteenth and nineteenth-century female professionals. Williams adds references to Maria Edgeworth (already present in Austen), but also to contemporary female painters and astronomers (not in Austen). In his discussion of astronomy, Howard mentions Caroline Herschel to persuade Margaret of women's capabilities (2005: 65). Herschel was a German-British astronomer in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. With her brother, she discovered several comets, which led to the establishment of Herschel's scientific reputation – some of her work, for instance, was published by the Royal Society in 1798. Adrienne Rich celebrated these achievements in her poem "Planetarium" (1968). In Williams's completion, Mrs. Turner considers becoming a professional artist, making an income "like Miss Kaufmann, by painting portraits" (2005: 131). A Swiss-Austrian painter in the late eighteenth century, Angelica Kauffmann became a popular portraitist among English visitors to Rome; but, despite her success, the Royal Academy never accepted Kauffmann's work.

By including the names of female professionals, Merryn Williams is establishing a nineteenth-century female tradition. This practice connects back to 1970s feminists, like Patricia Meyer Spacks (1975), Ellen Moers (1976) and Elaine Showalter (1978), who insisted

on delineating the connections between female artists and writers throughout history – for they considered women's artistic achievements as a unique body of work. Further, Williams primarily alludes to non-British professionals (Austrian, Swiss, German, Irish), intimating a shared female experience across national boundaries. There are no borders to female oppression: nowadays Caroline Herschel's achievements have been forgotten while her brother has gained claim for some of the discoveries they made together. Even Howard undermines his potential feminism by claiming that Herschel is "*almost* as good an astronomer as her brother" (2005: 65, my italics). Merryn Williams's completion connects back to the women's movement, enquiring into the work of women contemporary to Austen and, like Adrienne Rich, digging up this tradition.

Despite its feminist ingredients, *The Watsons* (2005) is largely conventional in sexual and narrative terms. Williams reproduces the original fragment to the letter, and develops her plot along predictable lines – those presumably sketched by Jane Austen: Emma marries Howard, who had left his parsonage at the Castle after a quarrel with Lord Osborne. The only source of anxiety is the delay in Howard's proposal, for he needs time to find another position before he has anything to offer the heroine. Other than that, there are no major difficulties: Elizabeth marries Purvis, and Sam is likely to obtain Mary Edwards's hand. *The Watsons* (2005) dwells on matrimony more than completions like Aiken's and Coates's. There are numerous speeches about the need to marry and references to mercenary unions (2005: 75, 99). Marriage occupies centre stage again, which together with the lack of feminist interventions by the heroine, undermines and decentralises the potential of other elements (female professionals).

The feminist promise is again subverted when, by the end of the novel, Mrs. Turner worries that Captain O'Brien may come back, but Emma reassures her that this time he will have a man to deal with (2005: 138). Regency women, Williams's closing message seems,

ultimately need a man's protection. This comment resembles Aiken's initial exaggeration of the conservative potential of *The Watsons*. It may be a piece of provocation, designed to elicit a snort from the modern reader. Yet the fact that it is one of the closing remarks, instead of an opening one that will later be subverted, raises questions about whether patriarchal institutions are not reinstated at the conclusion of this completion, rather than swept away, or at least questioned as Johnson claims happens in Austen's novels.

Williams's *The Watsons* complicates the late 1990s and early 2000s feminist transformation of Austen. Her novel is torn in more than one way: between portraying an openly feminist Austen and a more "authentic" one, between altering gender roles and keeping elements from the fragment – sometimes even adding a more conservative touch to the original. Even Williams's alleged feminism is itself not straightforward: with elements from the 1970s women's movement, the 1980s feminist revisionism and a more modern conception of masculinity and the interaction between the sexes. And all this is combined with an emphasis on the marital solution that many Austen feminist scholars have deprecated for more than three decades. The vision of Austen that stems from Williams's text, like that deriving from *Emma Watson*, is far from unitary, and if completions often lodge conflicting readings of Austen, Williams takes it to the extreme.

IV. The Austen film phenomenon

Finally, I want to look at the boom of film adaptations of the 1990s and the way they manufacture Jane Austen as a modern feminist. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed an outpouring of Austen adaptations on the big and the small screen. Whereas between 1970 and 1986 only seven Austen adaptations were shot, the years 1995 and 1996 produced almost the same number (six). Of these, Simon Langton's *Pride and Prejudice* for the BBC (1995) sent Janeites into a fever: on its airing, it weekly gathered between 10 and 11

million viewers around the screen; on its release, it sold 200,000 copies within a year, 50,000 during the first week only. Emma Thompson's screenplay for Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) sold out its first edition of 28,500 copies and went through a second round of 5,000. These two successful adaptations were followed by Roger Michell's *Persuasion* (1995), Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995) and Douglas McGrath's *Emma* (1996), among others.

This spate of film reinterpretations has its antecedent in the rise of period drama in the 1980s, with the adaptations of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1984) and *A Room with a View* (1985). Claire Monk describes 1990s adaptations as "post-heritage," for they are self-conscious of the past represented and of their own portrayal of gender and sexuality (1995: 32). This definition applies to the 1990s Austen films, which clearly share the wish to brandish Austen as the mother of modern feminism. They add progressive ingredients (female independence), but occasionally subvert, and simplify, the potential of Austen's novels through their emphasis on courtship. In this sense, their feminism is often more reductive than that of sequels and especially completions, probably due to differences of audience and medium.

Simon Langton's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) has become popular among Austen feminist critics for the way it privileges the female gaze by adding male physicality. The film contains numerous added scenes displaying Colin Firth's Darcy: Darcy and Bingley riding towards Netherfield, Darcy bathing, playing billiards, fencing and diving in the pool at Pemberley. Cheryl Nixon argues that, by adding some "extra" Darcy, the film displays him as a man of emotions, for his physical abilities show his inner battles (1998: 33). A notable example is his attack at the fencing master while muttering "I shall conquer this," meaning, the audience may imagine, his passion for Elizabeth (Nixon 1998: 32). Lisa Hopkins contends that all these scenes empower women by making men the object of their gaze

(1998: 119). This view is, however, problematic: the "extra" Darcy/Firth resulted in the mystification of actor and fictional character alike; in contrast, the actress playing Elizabeth Bennet, Jennifer Ehle, attracted much less media attention and was apparently left to her own devices during the shooting – being responsible, for instance, for her own clothing (Hopkins 1998: 114). The privilege of the female gaze, one may argue, empowers women spectators in Langton's film at the expense of female characters and actresses on the screen. The reversal of the gaze may allow viewers (either male or female) to gloat over the image of Colin Firth in a wet shirt, but it also makes Elizabeth Bennet, Austen's witty and determined heroine, much more peripheral than in the original.

Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) has also attracted feminist critics for its apparent liberalism. The main feminist element is a full rewriting of the character of Margaret Dashwood, who becomes more central than in the novel. Emma Thompson's Margaret cannot abide the rules of polite behaviour; she hides in a tree-house and, when John and Fanny move to Norland, refuses to join her sisters in welcoming them. Margaret dreams of becoming a pirate and travelling to India; piracy, Kristin Samuelian notes, is a "fantasy of rebellion and escape," which suggests that a younger generation of women may be able to escape from the constraints of femininity (1998: 156). Thompson's/Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* is also preoccupied with the economic position of women. It opens with an explanation of the entailment of Norland Park, for the benefit of a modern audience, and voices women's protests through Elinor Dashwood. When Edward declares "Our circumstances [as dependants] are therefore precisely the same," Elinor remonstrates: "Except that you will inherit your fortune. We cannot even earn ours."

However, Thompson's feminist colouring of the novel in her screenplay sometimes undermines the potential of the original. For Rebecca Dickson (1998), the film clearly demeans the subtle feminism of Austen's work in its portrayal of a defeated Elinor

Dashwood. The original strong woman collapses in the movie on three occasions: arguing with Marianne, during Marianne's illness, and finally during Edward's declaration. "[I]t is the strong woman who breaks, not the immature, malleable one," Dickson laments (1998: 55). The result is a sentimental film, with moments of high melodrama – such as Elinor's breakdown while nursing her sister. It sentimentalises Austen's novel, which aimed precisely to satirise the sentimental vogue.[53]

The re-inscription of the marriage plot in these productions is also problematic. Thompson's emphasis on marriage seems to undercut some of her feminist strategies: the discrepancy between novel and film lies in their tonally different endings. Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* closes with the marriage of Elinor and Edward and, several years later, Marianne and Brandon. The union of Colonel Brandon and Marianne is a consolation prize in the novel, more convenient than romantic. Contrasting with the dark subtleties of Austen's original (exploited by Aiken), the ending of Thompson's adaptation is much more celebratory, closer to a Shakespearean comedy than to anything Austen ever wrote. It includes a double wedding, music, dancing, children playing and Brandon throwing coins up in the air – like the children, a symbol of fertility and prosperity. One of the differences between the way rewriters and directors/scriptwriters deal with Austen is the romanticisation of her originals. Whereas Aiken is ready to explore the dark and unsettling potential of Austen's ending, Lee and Thompson add a coat of sugar to the novel, simplifying the gender complexities of the source text.

Another difference between sequels and films lies in the construction of masculinity. Aiken's men are mostly flawed and disappointing – fathers especially so: in *The Youngest*

[53] Marilyn Butler (1975) notes how Austen departs from the traditional didactic novel in *Sense and Sensibility*. Didactic novels, such as Maria Edgeworth's *Letters of Julia and Caroline*, tend to compare and contrast the behaviour of two heroines. Although Austen adopts this technique, she refuses to punish Marianne for her misjudgement and lack of Christian understanding. Whereas Edgeworth or West would have probably killed off this flawed heroine, Austen has Marianne Dashwood recover from her convalescence (Butler 1975: 189).

Miss Ward, the heroine's uncle overlooks his twin daughters, believing that, because they are handicapped (probably autistic), it is better not to lavish much effort on their education (1998: 104). In contrast, the film adaptations construct Austen's male characters as New Men who frequently show affection towards children. Edward Ferrars in Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* befriends Margaret and encourages her piracy schemes. Admiral Croft in Mitchell's *Persuasion* (1995) indulges the Musgrove children, letting them sit on his knees and building them paper boats. The heroes' love of children evinces the updating of masculine roles, a trend that is generally absent from Aiken. The films, like Williams's completion, represent a more modern version of feminism, which aspires to an equal and harmonious relation between the sexes. Austen's novels are porous texts: if they can absorb contradictory gender affiliations (radical or conservative), they can certainly take in different feminisms too (1970s, 1990s).

Further evidence of the feminist updating the films conduct is the age of the actresses playing Austen's characters. Frequently, in modern adaptations, the female characters are much older than they are claimed to be in the texts. This is to some extent true in Langton's *Pride and Prejudice*, where Jennifer Ehle was 26 rather than 20 like Austen's character, and in Mitchell's *Persuasion*, where Amanda Root was 32, instead of 27. More notably, Emma Thompson was 36 at the time she played Elinor Dashwood, 18 in the novel. The heroines, from a modern feminist perspective, are revealed as mature characters, like the older Jane Austen who revised the novels. Rather than the girls of 20 they theoretically were, Austen's heroines have aged in the adaptations, which suggests less strict views on femininity, spinsterhood and the time span of women's "bloom."

The film adaptations remain open to varying feminist interpretations. Their main difference from the completions (an occasional simplification of Austen's potential feminism) is probably caused by a difference of medium. Film adaptations are often

Hollywood movies with a built-in audience, and the demands to succeed in the box-office constrain filmmakers' options. Movie audiences approach the cinema with certain expectations: Austen, but Austen with a difference (that is, an updating of gender roles in combination with good old romance). A subversive reworking of the original is clearly out of the question. Even nowadays, in a post-*Clueless*, postmodern world of cultural recycling, too many liberties with the original on screen are often resented. Writing for the *Guardian*, Peter Bradshaw condemned Rozema's *Mansfield Park* on account of its experimentalism: "Patricia Rozema takes some diabolical liberties with her perversely experimentalist, and frankly preposterous, reading of Mansfield Park" (31 March 2000). Undeniably, sequels and completions also seek success in the marketplace, but the possibilities of amassing a fortune are much more remote. Few novelists would expect to make the $125 million that Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* grossed worldwide (Kaplan 1998: 179). Both novels and films participate in the commoditisation of Jane Austen, but the odds are in the latter's favour, curiously granting the former greater artistic (and gender) freedom.

Technical specificities also constrain film directors. The cinema is a visual art with a limited running time, which means that a novel must be heavily compressed and probably simplified; characters, incidents and subplots must be cut down to fit the 90 minutes allocated. This compression partly explains the differences between Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility* and Aiken's *Eliza's Daughter*. The former lasts 136 minutes, the latter 316 pages. Whereas Aiken has ample room for development, Thompson is forced to use pointed scissors: she disposes of the second Miss Steele and the whole of Elinor and Willoughby's conversation during Marianne's illness.

These technicalities help to explain the more depolemicised gender politics of the 1990s film adaptations. What clearly emerges from my examination of late twentieth and early twenty-first century films, sequels and completions is that there is no single Austenian

feminism. Her novels never present a simple unitary feminist reading to rewriters and directors. On the contrary, there are internal and external conflicts in the ways all of them attempt to make her novels fit the mould of modern feminism. Austen is for critics, writers and readers a radical feminist, a conservative feminist or not a feminist at all, whose works need heavy redrafting – by alternatively demonising or enhancing male characters, creating stronger and more resolute heroines or pushing them to the margins of the post-text. The completions, never quite finished, never quite complete, make the reader confront these dilemmas. They encompass conflicting feminist readings of Austen and her fiction, but not even in the way Aiken and Williams finish *The Watsons* is there unison.

Chapter V

Austen and *The Watsons*, 2010s

Recreations of Jane Austen in the last few years have been characterised by ironic commentary, pastiche and self-referentiality. Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) introduces herds of zombies into Meryton, where the refined young ladies now brandish a katana. It is not that irony and pastiche were not present earlier, but with the advent of postmodernism, they have become much more central to the popular treatment of Austen and her texts. Linda Hutcheon defines parody as a mixture of respectful homage, irony and humour, and sees this practice as part of the postmodern tendency to self-reference (1985: 37).[54] The pleasure of parody's irony comes "not from humor in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual 'bouncing'…between complicity and distance" (Hutcheon 1985: 32). This explains the appeal of depicting Elizabeth Bennet as an expert in martial arts and Mr. Darcy as a repressed, but benevolent, vampire. Jean-François Lyotard describes the postmodern trend as "bricolage," meaning "the high frequency of quotations of elements from previous styles or periods (classical or modern)" (Lyotard 1986: 171). Rewriting Austen's classic novels comes as a matter of course: whereas modernism attempted to break with tradition, postmodernism is characterised by repetition (Lyotard 1986: 171), especially of unique styles, like Austen's Regency discourse, which become ideal targets for parody (Jameson 1988: 4).

What happens to *The Watsons* in this era of self-confessed textual recycling? Two attempts to continue the fragment have been made since Merryn Williams's 2005 novel: Helen Baker published her own completion in 2008, and Laura Wade planned to finish and

[54] Hutcheon distinguishes between parody and pastiche: parody establishes a clearer difference and a greater distance between derivate and original; in contrast, pastiche is more imitative (1985: 38). For the purposes of this chapter, I will treat both as a form of ridicule, even if acknowledging Hutcheon's distinction between the different attitude parody and pastiche show towards their original.

adapt Austen's fragment for the stage. But to no avail: neither of them has captured the reader's imagination as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* has done. Whereas this monster mash-up sold more than 700,000 copies in less than one year, Baker's novel has gone unnoticed and Wade's play remains unfinished.

This chapter seeks to establish why no effective completion of *The Watsons* has appeared in the 2010s. It argues that recent continuations fail to embrace the ironic duplicity of most postmodern rewrites, that is, the impossible desire of presenting a Jane Austen of her own time and ours (Gothic and anti-Gothic, with Regency and modern sexual attitudes). Whereas the completions used to encompass contradictory Janeite discourses effectively, in the twenty-first century they have mostly lost this capacity. They have become the textual realm inhabited by more conservative sequel authors; with a lesser commercial potential, the completions become the refuge from aliens, zombies and vampires for those who still want to recapture the "real" Jane Austen. This chapter first studies three representative spinoffs, analysing how their ironic knowingness often takes the shape of a Gothic or monster mash-up with the author-as-character: Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), Amanda Grange's *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) and Michael Thomas Ford's *Jane Bites Back* (2010). Then, it examines why the last two completions of *The Watsons* emerge as poor examples of the postmodern Austen.

The Gothic, originally a medieval architectonic style, was in vogue from the mid-1700s. By the end of the eighteenth century, the taste for the gothic had acquired the proportions of a gothic revival, both in literature and architecture: architect Nicholas Hawksmoor used the gothic style in his rebuilding of All Souls College (Oxford) between 1715 and 1736; several writers, such as Horace Walpole and Sir Walter Scott, built themselves mansions in the gothic style in the late 1700s and early 1800s. This eighteenth-century gothic strongly fed upon Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime, as outlined in his

Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1759). Burke defined the sublime as "[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror." The sublime is for Burke an inextricable mixture of pain and pleasure, "productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (1759: 51). The eighteenth-century Gothic novel seeks an analogous bodily effect by arousing feelings of fear and terror in its readers. For instance, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) shows one of its characters being mysteriously dashed to pieces under a gigantic helmet of black feathers. This is the fashion that Jane Austen parodied in *Northanger Abbey*, where Catherine Morland discovers a laundry bill locked in an old-fashioned cabinet, instead of the tale of horror she expected (NA 172). *Northanger Abbey* is highly aware of its own Gothicism: when Catherine first sees the Abbey, she "felt for the first time she was really in an Abbey.– Yes, these were characteristic sounds;– they brought to her recollection a countless variety of dreadful situations and horrid scenes, which such buildings had witnessed, and such storms ushered in" (166-67). Catherine's confusion of fantasy and reality marks the novel's parodic self-awareness.

Unsurprisingly, the number of *Northanger Abbey* adaptations has risen in the last few years. The most self-conscious of Austen's novels – also containing Austen's famous defence of the novel – has recently been revived onstage by Tim Luscombe (2005-2007) and Marie Lynn Macy, who entitles her play *Northanger Abbey: A Romantic Gothic Comedy* (2006). Both highlight the original Gothic element by fusing *Northanger Abbey* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the novel it parodies. Luscombe inserts passages and characters from Radcliffe, and adds a Gothic décor to his play – published with a reproduction of Caspar David Friedrich's haunting painting "Abbey in the Oakwood" (1809-10) on its cover. If every epoch seems to have its own Austen favourite, *Northanger Abbey* is clearly the choice of the twenty-first

century:[55] ridiculing the Gothic tradition it mimics, *Northanger Abbey* emerges as a pre-text to the current ironic revision of Austen – for Catherine finally discovers, to her disappointment, that there has been no bloody murder within the walls of the abbey. There is an irony inherent in readmitting those Gothic elements that Austen spoofed and superseded.

A key film adaption is Jon Jones's *Northanger Abbey* (2007), where Henry Tilney encourages Catherine to write her own gothic novel: "*Northanger Abbey* would make a very good title," he says. The film "gothicises" the gothic: the Abbey, with its medieval staircases, windows and arches, recalls Horace Walpole's gothic mansion, Strawberry Hill. There are references to vampirism, which becomes a metaphor for General Tilney's behaviour to his late wife. The last scene "vampirises" the General, presenting him as a figure reminiscent of Bram Stoker's Dracula: pale, solitary and totally clad in black, General Tilney bitterly walks in the vicinity of the Abbey.

Jones's film adaptation enhances the sexual undertone typical of the gothic through Catherine's fantasies.[56] They mostly consist of abductions and seductions: drowsing on her way to Bath, Catherine dreams that the carriage is assaulted by a group of bandits, one of whom caresses her face and neck after thrusting Mr. Allen out of the vehicle. A different dream features Henry and Catherine running away from John Thorpe in the middle of a storm. The two men engage in a swordfight – obvious phallic element included – which throws Catherine into sexual ecstasy. Her fantasies take her to a dungeon too, where she finds Isabella Thorpe tied down to a bed under Captain Tilney's watch. It is not surprising that the heroine confesses to Eleanor: "I don't think I'm very pure in heart. I, I have the most terrible dreams sometimes," at which Eleanor smiles understandingly.

[55] Other examples include the collection *Gothic Classics*, which illustrates *Northanger Abbey* and other stories by Poe and Radcliffe (2007). In 2008, the blog *Austenprose* held a special event to celebrate *Northanger Abbey*, under the motto: "Go Gothic!...With Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*" (Austenprose.com, 31 Oct 2008).
[56] Famously, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) excited the late eighteenth-century reader's imagination by exploring the sexual awakening of its hero, the repressed monk Ambrosio.

Jones's "undressing" of *Northanger Abbey* is evidently controversial in gender terms. One may wonder if this is not a return to the male gaze that Laura Mulvey (1975) deprecated for its objectification of women. If reversing the traditional male gaze was problematic as a feminist tool in the 1990s adaptations (see Chapter 4), reverting back to the objectification of the female body on screen is certainly more so. The sexual scenes could be read as enacting and celebrating Catherine's loss of power – with nudity, violence and semi-naked women suspended by their wrists. Alternatively, they are the product of the heroine's imagination, and represent her search for sexual pleasure. Even Catherine's sadomasochism is a symptom of her agency.[57] In contrast with the freedom she arguably finds in her dreams, Catherine and the other female characters are persistently ogled in Bath society. As soon as Catherine gets out of the carriage, a stranger eyes her up. Catherine and Isabella are chased by two young men in the Pump Room and the circulating library. Women are the permanent targets of the male objectifying gaze in Jones's film – and that is not the product of female fantasy.

The "gothicised" versions of Austen are often funny because they acknowledge the sex, blood and melodrama that Austen deliberately omitted in her response to the Gothic vogue. They are parodies of parody: lampooning Austen's lampoon on the gothic by reintroducing the elements she neglected. This self-aware "gothicisation" of Austen is key in the novels examined here: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009); *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) and *Jane Bites Back* (2010).

[57] Pat Califia, among many others, defends masochism in feminist terms claiming that, rather than being the epitome of sexism, it is "a consensual activity that involves polarized roles and intense sensations…The participants are enhancing their sexual pleasure, not damaging or imprisoning one another" (1982: 35).

I. The horror mash-up: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*

The "gothicisation" of Austen is one of the manifestations of postmodern self-reflexivity which, as Hutcheon claimed of parody (1985: 37), straddles two trends: ridiculing and paying homage to the past. It belongs to a larger phenomenon, the Gothic revival that currently fills TV, film, videogames and strands of popular literature. The origin of the modern vampire fashion can be traced back to Hammer horror films in the 1960s and 70s[58] and Anne Rice's novels in the 1970s and 80s, particularly *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), adapted for the screen with Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in 1994. More recent vampire blockbusters include the TV series *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and the *Twilight* books (2005-2008) and films (2008-2012). Returning from the dead to prey on the living, zombies are equally fashionable: Max Brooks's novel *World War Z* (2006), currently being filmed, is the story of the coming war against the zombie hordes; the recent drama series *The Walking Dead* features the US after the zombie apocalypse. Whereas the vampire is an individual with a proper name, the zombie is part of a homogenous horde. Vampires tend to be glamorous, intelligent and sophisticated, zombies are decaying (having parts missing or hanging out), slow and stupid – in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, they mistake heads of cauliflower for human brains (2009: 302).

Zombies and vampires are not simply cheap devices in lowbrow novels and films. Their mobility as motifs enables authors and directors to adapt them for different purposes. Ken Gelder defends the cultural adaptability of the vampire, for it "can be made to appeal to or generate fundamental urges located somehow 'beyond' culture (desire, anxiety, fear), while simultaneously, it can stand for a range of meanings and positions *in* culture" (1994:

[58] After *Dracula* (1958), which broke box office records, Hammer produced eight *Dracula* films between 1960 and 1974: *The Brides of Dracula* (1960) – alluded to in *Jane Bites Back*, *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966), *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1969), *Scars of Dracula* (1970), *Dracula AD 1972* (1972), *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973) and *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974).

141). As happens with Austen's texts, zombies and vampires have been reinterpreted differently according to author and epoch, often appearing as an excuse for social commentary. Although they often fulfil the audience's escapist fantasies, the Undead also represent cultural paranoia (fear of sex, incurable diseases) and serve political discourse on serious topics (consumerism, economic crises). Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has been read as the unleashing of Victorian sexuality, but also as a representation of class anxieties, homosexuality, The New Woman, Irishness, the threat of Judaism, etc.[59] David Sirota reads zombies as symbols of the current economic and political crisis in the US, referring to the "zombie executives" in Wall Street and the "zombie politicians" working to construct "zombie health insurance companies" (10 Oct 2009).

Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* launched the modern Austen horror mash-up using a very simple strategy: inserting zombie incidents into Austen's original text. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* follows the original chapter division and does not alter the basic plot. The novel works as an expanded version of *Pride and Prejudice*, with herds of zombies "cursed to wander the earth in search of brains" (2009: 158). Hordes of unmentionables are menacing Britain, and the five Bennet sisters, after an advanced training in Chinese martial arts, are commissioned to defend Meryton from the plague. The most significant differences are Wickham's lameness (the punishment Darcy chooses for his past debauchery) and Charlotte Lucas's zombie transformation. Infected by the plague, Charlotte decides to marry Mr. Collins and enjoy some comfortable last months. These major deviations aside, Grahame-Smith "copies" Austen's text and weaves it with his own; for instance, on Bingley's desertion, Mrs. Gardiner originally claims "Poor Jane! I am sorry for

[59] See, for instance, Christopher Bentley's "The Monster in the Bedroom: Sexual Symbolism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (1988). Some critics (Dyer 1988; Howe 1988) have connected *Dracula* with alternative sexualities. For re-interpretations of *Dracula* through the phenomenon of the New Woman, see Marie Mulvey-Roberts's "*Dracula* and the Doctors: Bad Blood, Menstrual Taboo and the New Woman" (1998), and for post-colonial re-interpretations, see Canon Schmitt's "Mother Dracula: Orientalism, Degeneration, and Anglo-Irish National Subjectivity at the Fin de Siècle" (1997).

her, because, with her disposition, she may not get over it immediately. It had better have happened to *you*, Lizzy" (PP 141). To this, Grahame-Smith adds: "you would have opened this Bingley's stomach and strangled him with his own bowels, I suspect" (2009: 107).

Zombies in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* are humorous and ridiculous. From the beginning, Grahame-Smith establishes the flippant tone of his pastiche: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains" (7). This opening sentence, which sets the tone for the whole volume, is very tongue-in-cheek; it initiates the textual "plunder" the novel conducts, capriciously erasing and adding words and phrases. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a childish game, the archetypal example of literary mischief. When Elizabeth visits Hunsford Parsonage, Charlotte's transformation is already advanced. As she wonders who, Mr. Darcy or Colonel Fitzwilliam, would be a better match for her friend, Charlotte cannot help pondering the size of their brains: "to counterbalance these advantages [Colonel Fitzwilliams's], Mr. Darcy had a considerably larger head, and thus, more brains to feast upon" (142). Despite the mixed feelings *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* has generated,[60] Austen biographer Claire Tomalin applauds its sauciness, believing that Austen herself would have appreciated it: "Many of her early stories written for her brothers were very violent. She did have a strong sense of humour and also knew what publishers liked" (qtd. in Harlow, 8 Feb 2009).

The absurdity of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* derives from its amalgamation of genres, the comedy of manners and the zombie blockbuster. The polite manners and social refinement of Austen's original characters utterly contrast with the violence they exhibit in the rewrite. Rejecting Darcy's first proposal, Elizabeth smashes his head against the Collins'

[60] *The New Yorker* defined *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as "Eighty-five per cent Austen, fifteen per cent a television writer named Seth Grahame-Smith, and one hundred per cent terrible" (Macy Halford, 8 Ap. 2009). For *Vanguard*, zombies make the novel "repetitive and tedious," adding nothing new to the text (Sara Hutchins, 5 May 2009).

mantelpiece, planning to cut his throat for his offence to the Bennet family (148-51). Likewise, in his attempt to obtain information about Wickham and Lydia, Darcy automatically resorts to violence: "it was two or three minutes of savage beating before he could get from her [Mrs. Yonge] what he wanted. She would not betray her trust, I suppose, without an application of severe blows about the head and neck" (259). And yet Darcy is the model English gentleman – there lies the irony of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

What is the effect of Grahame-Smith's odd genre combination? Zombies are no longer scary; horror is no longer horrific. Zombies in Grahame-Smith do not provoke the reader's fear, but his/her laughter and disgust. There are many descriptions of dismemberments, rotting corpses, beheadings, vomit, bowels and brains. Elizabeth enjoys nibbling the heart of one of Lady Catherine's ninjas, whom she has just slain (132). These elements aim to provoke a reaction, to move the reader and make him/her experience shock, repugnance or amusement. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is an exercise in literary absurdity: there is no good intellectual reason for mixing Austen and horror; zombies do not add to our understanding of the original. Yet this is part of the novel's anti-intellectual cleverness: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* strongly implies that the original lacks action, especially the kind of feisty female action that modern youngsters seem to relish.[61] *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* does something new with Austen; such a combination had never been attempted before, and at a time when readers have seen a spate of sequels, completions and adaptations following the fate of Austen's characters, the monster mash-up comes as a refreshing variation.

[61] A good example is the popular TV series *Once Upon a Time* which, rewriting the character of Snow White as an aggressive hermit in the woods, was rated among the top 25 broadcasts in October 2012 (Nielsen TV Ratings 2012).

Grahame-Smith's novel adds a transgressive pleasure to the experience of reading Austen, which the 2010s completions lack. In an act of defiance, the advertising statement announces that *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* "transforms a masterpiece of world literature into something you'd actually want to read." Roland Barthes defined "the pleasure of the text" as the result of a seam or cut between two edges: the obedient, conformist edge and the subversive, mobile edge (1975: 6). Pleasure in Grahame-Smith's novel derives from the tensions between the Regency novel and the zombie blockbuster, from inhabiting "the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation" (Barthes 1975: 7). For Barthes, the value of modern works proceeds from "their duplicity. By which it must be understood that they always have two edges. The subversive edge may seem privileged because it is the edge of violence" (1975: 7). Grahame-Smith and Grange favour the dissident edge in their rewrites, where violence and aggression, literal and literary, constitutes the main textual engine. Their desire to have it both ways with Austen connects with the duplicity Barthes notes: theirs is a Jane Austen of the 1800s and the 2000s, gothic and anti-gothic, high and lowbrow. After all, as Jameson observed, schizophrenia is one of the most significant features of postmodernism (1988: 3).

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies shies away from all serious academic criticism, throwing egg on the face of the literary establishment. The back cover introduces Grahame-Smith as someone who "once took a class in English literature," and the final pages of the volume are a mock "discussion guide," which describes the novel as "a rich, multilayered study of love, war, and the supernatural" (318). These are highbrow delusions, for clearly there are just two layers in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, as its title indicates: the Regency novel and the zombie mayhem. Grahame-Smith writes a postmodern lampoon more on academia than on Austen, as he questions what high and lowbrow literature is and what

deserves critical attention. The borderline between classic and popular, serious and trashy, literature is blurred.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies deliberately challenges the very existence of these boundaries. The novel asks why readers should respect one kind of book more than another on the basis of its age and intellectual aspirations. Frederic Jameson noted how postmodern authors do not quote texts as modernists (like Joyce) did, but incorporate them directly so that the line between high and low is difficult to draw (1988: 2). Likewise, Grahame-Smith interweaves his own text with Austen's, refusing to signal where one ends and the other one begins; this is a quotation without quotation marks. Postmodern spinoffs seem to ask how Austen's classic novels should best be rated: as old texts that demand study and discursive analysis, or as youthful romances that continue to entertain in a modern context? But this is an old debate, for as my thesis shows, Austen's status has long been at the crossroads between elite and popular culture. Her novels are a high and lowbrow cultural phenomenon, attractive to academic and popular readers alike;[62] so perhaps the current duplicity of Austen recreations is but an elaboration on her long split cultural identity.

Amanda Grange's *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) is an even more self-conscious monster mash-up, which clearly draws on the eighteenth-century Gothic novel and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Maggie Kilgour summarises the characteristics of a typical gothic novel: "conventional settings (one castle – preferably in ruins; some gloomy mountains – preferably the Alps; a haunted room that locks only on the outside) and characters (a passive and persecuted heroine, a sensitive and rather ineffectual hero, a dynamic and tyrannical villain, an evil prioress, talkative servants)" (1995: 4-5). *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* fits most of the criteria. The setting is obviously foreign: France, the Alps and Italy, like Horace Walpole's *The*

[62] Whereas Lionel Trilling feels that Austen is "a phenomenon of our contemporary high culture," Juliet McMaster believes that "Austen's popular following is as large and loud as it has ever been, and moreover they are now more organized and articulate than before" (McMaster 1996: 3-4).

Castle of Otranto (1765) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797). Mountains are a clear source of sublime danger for Burke, since "we are more struck at looking down from a precipice than looking up at an object of equal height" (1759: 91). There is a castle in the sequel (belonging to Darcy's uncle whom Darcy and Elizabeth visit following their marriage); this castle is in the Alps and is also semi-ruined. It has mysterious passageways and a "staircase leading down into the bowels" (2009: 124), reminiscent of Walpole's novel, where "the lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters" (1765: 25). This pervasive sense of danger triggers Elizabeth's persecutory dreams: "the hairs rose on the back of her neck. She felt her flesh crawl with horror as she knew with all her senses that there was someone – some *thing* – behind her. It was waiting in the shadows" (183) – a clear example of the strong emotions of terror and pain Burke contemplated. Talkative, superstitious servants complete the gothic tone of *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*: they believe that Darcy and Elizabeth are cursed and that Elizabeth will cause her husband's death (2009: 89).

Mr. Darcy, Vampyre absorbs Bram Stoker's *Dracula* too, the novel which popularised vampires in fiction. The atmosphere in the Alps recalls that of Transylvania: the castle is surrounded by ravenous wolves, and locals are full of superstitions – they cross themselves when the Darcys' carriage passes them on the road (79). Darcy's uncle, vampire Count Polidori, is described as "somewhat strange of appearance, being unusually tall and very angular, with a finely-boned face, long, delicate fingers, and features which gave him a perpetual look of haughtiness" (85). Jonathan Harker's first impression of Count Dracula in Transylvania is similarly that of "a tall, old man, clean shaven but for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere" (1897: 46). The model of the aristocratic vampire had been introduced by John Polidori, Lord Byron's secretary and author of *The Vampyre* (1819), one of the first fictional accounts of vampirism. Grange adds a further level of ironic self-awareness to her sequel: she

names Darcy's uncle after John Polidori, whose literary vampire is a thinly-disguised portrait of Byron. The latter will emerge as a fictional character, and a vampire, in Michael Thomas Ford's *Jane Bites Back* – all an exercise in postmodern self- and cross-referentiality.

Zombies and vampires in Grahame-Smith's and Grange's novels can be read as metaphors for the Austen phenomenon: these creatures are dead, but still living and refusing to die. In *Dracula*, Dr. Van Helsing describes vampires as "the dead Un-dead," who suffer "the curse of immortality; they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world" (1897: 245, 252). Applied to Austen recreations, this comparison results in an ironic reading of the Janeite phenomenon, which has indeed multiplied the number of Austen novels in the form of rewritings, sequels and film adaptations – whether they are "the evils of the world" is a matter of opinion. The zombie contributes to this humorous reading, for it is a menacing but ridiculous creature that revels in the brains of the living – perhaps as mass culture and fan fiction arguably "prey" on readers' minds.[63] The gothicisation of Austen's oeuvre points to the cyclical nature of history: fashions, literary trends, are recuperated and, like Austen's narratives, refuse to die.

Zombies and vampires serve a number of purposes in Austen sequels. The first and obvious one is, paradoxically, updating Austen's Regency novels to modern taste: the film producer of *Pride and Predator*, which throws a seven-foot alien into Meryton, declared that the film was "an attempt to deconstruct and breathe new life into the exhausted Jane Austen stories…It felt like a fresh and funny way to blow apart the done-to-death Jane Austen genre" (qtd. in Funk, 18 Feb 2009). As in previous eras, Austen's novels are adapted to society's needs and tastes, to the genres that modern audiences covet. The addition of monsters can

[63] Simon Frith notes the evolution in appreciations of popular culture: from the notion that "if it's popular it must be bad," held by the Frankfurt School, to the still problematic position that "if it's popular it must be bad, unless it's popular with the right people." This modern stance looks for redeeming features in popular culture based on consumption, but still downplays its social import (1991: 103).

also be read as an attempt to bring a male audience to Jane Austen. Typically, men do not find period drama appealing, but with an extraterrestrial in the recipe, producer David Furnish expects that *Pride and Predator* will be "the first Jane Austen adaptation 'to which men will drag their girlfriends'" (Ibid.). Ultimately, the end of adding horror creatures is commercial: as the sales figures of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* demonstrate,[64] vampire and zombie creations are a commercial success, but so are Austen rewrites, or any product with the "Austen" label. This modern trend of cross-genre and ironic pastiche is not unique to Jane Austen: *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011) transforms Shakespeare's characters into garden gnomes; *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012) focuses on the huntsman who refuses to kill Snow White and eventually becomes her mentor. Paraphrasing Jameson, we are imprisoned in the past and "all that is left is to imitate dead styles" (1988: 7).

Monsters, or the dead Undead, have given a new turn to Austen's popular reception, which contrasts dramatically with that of earlier periods. The 1920s admired a fidelity to the original, enacting a sanctification of the Austen text. In contrast, the 2010s intersperse explicit sexual scenes and monster attacks with the formerly worshipped text. Austen's novels are no longer the repository of order and stability that they were after World Wars I and II. In *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*, the unhappy Elizabeth writes to Jane from the Polidori castle: "Tell me of our Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, and the dear children. Remind me that there is a world beyond this one and that order and familiarity and calm and security exist" (2009: 93). Clearly, they no longer exist in Austen rewrites, which have become the place of the wonderful and the fantastic, striding far away from the sanity which Austen's novels were thought to impart in the 1920s.

[64] According to *Publishers' Weekly*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* sold 794,333 copies in 2009, closely followed by another novel on the supernatural: Charlaine Harris's *Definitely Dead*, which sold 730,013 (5 Ap. 2010).

Another ironic turn in Austen's popular afterlife is the "undressing" that her novels have undergone in the last few years. Austen regularly pushes sexual liaisons to the margins: Maria Rushworth's affair with Henry Crawford and Eliza Williams's with Willoughby happen offstage, and are subsequently reported, rather than shown. Critics have sometimes made this sexual component even more peripheral: for JEAL, sexuality was clearly not an issue in his aunt's novels; JEAL limited himself to praise the "great moral" of the novels, "the superiority of high over low principles, and of greatness over littleness of mind" (1871: 153). More recently, Susan Morgan has extolled the absence of sex in Austen's novels as a literary innovation, not a limitation (1987: 351). Yet modern rewrites frequently "spice up" Austen's texts, bringing these marginal or suppressed elements to the centre of the narrative. They revel in their own liberalism, which is highlighted through contrast with nineteenth-century attitudes.

Arielle Eckstut's *Pride and Promiscuity* (2003) retrieves the "lost" (meaning pornographic) scenes of Austen's six complete novels and her fragment of *The Watsons*. *Pride and Promiscuity* concludes with a postscript on *The Watsons*, which is as close as the fragment comes to obtaining a self-ironic continuation. This postscript consists of a letter from publisher Richard Crosby to Jane Austen, where he explains the reason for turning down *The Watsons* and destroying most of the manuscript: its obscenity. Eckstut thus answers the question of why *The Watsons* is incomplete. Although she does not actually continue the fragment herself, Eckstut hints at certain plot developments through Crosby's letter, including deviant sexual practises in Croydon: "I will never be able to look at an innocent lamb in the same way again," Crosby writes, "nor will a bonnet appear the benevolent object it has always been in my heart. No, both these and so many others (a butter churn, a poker, a mop-handle) are forever coloured in my mind" (2003: 152). Eckstut re-

appropriates elements that are often associated with Austen's novels (a bonnet) and transforms them into sexual toys – hence the joke of *Pride and Promiscuity*.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* also participate in the current sexualisation of Austen's narratives. The former heightens the sexual undertone of its original, sometimes contributing bawdy, even obscene, episodes. After a fight against the Undead on the grounds of Pemberley, Elizabeth gives Darcy his ammunition back: "Your balls, Mr. Darcy?" To which he answers: "They belong to you, Miss Bennet" and "[u]pon this, their colour changed, and they were forced to look away from one another, lest they laugh" (205-6). Recurrent references to male genitalia as men's "most English parts" complete the lewd tenor of the novel. There is a certain national pride apparently associated with male genitalia in the novel – with the implication that the phallus stands for the nation and will combat the zombie attack. But this is very tongue-in-cheek for, when the ravenous undead attack the Meryton assembly, "neither he [Mr. Bingley] nor Mr. Darcy were to be found with blade or bludgeon" (16). Instead, they step aside and watch the Bennet sisters defend their compatriots. Such references mock gender conventions and deride the traditional association between Austen and the nation.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies' attitude towards gender is highly ambivalent. Its feisty heroines could be seen as empowered or ludicrous or both: women are the primary fighters against the ravenous undead. In a post-feminist era, traditional female accomplishments (music) are replaced by training in the deadly arts (managing a katana). Yet gender in the novel is not to be taken too seriously, for Grahame-Smith objectifies men and women alike. When Elizabeth stays at Netherfield and Miss Bingley invites her to walk around the drawing-room, Darcy claims: "I can admire you much better from here. In fact, the fire casts quite a revealing silhouette against the fabric of your gowns" (46). Elizabeth similarly exercises the female gaze on Darcy, alluding to his "English parts" when chatting to

Jane or Mrs. Gardiner: "I believe I must date it [her love for Darcy]," Elizabeth tells Jane, "from my first seeing the way his trousers clung to those most English parts" (305). This substitutes Elizabeth's joke that she first fell in love with Darcy on contemplating the grounds of Pemberley (PP 373). The implicit equation between Darcy's genitalia and his estate, deriving from a textual comparison between source and target text, adds to the latter's lampoon on gender and the old association between Austen and Englishness.

In contrast, in a post-feminist age that takes sexual liberation for granted, *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* seems to exhibit an old-fashioned attitude towards gender. Grange depicts a weaker Elizabeth who, far from being the wit of Meryton, or the best zombie-slayer in town, becomes a frail damsel in distress, the "passive and persecuted heroine" that, according to Kilgour (1995: 5), characterised the Gothic novel. On their wedding tour, Darcy takes all the decisions about their route and means of transport without even consulting Elizabeth: "We will travel in easy stages, seeing the sights on the way;" "I will have to guard you well" he says when heading for Paris (2009: 36, 16). Elizabeth, originally one of Austen's most determined heroines, simply answers: "Where you go, I go. If you stay, I stay" (51). Sexual tension and repression are quite explicit in Grange's novel, for Darcy, as a vampire, runs the risk of converting Elizabeth during sexual intercourse. For this reason, he frequently casts a "hungry" look on her: when she accidentally cuts her finger, "the look on Darcy's face…had been ravenous" (204), and he talks about how "[y]ou are intoxicating, ravishing, exquisite" (70), in a clear blending of sex and food which presents Elizabeth as an appetising dish for male consumption.

The reason for *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*'s seemingly traditional gender roles – even misogynistic from a modern perspective – may lie in the sources on which it draws. *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* seems to inherit Burke's masculinist notion of the sublime (1759), which identified subliminity with the masculine and beauty with the feminine. In the sequel's most

conspicuously objectifying scene, Elizabeth is abducted by the eldest vampire, who, as *the* family patriarch, demands a medieval *droit de seigneur*. She is kidnapped in the carriage of his accomplice, Prinze Ficenzi, who has persuaded her to abandon Darcy. When Elizabeth realises the trick, it is too late; she is helpless, travelling in the Prinze's carriage, driven by his coachman and surrounded by his servants. The carriage only moves faster when she orders it to stop, taking Elizabeth to the middle of the forest. This abduction creates a typically gothic atmosphere: "The world became dark and mysterious, with green shadows closing in around the carriage, eerie and malevolent. The sounds were muted and the atmosphere was heavy and thick" (233-4). A Burkean mixture of pain and pleasure characterises this passage: on the one hand, the feeling of terror is emphasised by Elizabeth's looking up at the tall surrounding trees; on the other, there is something extremely sexual, even pornographic, which connects back to Jones's adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*. Poor heroines in distress are kidnapped against their will and taken far away to meet their (sexual) aggressors, in scenes that intend to be racy and titillating, but normally offer up powerless women for male pleasure.

Yet the self-consciousness that pervades *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* enables a different interpretation of its gender politics. The apparently traditional gender roles depicted in the sequel may be intended to provoke a critical reaction from the modern reader. The ironic self-awareness of *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (in emphatically portraying Elizabeth as a frail damsel in distress) makes the twenty-first-century reader wonder whether the novel is really re-instating older patriarchal values or simply mocking them through exaggeration. The Gothic genre itself, as Kilgour notes, was a controversial art form, "a puzzling contradiction:" "Revolutionary or reactionary? An incoherent mess or a self-conscious critique of repressive concepts of coherence and order? Apolitical or a direct product and artistic equivalent of the French Revolution? Transgressive and lawless or conformist and meekly law-abiding?" (1995:10). Grange's and Grahame-Smith's self-conscious re-interpretation of what is itself a

highly contradictory genre adds to the already controversial afterlife of Austen's work. The double reading of the gender politics of *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* exposes how the self-contradictions typical of the completions of *The Watsons* seem to have been transferred to other forms of afterlife in the twenty-first century.

The process of sexualising Austen's novels generally involves strong self-awareness. Present-day readers/viewers revel in their own permissiveness: sex gives the audience a sense of their openness and liberalism, contrasting with the repression of their tight-laced ancestors. The "undressing" of Austen's novels confirms the present (and past) ambivalence towards the novelist, as writers and readers persist in having visions of nineteenth and twenty-first-century sexuality in place at the same time. A further example is the film script *F*cking Jane Austen*, in the "Black List" of Hollywood's best unproduced scripts in 2010. It features two male friends angry at Austen for creating unrealistic romantic expectations among women. But when they get trapped in the nineteenth century, there is only one possible escape – seducing Jane Austen. Sex is also a lucrative component in low/middle-brow cultural productions, even more so when combined with other popular elements, like Austen and vampires. Most recent Austen rewrites enhance this element even when divested of vampires: the chick lit rewriting *Me and Mr Darcy* (2007) and the film *Lost in Austen* (2008) exploit Darcy's sex-appeal and the legacy of the legendary BBC pond scene – in which Colin Firth as Darcy was shown wearing a dripping shirt.

Another ironic practice that reads Austen against the (heterosexual) grain is the appropriation of her oeuvre by the gay community. Claudia Johnson traces the "queering" of Austen and her novels back to the early twentieth century, through Rudyard Kipling, Lord David Cecil and Marvin Mudrick – all of whom contributed, in Johnson's view, to the homoerotic reading of the novels (2000: 31-36). Yet the "queering" of Austen and her works had never been so open: in 1995, *The London Review of Books* took the Janeite world by

storm when it titled Terry Castle's piece "Was Jane Austen Gay" (3 Aug. 1995). In *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon*, Clara Tuite "digs up" homoerotic tendencies in Austen's texts. Tuite provides a queer reading of the heroine's aunt, Mrs. Percival, in *Catherine, or the Bower* and describes *Sanditon*'s Lady Denham as a lesbian vampire (2002: 173). Popular rewrites have turned Austen into an icon of homosexuality too: Ann Herendeen's novel *Pride/Prejudice* (2010) explores Darcy's premarital affair with Bingley and Elizabeth's liaison with Charlotte Lucas. Eckstut's *Pride and Promiscuity* (2003) includes homosexual episodes among the "lost" scenes of Austen's novels: while staying at Netherfield, Jane finds Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst climbing into her bed, and Frank Churchill makes unmistakable approaches to Mr. Knightley. The film *Lost in Austen* depicts Miss Bingley's lesbian preferences, as she openly flirts with heroine Amanda Price. Austen's apparently heterosexual model of romance is appropriated by the gay community: either by ascribing a new meaning to Austen's old texts or by rewriting them with all-new gay content. In this way, homosexual minorities claim the presumably "straight" Austen text and challenge the (sexual and literary) mainstream. This mode of appropriation may be symptomatic of Austen's "queer," or odd, status in the canon of English literature, as a popular and academic author whose novels have been the origin of literary battles for the last two centuries.

II. The writer-within-the-story: *Jane Bites Back*

A second popular practice in modern Austenalia is resurrecting the writer in the post-text. *Northanger Abbey* opens by mocking the idea of a heroine: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine," for Catherine is neither especially pretty nor especially intelligent, and her learning, drawing and music skills are all deficient (NA 13, 14). Ironically, recent spinoffs have taken a fancy to transforming Austen herself into a literary heroine. The biopics *Becoming Jane* (2007) and

Miss Austen Regrets (2008)[65] depict an attractive writer: played by Anne Hathaway and Olivia Williams respectively, the filmic Austen strays far away from Cassandra's drawing, the only likeness of the novelist to have been authenticated by the National Portrait Gallery.[66]

The intrusion of the author as a fictional character is a common postmodern trope: Aleid Fokkema views the author as "postmodernism's stock character," since s/he embodies the main tenets of the movement, namely a concern with writing and the impossibility of factual representation (1999: 41). Although the writer-within-the-story is no new invention,[67] author fictions have mushroomed in the last twenty years: the lives of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Arthur Conan Doyle, among many other writers, have all metamorphosed into fictional material.[68] The work that concerns this section, Michael Thomas Ford's *Jane Bites Back* (2010), features Jane Austen as a vampire in modern-day New York, where she works as a bookseller and laments the transformation of her novels into a global brand.

Jane Bites Back confirms the author-as-character as a postmodern genre, with Austen being simultaneously in control of the fiction *and* not, at once author and character. Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars relate the author-as-character to the impossibility of historical knowledge, self-reflection and deliberate intertextuality (1999: 11). Ford's novel is self-referential on various levels. First, it engages with the process of literary creation, in the form of Jane's new novel and Byron's turn to the romantic novel under the pseudonym of

[65] *Becoming Jane* (2007) is itself based on Jon Spence's fictional biography (2003). Other fictional renditions of Austen's life include T.C. Boyle's *I Dated Jane Austen* (1997), Alexandra Potter's *Me and Mr. Darcy* (2007) and Laurie Viera Rigler's *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* (2009).

[66] This watercolour shows an unsmiling, unwelcoming Austen. For a more thorough discussion of Austen's portraits, from Cassandra's drawing to the plumbago and chalk sketch recently brought to public notice by Paula Byrne, see Claudia Johnson's Chapter One in *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (2012).

[67] Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars trace the history of the genre back to Ancient Greece (in Plato and Homer), passing through the Renaissance and eighteenth-century France (1999: 12-14).

[68] Gaynor Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008) explores Dickens's tumultuous marriage; Margaret Forster's *Lady's Maid* (1991) retells the romance between Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning from the viewpoint of Barrett's maid; and Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005) portrays Conan Doyle as a Sherlock-Holmes figure.

Penelope Wentz. *Jane Bites Back* relates Austen's struggles to publish her seventh complete novel, *Constance*, which has been rejected 116 times over the last two hundred years. Most chapters in *Jane Bites Back* open with an excerpt from the manuscript of *Constance*, partly a gothic novel, partly a künstlerroman or "artist" novel. It recounts Constance's process of becoming a writer: her wish for pens as Christmas presents, and her reflections on the power of writers over characters (2010: 29, 102). Austen's new work is highly sexual, depicting the heroine's affair with the Byronic figure Jonathan, which parallels Jane's affair with Byron in *Jane Bites Back*. *Constance* appears as a fragmented reflection of Ford's own novel: there is a correlation between each excerpt and the action in the chapter it opens. The synergy between both texts foregrounds *Jane Bites Back*'s ventriloquism – and postmodernism.

In its inclusion of various authors and their interactions, Ford's novel comments by extension on the relation between canonical texts of English literature. *Jane Bites Back* dramatises the quarrel that Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë could never have – for the historical Brontë was reading Austen's novels in the mid-1800s, decades after Austen's death. In this way, *Jane Bites Back* engages with the past while also allowing for new possibilities. Discussing literature with Byron and Walter (her former and potential lover, respectively), Jane defends her own novels crying: "What nonsense. Just because Austen's heroines aren't flinging themselves all over the moors and mooning over disfigured men and being tormented by mad-women...Personally, I find it [*Jane Eyre*] devoid of warmth and overripe with melodrama" (88-89). *Jane Bites Back* allows Austen to answer back Brontë's famous censure – that Austen's novels are "without *poetry*" and "the Passions are perfectly unknown to her" (1850: 140). The literary fight is taken further, for the fictional Charlotte attempts to murder Jane and claim authorship for *Constance*. Also a vampire, Charlotte Brontë does not fare well in Ford's novel: jealous, deceitful and mentally deranged, she lives with her three mummified siblings, perpetually re-enacting their "happy" times together (222)

– another symptom that, as Jameson claimed, the past is inescapable and gets perpetually re-enacted.

Jane's interaction with Byron, her former lover and transformer into a vampire, is part of the postmodern literary game that adds a humorous note to the novel. Glamorous and egotistical, Byron is still a hardened womaniser, whose "dark eyes were matched by the darkness of his hair, which was cut slightly long, so a lock of it curled over one eye" (79). His quarrels with Jane contribute some of the most hilarious moments to the novel. When Byron blackmails Jane to leave Walter and elope with him, he claims "man's love is of man's life a thing apart. 'Tis woman's whole existence," to which Jane answers "Stop quoting yourself...It's vain even for you" (117). This is a wonderful moment of postmodern self-mockery, repeated when Byron discloses his identity as Penelope Wentz at a conference on romantic fiction; he confronts Jane's disbelief by claiming "I am Penelope Wentz indeed...I am, after all, the most romantic man in the world" (243). Similarly, Byron regrets leaving some letters alluding to his homosexual affairs unburned, to which Jane retorts: "It's too late now...They even mention them in your Wikipedia entry" (139). Effacing the boundaries between high and low literature, *Jane Bites Back* amusingly juxtaposes romantic poetry and harlequin fiction, old hand-written correspondence and modern cultural mass production. The novel questions which of these ways of reading Austen, the popular or the canonical, is more meaningful and productive – and whether it is necessary to make a choice at all.

Jane Bites Back is conscious of the Austen industry and the pop culture to which it belongs. The novel opens with Melodie Gladstone's visit to the bookshop to sign copies of her sequel *Waiting for Mr. Darcy*, a word-play on *Waiting for Godot*. Janeitism has become akin to religious fanaticism, for Melodie sells readers the idea that they should wait for their Mr. Darcy. Her philosophy becomes a chant to (nearly) eternal virginity, with tones of sectarianism, which involves adepts' wearing a silver locket with a portrait of Darcy as a

reminder of their promise (6). But when the audience leaves, Melodie's staging appears for what it is, as she claims: "It's just my piece of the Austen pie…You put her name on anything and it will sell" (9). *Jane Bites Back* is ironically critical of the Austen industry to which it belongs, with Jane herself disparaging the opportunism of sequel authors. In a narcissistic wink at the reader, Ford's heroine allows room for some imaginative (and comparable) spinoffs like *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, praising the comic tone zombies contribute – as if the novel was not metatextual and intertextual enough already. *Jane Bites Back* is also self-conscious as a monster mash-up: it parodies the vampire genre by contradicting widespread assumptions, such as the idea that vampires cannot eat. Here Jane is quite happy about binge-eating cinnamon buns without putting on a gram. There are references to Anne Rice's novels and the horror film *The Brides of Dracula* (30, 70), which, alongside the comments on Austen merchandise, present *Jane Bites Back* as an all but innocent horror mash-up and a Janeite self-parody.

The author-as-character genre may be what enables the absorption of these numerous self-referential moments into *Jane Bites Back*. Franssen and Hoenselaars recognise the genre as eminently hybrid and undefined, at the crossroads between the historical novel, biography and the künstlerroman (1999: 18). This indeterminacy might explain why, in *Jane Bites Back*, the writer-within-the-story allows for the inclusion of gothic fiction, chick lit and pop culture: the first half of the novel is a gothic narrative of nightmares, vampires, lakes and storms; the second half dwells on Jane's emotional reserve. The writer-within-the-story opens up the novel and enables chronological impossibilities (a fight between Austen and Brontë), self-reflection and self-criticism. This is perhaps what distinguishes the genre in the twenty-first

century: the author-as-character is no new creation, but the scale of metatextuality that accompanies the genre is primarily a product of the 2000s.[69]

The postmodern Austen constructed in *Jane Bites Back* utterly differs from mainstream Victorian accounts. As Chapter One explored, JEAL presented Austen as an agreeable spinster who was extremely fond of children and never mocked her neighbours (1871: 103). But this is not Ford's Jane: his heroine enjoys the tittle-tattle of the "drawing-room," so at a New Year party she deliberately sits next to the editor of two local newspapers, who is always aware of town gossip (43). Ford's Austen is not kind to children either: while travelling on a train, she scares a noisy child by exhibiting her fangs. The boy "turned his face away and sat very still, like a small bird in the presence of a cat" (53), and "Jane cheerfully wondered how long he would have nightmares about the woman on the train" (54). This is Jane Austen the ironist, not the pious Victorian lady JEAL, and also Hubback, outlined. Janet Todd and Linda Bree have noted this change of perception: "Just as the nineteenth century wanted a pious and dignified Jane Austen, the twenty-first instinctively reacts against the religious woman in favour of the comic satirist. None of the recent film and television dramatizations of the author has Austen practising the Christian faith we know sustained her" (21 July 21 2009). *Jane Bites Back* adds to the modern secularisation of Austen: thirsty for human blood, Jane cannot resist the temptation to get easy "supplies" by biting a priest in the confession box, feeling only slightly guilty that her father was a clergyman (130). As for money and fame, JEAL may have claimed that she was a selfless creature, unconcerned with anything material (1871: 106), but Ford's heroine is bitter about receiving no royalties for *The Jane Austen Cookbook* and Austen finger puppets (24, 29).

[69] This is confirmed by some of the Renaissance examples of the writer-within-the-story Franssen and Hoensselars cite in their historical survey. Many of these early writers/characters are simply choral figures: for instance, Homer in Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* and the British poet Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles* (1999: 12).

Jane Bites Back and other twenty-first-century fictionalisations portray a Romantic novelist with a romantic life. *Jane Bites Back* shows Jane's flirtations with three men: Walter, Byron and Kelly, her editor. Austen's connection with Byron, like her gothicisation, realigns her with the Romantic Movement: after Byron takes Jane to Lake Geneva, opening her eyes to the world's pleasures, Austen's literary style and even nature change dramatically.[70] This fictional connection opens the old debate about Austen's place in Romanticism. F.R. Leavis considered her a realist, the link between earlier eighteenth and later nineteenth-century realist writers such as Fielding, Eliot and Dickens (1948: 4-5). Austen's taste for Johnson, Swift and Pope, and her penchant for epigram and satire, meant that she was often classed as an Augustan. B.C. Southam considered Austen's "accustomed style [as] a personal adjustment of the Augustan tradition" (1964: 102), and Harold Bloom has more recently commented on her "Johnsonian pronouncements" (1994: 263). In contrast, twenty-first-century critics seem to favour Austen's Romanticism: Clara Tuite (2002) examines Austen within the Romantic tradition, claiming that she adheres to the Romantic notions of nationhood, culture and literature.

This romantic turn manifests in other modern derivatives. Rewriters, like Grahame-Smith and Grange, align Austen with the late eighteenth-century tradition of the Gothic novel, and read her as a Romantic author whose characters are often driven by feeling and emotion, rather than reason. The same goes for recent biopics: *Becoming Jane* (2007) exploits Austen's real-life flirtation with Tom Lefroy, and shows her rejection of three marriage proposals. In *Miss Austen Regrets*, Jane enjoys poking fun at her neighbours, dancing animatedly, drinking too much wine and, above all, flirting with almost every single man in her way. What all these fictionalisations have in common is the emphasis on feeling

[70] Adding more layers to the novel, there is a longer tradition of Byron and vampirism, which started with his own unfinished poem *The Giaour* (1813). More recently, Tom Holland has composed two Byron vampire fictionalisations: *The Vampyre: Being the True Pilgrimage of George Gordon, Sixth Lord Byron* (1995) and its sequel *Supping with Panthers* (1996).

against reason, emotion against restraint, building up a R/romantic Austen. It seems that viewers and readers need a *Jane Austen in love*, a Jane Austen with feelings, who is rejected by her lover (*Jane Bites Back*), and has to struggle for romantic fulfilment (*Becoming* and *Regrets*). Deborah Kaplan has noted readers' need to believe in a Jane Austen who was both loveable and capable of loving; this is why her descendants and most biographers have portrayed Harris Bigg-Wither, the man she historically refused, as rude and unappealing (1992: 112). This is a Jane Austen readers can relate to, a textual construct of the author which mirrors the reader's own emotional longings.

The sexualisation of Austen's life often goes hand in hand with this romanticisation. *Jane Bites Back* explores her love and attraction for Walter, but Byron is hard to resist too: she gets an electric shock simply passing Byron a dish of peas, and drops the plate as a result (87). A more explicit example is Jane's first sexual experience (present as a flashback), after which Byron converts and then abandons her: "His kisses covered her face, her neck, her breast and stomach. His hands drew from her such pleasure that her breath caught in her throat...Outside the storm raged, the wind blowing one of the windows open and letting in the rain" (19-20). There is still something potentially scandalous in depicting the traditionally selfless Austen during sexual intercourse – this is part of the transgressive pleasure sought by many modern rewrites, which add a frisson of naughtiness to the past.

Re-imagining Austen as sexually and emotionally active humanises the writer, presenting her as a modern woman with whom the reader can identify. Ford's heroine has the same professional and emotional preoccupations that most Western women presently harbour: she struggles to succeed professionally and hesitates between past, present and future lovers. Ford's character is a Bridget-Jones-like Austen who often finds herself in embarrassing situations – another self-ironising layer, since *Bridget Jones's Diary* was inspired by *Pride and Prejudice*. When she first meets Kelly, Jane stammers: "No...I mean

yes. Everything's fine. It's just that I thought you were a woman...I don't mean right now I thought you were a woman. I mean before I saw you. Because of your name. We've never spoken...May I just go out and come back in?" (58). Jane can be as verbose and incoherent as the heroines of chick lit, one of the novel's strongest generic influences. Featuring a confused heroine who is not always in control, *Jane Bites Back* produces a human and fallible Austen. Sara Martín argues in favour of the feminist potential that this lack of control generates: chick lit ends the decree that women have to be always perfect and, through its use of humour, allows them to relax and make mistakes (2005: 101). Trying to confess her vampiric nature to Walter, Jane blurts out instead that her novel is to be published, "wondering where in the world that had come from" (124). In these fictionalisations, Jane Austen becomes an everywoman.

The author-as-character genre still remains mostly untheorised. For Franssen and Hoenselaars, the main reason is critics' misgivings about the biographical fallacy which often accompanies these narratives – that is, the equation between writer and work, present, for instance, in Ford's depiction of Byron and Brontë. An additional function of author fictions, which neither Franssen, Hoenselaars nor Fokkema acknowledges, is that of giving the "other" a voice. Late twentieth and early twenty-first-century literature often explores the point of view of marginalised characters and cultural minorities.[71] Fictional biographies function similarly by ventriloquising the author, exploring what it is like to be on the "other side" of the written work. Books normally reflect a writer's authorial voice, the *discursive* author as opposed to the *personal* author. Representations of the writer as hero invert the typical roles of the literary craft, speculating on what his/her "real" voice might be. *Jane Bites Back*, for instance, examines what it feels like to be a two-hundred-year bestseller and prey to

[71] As analysed in Chapter 5, feminist rewritings attempt to explore the viewpoint of neglected female characters. Postcolonial literature has a similar agenda: for instance, J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1987) revises the racial, gender and power relations of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

opportunism. Author fictions construct a version of the *personal* author that simultaneously gives voice to the author and the modern reader.

III. The impossibility of *The Watsons*

The two attempts to continue *The Watsons* after 2005, Laura Wade's and Helen Baker's, fail to engage with this postmodern game that mockingly manufactures a Jane Austen of the 1800s and the 2000s at one and the same time. Baker's completion rejects all obvious pastiche and self-referentiality in favour of a more "authentic" Austen in Regency gown and pelisse. This probably explains why her continuation has been utterly unsuccessful, and why Wade's play still remains unfinished – with the added irony of an incomplete completion. These continuations, apparently a reaction against more imaginative spinoffs, have lost the power to absorb conflicting Austen readings that used to characterise *The Watsons*' afterlife. But they have also come to embody a different side of the postmodern Austen (the new publishing options opened to Janeites) and have perhaps become transgressive precisely in their refusal to transgress.

Laura Wade's unfinished stage adaptation of *The Watsons* occupies a middle ground. According to theatre director Max Stafford Clark, the production was meant to include a character called Jane Austen and another called Laura Wade, who would engage in a heated discussion about how to conclude the novel/play (Interview by Cassandra Harwood, Oct/Nov 2007: 59). However, at present, the play remains unfinished and there are no plans to produce it, which may also be the reason for its incompletion. Known for plays like *Breathing Corpses* (2005) and *Colder than Here* (2005), Wade was awarded the 2006 Critics Circle Award for Most Promising Playwright. In the same year, she announced she was working on Austen's fragment, which she would conclude and adapt to the stage with as many as 17

characters (M.A. 3 March 2006). Six years later, it seems unlikely the plan will ever come to fruition.

Helen Baker's *The Watsons* (2008) disappoints because it does not engage with the problems and interests of the current zeitgeist. The novel is an anachronistic effort to conclude *The Watsons* as Austen herself might have done it, disregarding the fact that Austen's novels are the product of a specific time and place which cannot be replicated, Regency England. Writing an accurate 1800s novel in the 2010s, even if possible, does not augur high success. In 1971, Barthes delighted in the impossibility of writing like Proust, Flaubert or Balzac: the pleasure of reading them remains "a pleasure of consumption; for if I can read these authors, I also know that I cannot *re-write* them (that it is impossible today to write 'like that') and this knowledge, depressing enough, suffices to cut me off from the production of these works, in the very moment their remoteness establishes my modernity" (1971: 163). The most successful completions of *The Watsons* are the product of the time when they were written, of their own "modernity:" Hubback, Coates and Aiken infuse the Austen text with their own historical preoccupations, appropriating her oeuvre as an excuse for cultural self-exploration. The problem with Baker's novel is that it refuses the self-congratulation that comes from depicting the Regency through the lens of the twenty-first century, from celebrating our own "modernity" through Austen's nineteenth-century plots.

Baker's novel adds very little to the afterlife of *The Watsons*. One of its few leaps is the discovery of Captain O'Brien's bigamy and the subsequent invalidation of his marriage to Mrs. Turner. Consequently, Emma returns to her aunt, who rents the Osborne Dower House, in the neighbourhood of Stanton. Mr. Watson has died in the interim, and as a result, Elizabeth becomes a schoolmistress in town, Margaret becomes Augusta's carer and Penelope stays with the Shaws in Chichester. The second unexpected turn in this novel is Emma's union to Lord Osborne, who is depicted as a frustrated artist of hidden sensibilities.

Other than that, Baker's novel stays close to Austen's texts and earlier completions: Penelope snares old Dr. Harding, Elizabeth moves in with her and Sam is engaged to Mary Edwards.

In terms of plot development, *The Watsons* (2008) follows Austen's narratives closely. Most of the novel is spent in visits – to the castle, the Howards – and dining out, normally at Osborne Castle. Social decorum is present too, as Mrs. Turner questions the propriety of Elizabeth's dance with Tom Musgrave during her mourning: "Miss Watson's public lack of restraint with a gentleman who was not even remotely related to her, she found both shocking and the worst means a lady could choose for fixing her own interest" (2008: 218). The marriage plot becomes more central again than in Aiken's sequels, not to mention Grahame-Smith's. Pondering Lord Osborne's marriage proposal, Emma concludes that, if she were still a dependant at her father's house, she would accept immediately, but the difference in her situation now gives her the freedom to choose (2008: 235). This has been written before (in Coates's novel, Emma seriously considers accepting Osborne), which poses the question: what is the use of a new completion? Baker's novel develops in a series of visits, dinners, flirtations and exhibitions of young ladies singing or playing the piano, and in this sense, it adds nothing new to *The Watsons*, or to Jane Austen.

It is true that Baker's novel has a sexual undertone, but sex is present here in an imitative 1800s shape. There is no self-conscious sexualisation that proclaims our own liberalisation: Dr. Harding is found out to have two illegitimate children and Penelope threatens him with public exposure unless he consents to marry her (2008: 187). This story resonates with that of the two Elizas in *Sense and Sensibility* and their respective natural children. Sexuality is as marginal in Baker's *The Watsons* as it was in Austen's novels; it speaks of Austen's society, not of ours. Linda Hutcheon explains readers' fondness for adaptations as part of the desire to "retell the same story over and over in different ways. With adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change" (2006: 9). That is

Baker's problem: her novel is repetition – of Austen, of modes of concluding *The Watsons* explored before – but not change.

Baker's style is imitative too: her use of metatextuality is locked into eighteenth and nineteenth-century conventions. Patricia Waugh notes how Regency and Victorian authors were not truly metafictional, for their self-referentiality reinforces the connection between the fictional and the real world (1984: 32). Baker incorporates many of these early uses, refusing postmodern self-awareness: "*The reader may guess* how Emma gasped;" "*The concerned reader* will not be surprised to learn that Emma arrived at the Dower House, a prey to an atrocious headache" (2008: 89, 138, my italics). In her attempt to mimic Austen's free indirect style, Baker slows down the action of her novel (through overuse of reported speech instead of direct dialogue), which results in a boring and monotonous continuation. For instance, during Emma's first dinner party at Croydon, there is little dialogue; most of the characters' interactions, including Margaret's lengthy flirtations with a Mr. Marshall and a Mr. Hemmings, are filtered through the narrator (2008: 131) – in clear contrast with the vivacity of Coates's dialogues and the theatricality Litz recognised in *The Watsons* (1965: 90).

Even Baker's paratextual elements evoke Austen's: the novel is marketed as *The Watsons by Jane Austen and Another Lady*, but the title page includes Baker's own name on the bottom right corner. Presenting the novel as an "anonymous" piece, while including the "other's" name on the same page, seems quite inconsistent. Barthes may have claimed that the author is dead (1968), but s/he still wants authorial recognition. Since Austen's novels were originally published as "by a lady," Baker is probably attempting to give her novel an "authentic" nineteenth-century flavour. Her preface is a note of apology, closer to 1920s self-justifications than the 2000s expression of a right to cultural recycling and appropriation,

analysed in this thesis. Even her phraseology is quite anachronistic, with terms of an earlier Janeitism such as "Miss Austen" and her "devoted readers" (2008: 5).

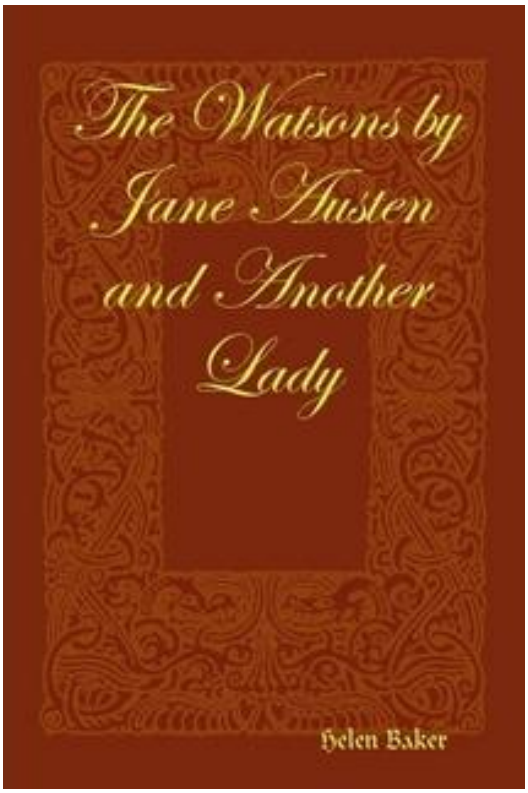


Fig. 6: Helen Baker's *The Watsons* (2008), cover.

The implication of my discussion is that Helen Baker fails because she is too faithful to Jane Austen, at a time when fidelity to the original is no longer the dominant ideology. Baker's novel differs from most of *The Watsons*' completions examined in this thesis in her effort to decontextualise her own novel. Catherine Anne Hubback composed a Victorian novel in *The Younger Sister* (1850). Coates (1958) reflected some of the incongruities of post-war Britain in his continuation; and Aiken constructed militant feminist rewritings in *Emma Watson* (1996) and *Eliza's Daughter* (1994). Only Oulton and Brown attempted, like Baker, to be faithful to Austen's original, but that was part of the 1920s general equation between recuperating Austen and recuperating national sanity.

Twenty-first-century completions mostly fail to embrace their own irony as completions. Instead, they seem focused on fidelity to their source, as some recent continuations of *Sanditon* confirm. D. J. Eden's *Sanditon* (2002), like Baker's *The Watsons* (2008), emphasises Austen's authorship on its cover, where Eden's name is hardly visible. Anne Toledo's later completion *A Return to Sanditon* (2011) has been recommended to "real lovers of Jane Austen's work," because this is "a completion of her unfinished *Sanditon* as she might possibly have envisaged it herself. No zombies or other anachronistic gimmicks" (Editorial review, Amazon.co.uk, 15 May 2012). Present-day continuations have lost some of their former ability to encompass contradictory readings of Austen, ironically becoming the last bastion for conservative Janeites. Based on minor, brief originals, the completions seem the ideal shelter for the shrinking group of Austen popular readers, who subvert the current mainstream of playful mash-ups precisely by refusing to transgress.

The continuations may not share the ironic self-awareness of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, but they represent a different side of the postmodern Jane Austen: imitative self-publishing in Austen's style. Baker's *The Watsons* (2008) is mostly the product of fan fiction, self-published through the internet platform lulu.com, which allows authors to be their own publishers and therefore responsible for most of the process. "Self-publish your book for free. We've got you covered. Make a book with professional book-store quality," they announce on their website. This is a new phenomenon in the publishing world which is affecting, and will continue to affect, Austen's popular reception. Toledo's *A Return to Sanditon* is offered only in a Kindle, or electronic, format on Amazon. L. Oulton's 1923 completion has recently been republished in a Kindle edition too, which brings together the current trend to "recuperate" Austen through the completions and the new publishing possibilities these novels embrace. Lulu.com and the Kindle create new opportunities for Janeites – if everyone can publish their own Austen novel at no cost, why not? Lulu.com offers very economical

prices for paperbacks and even more so for e-books; the kindle edition, which saves all printing, binding and distribution costs, is considerably cheaper than a paperback. The consequence of such opportunities is the publication of amateur, unedited novels. Helen Baker's *The Watsons* is indeed an inferior continuation – another reason for its lack of success: there are spelling and punctuation mistakes (2008: 12, 138, 169), muddled dialogue and a general lack of clarity throughout the text (7, 8, 43), which makes it confusing for the reader.

In contrast, successful twenty-first-century rewrites look back at Austen and literary history with laughter. Self-conscious, commercial and above all extremely funny, they delight in their own contradictions. The works of Grahame-Smith, Grange and Ford embody this desire to have it both ways: a gothic and anti-gothic Austen novel, depicting nineteenth and twenty-first-century sexuality, where the author is author and character at the same time. Recent completions of *The Watsons* transform Austen into what Barthes called the "stereotype," or "word repeated without any magic, any enthusiasm, as though it were natural" (1975: 42). These novels repeat the same words over again without "magic" or gusto, without irony, and this is why they cannot effectively illustrate the cultural and literary possibilities Austen allows readers in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The Future of Austen and *The Watsons*

> "Life itself is an unfinished sentence, or a few haphazard brush-strokes. Nothing stays. Nothing is completed. I can make nothing whole from it, however small. Pinned down, like a butterfly, it ceases to be itself, just as the butterfly becomes something else; dead, unmoving, its brightness gone...An honest painting would never be finished; an honest novel would stop in the middle of a sentence. There is no shutting life up in a cage, turning the key with a full-stop, with a stroke of paint" Elizabeth Taylor's *A Wreath of Roses* (1950: 225).

My thesis has studied how the afterlife of *The Watsons* elucidates responses to Austen's fiction; it has focused on those authors who have refused to leave the sentence unfinished, the novel with a hole. But the completions work in paradoxical ways: finishing off Austen's novel while providing an excuse for further continuations, which rewrite or respond to earlier ones, thus, ensuring the ultimate incompletion of the fragment. These novels expose conflicting readings of Austen not only throughout history (in the different ways completers conclude *The Watsons*), but also within the same historical period (as each completion often encompasses inconsistent views on Austen). In recent years, critics such as Kathryn Sutherland (2005), Janet Todd and Linda Bree (2008) have reclaimed the fragment of *The Watsons*, because, in its manuscript form, it illuminates Austen's working process. The importance of my study rests in reclaiming the afterlife of *The Watsons* too: *The Watsons* may have never been the best-loved Austen piece, the most frequently read and continued one (that is *Pride and Prejudice*). But precisely due to this marginal position, *The Watsons* and its afterlife have a different story to tell about the way readers encounter Austen: its completions retain voices that often leak out of the more numerous, polished and market-oriented derivatives of novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*.

To know more about Austen's reception, and to know it better, we need to turn to the afterlife of *The Watsons*. As I show in my introduction, the original fragment is full of possibilities, and each completer pulls the strands of this bale of wool in a different direction, finally knitting "their own stuff," as Julian Barnes demanded (1984: 99), but knitting it differently. The result is a collection of novels full of outward and inward tensions, probably encompassing greater ambivalence towards Austen than the afterlife of any of her other works. A good example is John Coates's *The Watsons* (Chapter 3), which simultaneously implies a conservative and progressive reading of Austen by combining an emphasis on traditional notions of Englishness and the influence of the theatre of the absurd. Joan Aiken and Merryn Williams (Chapter 4) also weave gender inconsistencies into their feminist completions: they are caught in a double bind between reading Austen as a feminist foremother and significantly altering her originals to do so. This picture of dissension is completed by the postmodern retakes analysed in Chapter Five, which mockingly insist on reading Austen as a member of the Regency and the twenty-first century: gothic and sexualised but rational and repressed at the same time.

The completions of *The Watsons* often question general assumptions about Austen. My analysis of Catherine Hubback's *The Younger Sister* (Chapter 1) challenges the widespread notion that the Victorian Jane Austen was exclusively that described by her nephew JEAL: a retiring spinster who never poked fun at her neighbours. Instead, Hubback offers a different insight into the fragment of *The Watsons* and its author, implying that Austen was an ironist and a worldly professional author. JEAL's *Memoir* also originated the platitude that Austen was unconcerned with the political events of her time. Yet L. Oulton's and Edith Brown's post-World War I completions (Chapter 2) show how Austen was appropriated as a political tool in the early twentieth-century, and how her novels were starting to be read as political in their own time and the completers'. The completions of *The Watsons* reveal certain

unacknowledged turning points in Austen's afterlife: John Coates's continuation (Chapter 3) suggests that the social adjustments brought about by World War II indirectly enabled more creative approaches to her fiction.

What is the importance of these dissensions within the text of the completions, of these contested portraits of Jane Austen? First, they contradict any possible idealised view of Austen's reception as static, neat or straightforward. Second, the internal disruptions within the completions show how Austen is adaptable to diverse interpretative efforts. Austen signifies different things to different readers. Her texts are unstable, fluid and accessible to multiple revisionary efforts; they allow for multiple appropriations, rewritings and re-imaginings – from a Victorian novel about the metropolis, an emphatically "English" novel, an absurdist or a feminist one to a monster mash-up threatening England with a zombie invasion. There is a deep need in Western society to keep rewriting Austen: her central position in Anglo-Saxon culture and her "unknowability" create a perfect storm of desire and frustration. Austen's oeuvre invites these contradictions: her characteristic, playful irony, which asserts and denies the same fact simultaneously, foretells these post-textual confrontations. Fragments, as Rajan noted (1985: 3), tend to be more indeterminate and ambiguous than the majority of texts. There are numerous contradictions and disagreements about the original *The Watsons*: its date of composition, literary value and reason for its incompletion (Introduction). It is probably for this reason that the completions of *The Watsons* are such a porous body of texts, absorbing trends and changes in Austen's readership as no other Austen post-text seems to have done. One of the problems with those sequels that continue a finished novel is that they tend to retell the story of their pre-text, something that cannot happen in a completion, where the source is already embedded within the text. For instance, Emma Tennant's *Elinor and Marianne* (1996) and P.D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011) frequently retell and summarise events from *Sense and*

Sensibility and *Pride and Prejudice*, respectively. The result is a slow and sometimes boring narrative, contrasting with the often more lively and interesting tone of the completions.

My study of the continuations has, of course, its limitations. It does not include some important Austen retakes such as Robert Leonard's first film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), with Sir Lawrence Olivier as Darcy; Emma Tennant's successful Austen sequels, mostly written in the1990s; and Karen Joy Fowler's famous *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2005), adapted for the screen in 2007. I have tried to keep the focus mostly on the completions of *The Watsons*, while setting them in the context of other examples of Austen's reception and literary criticism of her texts that elucidate how the completions differ, or not, from mainstream Austenalia. To do so, I have selected those other retakes which are particularly interesting because of the comparison or contrast they elicit, or because of their neglected position in Austen scholarship – such as John Hubback and Edith Brown's *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* and Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (Chapter 2). My main interest has been in Austen appropriations in the written medium, which have received considerably less critical attention despite the ever-growing number of sequels, completions and rewritings published every year.[72] However, there is undeniable interest in Leonard's film adaptation, which, shot in the context of World War II, contains several references to war and the class system. Tennant's *Elinor and Marianne*, like Aiken's and Williams's novels, adds to the Austen feminist debate through Marianne Brandon's plan to abandon Colonel Brandon and elope with Willoughby. Similarly, Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* poses as a modern version of Kipling's "The Janeites," where a group of Californians are brought together by their love for Austen, while their lives become inexplicably intertwined with the plot of her novels.

[72] The popular publisher Source Books currently offers eighty-two Austen-related novels, most of which have been written in the twenty-first century.

Over the last century, scholars have frequently argued about Austen's political and gender alliances, proposing a conservative, progressive, feminist or anti-feminist author; but the completions show how, for many (popular) readers, Austen often represents different values at one and the same time. Alistair Duckworth (1971) and Marilyn Butler (1975) argue for a conservative Austen whose anti-Jacobin novels align themselves with Burke's defence of the status quo. Claudia Johnson (1988), in contrast, proposes a progressive author, who challenged Burke's notions of femininity and its connection with the welfare of the nation. Johnson thus complicates Butler's argument for a politically-minded Austen in the context of the 1790s. All these interpretations show Austen's novels as elusive texts that allow multiple readings, but are ultimately difficult to pin down. My own feeling is that it is not so important whether Austen was a Tory or a mild Whig, feminist or patriarchal, but how at different points in history she has been read as either or both, and what that tells us about us, about readers and the way they project their own cultural and personal longings onto the Austen text. We should shift the focus of the debate from Austen and her presumed socio-political alliances to readers and how the way they have perceived those alliances illuminates readership, history and literature.

This is an established field of enquiry, in which my thesis inscribes itself and which continues to elicit scholars' attention. The year 2012 has seen three important volumes on Austen's reception: Katie Halsey's *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945*; Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* and John Mullan's *What Matters in Jane Austen?* Whereas Halsey focuses on readers and their testimonies, Johnson employs visual representations of Austen to study how she has been re-imagined in different epochs. Johnson examines responses to Austen in the Victorian period and the two World Wars, but mostly leaves out modern developments. Moving towards a blending of the popular and the academic, Mullan is not so interested in how Austen has been read, as in how she should be

read. His volume tries to solve twenty "puzzles" about the novels which will facilitate the modern reader's encounter with the texts. Some of these puzzles include: How much does age matter? Do sisters sleep together? Why is it risky to go to the seaside? Is there any sex in Jane Austen? I share Mullan's interest in popular or pulp Austen and Halsey's and Johnson's concern with Austen's reception; yet my study significantly differs from theirs in following the afterlife of one single text, *The Watsons*, and in the inclusion of modern Austenalia.

The aim of my thesis has been to demonstrate how an examination of *The Watsons*' afterlife problematises Austen's reception and allows for a more thorough comprehension of the conflicting responses to her work over the last two centuries. Yet important work still remains to be done on how appropriations of Austen's minor works connect with the author's general reception. My study, thus, suggests further fruitful avenues of enquiry into the afterlife of *Lady Susan*, *Sanditon* and the juvenilia. In 1993, Juliet McMaster started adapting Austen's juvenilia for children, adding her own illustrations to the stories. "The Beautiful Cassandra," Austen's mock tale of Cassandra's adventures on one day, has thus been transformed into a picture book where all the characters are small animals: Cassandra is a coquettish mouse; the Viscount she encounters, a lounge lizard; and the Widow, who greets Cassandra through the window, a cat. McMaster's reinvigoration of the juvenilia raises important questions still to be answered: What are the implications of animalising Austen's characters? Which animal traits are associated with each character? And how does McMaster's choice influence our (and children's) reading and imagining of the story?

Another case in point is that of *Lady Susan*. In *Rethinking Jane Austen's Lady Susan*, David Owen (2010) reclaimed the importance of the novella, reading two of the main characters, Lady Susan and Catherine Vernon, as representatives of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin ideals respectively. Yet the afterlife of *Lady Susan* remains unnoticed. The novella has been taken to the stage on numerous occasions (1980, 1998-9, 2001-2, 2009), which raises a

different set of questions: is *Lady Susan* more theatrical than other Austen pieces? Is its afterlife spreading an image of Jane Austen very different from JEAL's "proper" lady – by granting visibility to Austen's "evil" heroine, the unscrupulous and sexually voracious Lady Susan? This piece has also been rewritten in the novel form as *Lady Vernon and Her Daughter* (2009) by mother-and-daughter co-authors Jane Rubino and Caitlen Rubino-Bradway. Their re-interpretation visibly highlights the mother-and-daughter confrontation, central to the original plot although not always explicit – Lady Susan and her daughter never write a letter to each other in Austen's epistolary piece. *Lady Vernon and Her Daughter*, together with those other novels and adaptations which continue, reinterpret or adapt Austen's minor works, would undoubtedly prove a rewarding area for future research.

What is the future of Austen's reception in general and *The Watsons* in particular? Another completion of *The Watsons* has just appeared on the market: *The Watsons Revisited* by Eucharista Ward (2012). The novel is a contradictory negotiation between fidelity and infidelity, past and present: at its outset, *The Watsons Revisited* dutifully marks where Austen's text finishes and the new one begins. Ward's first chapters include typical Austenian elements, such as the character of Mrs. Tilman (Ward's creation), a hypochondriac whose rheumatic complaints Penelope and Margaret Watson repeatedly mock. Deviations from the original include an emphasis on death and religion, which move the completion back to the Victorian period: Ward's Emma Watson frequently reads and quotes the Bible; Mr. Howard's Christmas sermon is partly reproduced in the novel; and Mr. Watson's death, with Emma holding his hand, is dramatised in great detail. Other unexpected developments are Penelope and Margaret's repentance and conversion into reliable young women, and the Osbornes' voluntary metamorphosis into middle-class tailors half-way through the novel. For Ward, the Austen text seems still a field for struggle and negotiation: between early and mid nineteenth-century elements, period accuracy and inaccuracy. Although textually more

interesting than Baker's novel, *The Watsons Revisited* is unlikely to become a commercial success: the completion does not participate in the popular gothicisation and sexing up of Austen, and its highly religious tone goes against the current secularisation of Austen and her texts (Chapter 5). Like Baker's *The Watsons*, this completion is part of a new self-publishing phenomenon: its publisher, Outskirts Press, advertises its services with the motto "Write anything, publish everything," which begs the question of whether we really want everything published. *The Watsons Revisited* does not seem to add much new to the heavily trodden path of Austen's afterlife. Perhaps, after nine completions of *The Watsons*, it is high time to modernise the text, to bring it fully into the twenty-first century in a completion of the original akin to *Clueless*, which transferred the plot of *Emma* to the Beverly Hills of the 1990s.

The two leading trends in Austen's popular reception that Ward ignores, gothic and erotic Austen, have recently been strengthened. In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, P.D. James continues *Pride and Prejudice* as a murder novel, a trend initiated in the 1990s by Stephanie Barron's murder mysteries, which feature Austen as a sleuth. James resumes the gothicisation of Austen analysed in Chapter 5, but also many of the trends touched upon in this thesis: *Death Comes to Pemberley* features Alveston, a young lawyer in love with Georgiana Darcy, taking on a prominent role during the inquest and trial of George Wickham, who has been accused of murdering Captain Denny. This is a novel where the lower classes attain their own voice, the rights of women are vindicated, Englishness praised and the French Revolution overtly discussed. Irony and intertextuality still find room, as Lady Catherine is retrospectively transformed into a Wildean Lady Bracknell, who applauds labourer William Bidwell for finally making up his mind to die after a protracted illness. The tendency to spice up Austen's novels (Chapter 5) also persists in the latest Austenalia: the collection "Clandestine Classics" by publisher Total E-Bound, adds the "missing" sexual scenes to

novels by Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and Arthur Conan Doyle, among others. Following the legacy of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Total E-Bound has recently launched rewritings of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*, where Henry Tilney introduces Catherine Morland to a "world where sex knows no boundaries and even her deepest, most secret fantasies, can be played out behind closed doors" (Total-e-bound.com 9 Sep. 2012).

A final line of development is that of Austen and the new technologies. The internet and growing social networks allow almost infinite possibilities in the popular cult of Jane Austen. The famous *Republic of Pemberley*, a website with Austen discussion groups and Janeite resources, was born out of the 1990s Austen boom. In the twenty-first century, it has largely been replaced by Austen blogs and interactive games. The blogs *Austenesque Reviews*, *The Austen Blog* and *Austen Prose* dominate the web, keeping Janeites updated about developments in Austen's academic and popular culture. The internet has also spread fan fiction – sequels or rewritings of Austen's works by amateur authors. *The Jane Austen Fanfiction Index* compiles thousands of these works, some of them novel-length, with witty titles such as "Darcy-san and the Sensai" and "La Bennet sans Merci." The popular social network Facebook has just launched the game "Rogues and Romances," set in the world of Austen's six novels and produced by the BBC in partnership with Legacy Interactive. Players, who must convince Elizabeth and Darcy to return to the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, will visit the Pump Room in Bath and the dining room at Hartfield. As the twenty-first century advances, Austen's presence on the World Wide Web is likely to continue growing. It will be interesting to observe what new readings games such as "Rogues and Romances" generate, especially for readers who experience the game before the novel.

Ultimately, Jane Austen, her novels and their derivatives resist closure. My thesis has reclaimed the importance of the afterlife of *The Watsons* to comprehend the conflicting ways in which readers have encountered Austen over the last 200 years. Just as every completion

concludes Austen's text, the chiefly neglected afterlife of *The Watsons* seems to complete the story of Austen's reception. And yet this is another unfinished story: Austen's reception remains an open text, an unfinished sentence, to go back to Elizabeth Taylor's quotation. The completions contribute a fuller picture of the responses to Austen and her work, at the same time that they prevent these responses from being ever complete. Their endings always suggest the birth of new possibilities, new beginnings. There is no neat ending for the story of responses to Austen and the completions of *The Watsons*. So, like Taylor, I would like to conclude with the unfinished sentence...

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