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JANE AUSTEN'S DEALINGS WITH JOHN MURRAY AND HIS FIRM

BY KATHRYN SUTHERLAND

Jane Austen had dealings with several publishers, eventually issuing her novels through two: Thomas Egerton and John Murray. For both, Austen may have been their first female novelist. This essay examines Austen-related materials in the John Murray Archive in the National Library of Scotland. It works in two directions: it considers references to Austen in the papers of John Murray II, finding some previously overlooked details; and it uses the example of Austen to draw out some implications of searching amongst the diverse papers of a publishing house for evidence of a relatively unknown (at the time) author. Together, the two approaches argue for the value of archival work in providing a fuller context of analysis. After an overview of Austen's relations with Egerton and Murray, the essay takes the form of two case studies. The first traces a chance connection in the Murray papers between Austen's fortunes and those of her Swiss contemporary, Germaine de Staël. The second re-examines Austen's move from Egerton to Murray, and the part played in this by William Gifford, editor of Murray's *Quarterly Review* and his regular reader for the press. Although Murray made his offer for *Emma* in autumn 1815, letters in the archive show Gifford advising him on one, possibly two, of Austen's novels a year earlier, in 1814. Together, these studies track early testimony to authorial esteem. The essay also attempts to draw out some methodological implications of archival work, among which are the broad informational parameters we need to set for the recovery of evidence.

We can shape no simple or coherent narrative from the available details of Jane Austen's dealings with her publishers. She was a published author for only seven years of her short life—1811–1817; she was a practising writer, to adapt Virginia Woolf's famous phrase, for around 30 years.¹ In her lifetime, she was rejected by two houses and published by two. A version of what may (or may not) have been *Pride and Prejudice*, under the title 'First Impressions', was offered to Thomas Cadell in 1797 by George Austen on his daughter's behalf and rejected sight unseen.²

This essay was originally delivered as the John Murray Lecture, 27 October 2011, at the National Library of Scotland. I wish to record my grateful thanks to John and Virginia Murray, David McClay (John Murray Archive Senior Curator), and the Committee of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society. My thanks for comments and corrections go to Professor Peter Garside and Professor Tom Keymer. Materials are reproduced from the John Murray Archive by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.

1 'Jane Austen Practising' was the title of a review of Austen's juvenile work, 'Volume the Second', published as *Love & freindship* (London, 1922). Woolf's review appeared in the *New Statesman* on 15 July 1922.

2 The story is told and the letter transcribed in James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford, 2002), 105.

'Susan', a version of the posthumous *Northanger Abbey*, was sold for £10 in Spring 1803 to Crosby and Co. It too failed to see print and Austen eventually bought back the manuscript.³ Between 1811 and 1817, Thomas Egerton and John Murray published all six novels: three to Egerton and three to Murray, with Murray also putting out a second edition of *Mansfield Park*, her last novel with Egerton. Of the two houses that failed to publish Austen's work, Cadell and Davies were quality publishers of religious books, poetry, history, belletristic titles, and some fiction (including Frances Burney's recent success *Camilla* (1796)); Crosby was populist with a sizeable novel list.⁴ Neither was an odd choice, though the eminent firm of Cadell and Davies, among the most successful booksellers of the day, was an ambitiously high aim for an unknown provincial author, as a later generation of Austens acknowledged. Writing to her brother in April 1869 offering materials for his 'Memoir' of their aunt, Caroline Austen speculated: 'I do not know *which* novel he would have sent – The letter does not do much credit to the tact or courtesy of our good Grandfather [George Austen] for Cadell was a great man in his day, and it is not surprising that he should have refused the *favor* so offered from an *unknown*'.⁵

In contrast, Austen's first publisher, Thomas Egerton, apparently approached 13 years after Cadell and some 7 years after Crosby, specialized from the 1780s in military and political works: *Instructions to Young Dragoon Officers* (1794), *A Treatise on Military Finance* (1795), *The Military Catechism* (1804), *Instructions for Training and Exercising the Local Militia* (1809). His shop was on the east side of Whitehall just across from the Admiralty Office and he was official bookseller to the Naval Board. He had run his 'Military Library' for two decades when he accepted *Sense and Sensibility* in 1810 or 1811. What he had rarely done was publish a novel. A brief foray into the fiction market between 1786 and 1792 had resulted in six undistinguished titles, for four of which he acted as a secondary publisher. He repeated the experiment 17 years later, co-publishing with Rivingtons Henry Kett's evangelical novel, *Emily, a Moral Tale* (1809). After this, his next works of fiction were Austen's three novels, and by the end of his career, in 1830, he had added only another six novel titles to his list.⁶ So why did

The manuscript of George Austen's letter is now in St John's College Library, Oxford. He makes no reference to the author's sex.

³ Austen enquired after the manuscript in April 1809 (*Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1995), 174–5); but it may not have been bought back before 1816 (see *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 105–6 and note). See too David Gilson, *A Bibliography of Jane Austen*, corrected edition (Winchester, Hants, 1997), 82–3.

⁴ For details of both publishers, see Anthony Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author* (Basingstoke, Hants, 2007), 51–74.

⁵ *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 185.

⁶ The firm traded as Thomas and John Egerton until 1795. Details of Egerton's involvement as primary and secondary novel publisher are derived from the year lists in Peter Garside, James Raven, et al. *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000). This bibliography 'records the first editions of all known novels in English' (vol. 1, 4). This information has been checked

Austen's first publications emerge from his shop? While David Gilson's suggestion has found regular favour⁷—that the connection was made through Egerton having acted as London distributor for Jane Austen's brothers, James and Henry Austen's, Oxford student periodical *The Loiterer*—it seems a little forced; after all, the periodical had folded in March 1790, 20 years before. More likely, Henry Austen's career as militia officer and then army agent and banker provided the link, either directly or indirectly; indirectly, because a mutual connection was the printer Charles Roworth, of Bell Yard, Temple Bar, who did business with both men, printing for Henry Austen's bank the reward notices for the apprehension of absconding debtors and for Egerton a range of military titles.⁸ Roworth remained a lifelong friend of Egerton's, receiving the sum of £50 in his will.⁹ Indeed Roworth is an important link with John Murray too, for whom he printed the *Quarterly Review*, his work finding favour with its meticulous editor William Gifford.¹⁰ Roworth would in due course become Austen's most regular printer, handling 16 volumes of her novels by 1818.

To return to Henry Austen. By 1810 and the negotiations with Egerton he was in a banking partnership with two old militia friends, Henry Maunde and James Tilson, in premises on Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.¹¹ Henry acted in some capacity as his sister's agent for all her publications, and it seems highly likely that the choice of both Egerton and Murray as publishers was determined by Henry's business contacts rather than through any literary association. This appears to be confirmed by a brief note in the Murray Archive dated 1817, in which William Gifford (more of whom later) advises Murray over a novel he is reading for him in manuscript:

I have looked at | the Novel – It is decently | written, and carries you on | very well – but I see no great | marks of inventive power – the | story is not much out of the | usual way – but it is not fair | to judge from the opening only.

(for the post 1800 years) against the online Database of British Fiction, 1800–1829 (<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk> accessed 17 January 2012). See too Mandall, 78–9. Pat Rogers's Appendix, 'Thomas Egerton and the Publication History', to his recent edition of *Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge, 2006), 437–40, is helpful but contains some inaccuracies, including the information that Austen's were the firm's first published novels.

⁷ Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 8.

⁸ It is also possible that one or other of Austen's naval brothers, Francis (Frank) and Charles, represented another line of connection to Egerton that Henry followed up.

⁹ C. F. Viveash, 'Jane Austen's Early Adventures in Publishing', Report for 1997, in *Jane Austen Society Collected Reports, 1996–2000* (Alton, Hants, 2005), 79 and 82–3.

¹⁰ Peter Isaac, 'Byron's Publisher and His "Spy": Constancy and Change among John Murray II's Printers', *The Library*, 6th series, 19 (1997), 1–24, especially, 20–1. Gifford regularly commends Roworth's work in correspondence with Murray; see, for example, note 53 below.

¹¹ Clive Caplan, 'Jane Austen's Banker Brother: Henry Thomas Austen of Austen & Co., 1801–1816', *Persuasions*, 20 (1998), 69–90.

It comes nearest your bankers | sisters Novels – more business | and incident, & freedom of obsert [? observation]; | but less penetration and nature.¹²

This must be a reference, so far overlooked, to Jane Austen, and Gifford's manner of denoting her as 'your bankers sister' is significant. Not only might Henry Austen's financial backing give potential publishers confidence to take a risk on a new or relatively unknown author, but Austen too relied on his ability to underwrite her ventures.

With the exception of *Pride and Prejudice*, sold outright to Egerton, Jane Austen made on commission agreements for the publication of all her novels, the publisher putting up the capital for printing, subject to payment of a handling commission (usually ten per cent), on the understanding that she would bear any losses.¹³ Despite the success of Kett's novel, such a contract may well have been necessary to persuade Egerton to venture again into the changeable market for fiction. From Henrietta Street in November 1813, Austen expresses her concern for the second edition of *Sense and Sensibility*: 'I suppose in the meantime I shall owe dear Henry a great deal of Money for Printing &c'. She assumes, either out of ignorance or because this was the hard bargain Egerton drove first time around, that costs of paper and printing must be paid up front rather than deducted from profits. This chimes with Henry Austen's remark in his 'Biographical Notice' of 1818, that she secured a contingency fund before risking the first edition; though what he puts down to a proper feminine diffidence is probably better understood as practical professionalism.¹⁴ The sale of the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice* in late 1812 may be further evidence of such practicality. Austen's comment to Cassandra on 29 November—'Its' being sold will I hope be a great saving of Trouble to Henry'—comes months before she knew that the first edition of *Sense and Sensibility* had finally sold out and made her around £140.¹⁵ When in 1816–1817 she set aside two completed novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, she did so in the wake of Henry's banking collapse (March 1816) and further personal reversal, by which the poor sales of the second edition of *Mansfield Park* swallowed up most of her profits from *Emma*. *Emma* too failed to find the popularity its fairly large edition of 2000 copies anticipated; after 4 years a quarter of the copies remained unsold. It is possible that Austen delayed any new publication at this time until she could underwrite it herself or find other financial backing.

12 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Murray Archive, 42254, 'Various Letters to and from Gifford'. All references to John Murray, unless otherwise specified, are to John Murray II (1778–1843). Transcriptions of manuscript materials from the John Murray Archive are diplomatic with line and page breaks marked thus: | (line break); || page break. A conjectured reading is followed by [?].

13 For Austen's preferred mode of publication, see Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and London, 1991), 16–17; and Garside et al., *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 2, 80–1.

14 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 250; Henry Austen, 'Biographical Notice of the Author' (1818), in *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 140.

15 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 197. For the profits on *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), see *Jane Austen's Letters*, 217 (3–6 July 1813).

(In the Spring of 1817 she may have hoped for some assistance from her uncle Leigh Perrot's will.) In contrast, there is no real evidence for the fond family assumption, passed down to Victorian and later critics, that she relied on Henry's literary judgement.¹⁶

Jane Austen moved to John Murray in autumn 1815, a year after her unsuccessful negotiations with Egerton for a second edition of her third novel *Mansfield Park*. Again, Murray was no noted novel publisher; between 1804 and 1815 he published only six novels. Of these, one, *The Duchess of Vallière. An Historical Romance* (1804), was a translation from the French of a work by the fashionable Mme de Genlis; two were the whimsical scholarly romances of his regular author Isaac D'Israeli (*Flim-Flams* (1805) and *Despotism* (1811)); one was Joseph Strutt's antiquarian romance *Queenhoo Hall* (1808); another was Hector Macneill's *The Scottish Adventurers* (1812), a historical tale; and the most recent, William Williams's *The Journal of Llewellyn Penrose, A Seaman* (1815), apparently approved by Walter Scott. Of the six, four were published in association with Edinburgh houses, either Blackwood or Constable and Co. In late 1816, almost a year after he issued *Emma*, Murray also co-published with Blackwood Scott's pseudonymous *Tales of My Landlord*.¹⁷ There is a clear pattern here, reflecting the firm's long-standing commitment to history, travels, and memoirs; a robustly masculine interest that Austen's quiet domestic fiction does not fit. Murray's father, John Murray I, the founder of the firm, had been a wary novel publisher: new fiction amounted to only two percent of his total output, though rising to around five and a half percent when supplemented by shares in reprinted classic fiction or translations. This caution, which Murray II inherited, arose from the difficulty of predicting the likely market for new titles in a literary form so subject to the vagaries of fashion. Readers were fickle, and where prices remained extremely high interest did not translate into actual sales. He too had considered a reprint series in 1808 but pulled out as projected costs spiralled.¹⁸

Like Egerton, Murray II moved into new territory in publishing Austen. There is strong justification for claiming she was Murray's first female novelist, since

16 T. A. B. Corley, 'Jane Austen and Her Brother Henry's Bank Failure 1815-16', Report for 1998, in *Jane Austen Society Collected Reports, 1996-2000*, 139-50. See too Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2004), 234 and 245-7. The poor sales figures for *Mansfield Park* (1816) and consequent loss of profit on *Emma* are documented in Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 59-60; for revisions to Gilson's estimates, see Fergus, *A Literary Life*, 157-9 and n. 62. There is evidence that Austen did not confide in Henry during composition; see for example, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 255 and 335.

17 Details of John Murray II's involvement as primary and secondary novel publisher are derived from the year lists in Garside et al. *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey*. This information has been checked against the online Database of British Fiction, 1800-1829 (<<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>> accessed 17 January 2012).

18 William Zachs, *The First John Murray and the Late Eighteenth-Century Book Trade* (Oxford, 1998), 153-5; for Murray II's plans for a reprint series, entitled 'British Novelists', see Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London, 1891), vol. 1, 86-8.

translations of de Genlis's vogueish works were eagerly snapped up by publishers in the period and by themselves denote no particular commitment to novels. *Emma* in 1816 is certainly his first novel by an English woman writer, as *Sense and Sensibility* was Egerton's. Evidence in the Murray Archive supports the view that most of the novel manuscripts offered to the firm were rejected. An undated note from William Gifford, conjecturally catalogued at some later time to 1816 or 1817, informs Murray: 'I have read a huge m.s. | volume of a Novel which M^r | Smith put into my hands. It | will do very well for M^r | Lane but you must have nothing | to do ^ with it -'. In another part of the Archive, a curt entry in a register of manuscripts received records that on 14 June 1817, 'Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus' in '3 Vols' was returned to 'H. Smith Esq. 3 Knightsbridge Terrace'.¹⁹ It is tempting to link both references to a single 'Mr Smith' and therefore to *Frankenstein*. 'H. Smith' must be Horace (born Horatio) Smith, author with his brother James of the hugely popular *Rejected Addresses* (1812). Smith lived at 3 Knightsbridge Terrace and was a longstanding friend and financial adviser to Percy Shelley. No novel that we can attribute to Smith himself (he wrote historical romances) is listed as published between 1807 and 1826.²⁰

Despite his cautious approach to novels, it is impossible to ignore in retrospect a similarity in the trajectories both Murray and Austen were on in the 1810s. While Austen was establishing herself as a new kind of fiction writer, Murray was in the vanguard of a new breed of publisher. As recently as 1812 he had left the cramped quarters of the Fleet Street bookseller to move to the fashionable West End, where he purchased the house, at 50 Albemarle Street, and the copyrights of William Miller. Miller had shares in a modest fiction list, which included some frivolous titles as well as the sober Elizabeth Hamilton's *Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808).²¹ In Albemarle Street, Murray was within yards of John Hatchard's bookshop on Piccadilly, Henry Colburn's circulating library and publishing enterprise off New Bond Street, and the Hookhams' famous reading rooms in Old Bond Street. Murray's business here was wholesale publishing rather than retailing. He cultivated influential connections, in London, Edinburgh, and beyond; and he established a leading literary brand, which he stimulated through his ownership of the *Quarterly Review*. The *Quarterly* was a major recurrent commitment, and the Archive is peppered with references to its rising sales in the years 1814 to 1817,

19 Murray Archive, 42248, 'Letters of Gifford mainly to Murray, 1814-1818'. The previous letter in the file is dated '1816 Feb 13th', and the following letter '1817 Sep 21'; and 42632, 'Register of manuscripts received 1 February 1817-2 April 1834'. 'M^r Lane' is William Lane of the Minerva Press, specialists in Gothic and other pulp fiction.

20 See Garside et al., *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey*, for listings of Horace Smith's novels.

21 Details of William Miller's involvement as primary and secondary novel publisher are derived from the year lists in Garside et al., *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey*, checked (post 1800) against the online Database of British Fiction, 1800-1829 (<<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>> accessed 17 January 2012).

showing how anxiously Murray tracked its success.²² The review he persuaded Walter Scott to write of the newly published *Emma* for the *Quarterly* in 1816 not only promoted his own imprint, it also achieved something quite remarkable: the first serious critical essay by 'a major British novelist' on 'a major novel-writing contemporary'.²³ However negotiated, the shift to Murray in 1815 gave Austen a similar hike.

Among the riches of an archive are the riches of context. This is as true of the biographical riches of a single author's archive as it is of the multifarious uses of a publisher's papers. In the one, mounting hairdressers' bills may sit alongside and pass comment on the rising prices commanded by typescripts (as in the Muriel Spark Archive in the National Library of Scotland);²⁴ in the other, the publisher's archive, the broad conspectus of the whole trade in books is primed to sabotage or enrich our least and largest assumptions about an author's control over her work. Hence the importance of holding archives together, both as physical entities and as intellectual or informational parameters that determine and challenge the scope of the questions asked. Of course, this is impossible: a search through the Murray Archive for Jane Austen already implies a partial story and a limited perspective. In cherry picking, all kinds of duller and more pertinent insights risk being overlooked. Evidence of a now famous novelist will be hidden inside patchy information about an unknown (even unnamed) writer, within a mixed publishing economy of medical textbooks, periodicals, travel writings, and one or two recognized literary lions—none of whom is Jane Austen. She will not be there in the quantity or quality of reference that her later reputation seems to require, and when she is there she may not be recognized because of the company she keeps. Is she 'your bankers sister'? The rich significance of this description might be missed because it does not present itself as the anticipated literary nugget. Did Murray only read Jane Austen late in the day and as a favour to Henry Austen, with whom he banked or who was, perhaps, an associate who happened to be a banker? The two case studies that follow argue the importance of the fuller context of analysis that the archive provides for addressing the issue of authorial esteem.

22 For example, in Murray's regular correspondence with Byron: 'My Review is improving in sale beyond my most sanguine expectations I now sell nearly 9,000 ...' (12 September 1816); 'I now, this time print 10,000 copies of my Review ...' (22 January 1817); 'I now print 12,000 Copies of the Quarterly Review which I believe exceeds the Editions of the Edinburgh ...' (15 March 1817); in *The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Liverpool, 2007), 174, 190, and 207.

23 The point is made by Peter Sabor, "'Finished up to nature": Walter Scott's Review of *Emma*', *Persuasions*, 13 (1991), 97.

24 I am grateful for this insight to Joan Winterkorn, Head of Valuations, Bernard Quaritch Ltd.

Authorial esteem; or biography and the archive: Jane Austen and Germaine de Staël

Some time after July 1817, Byron at work on Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* attached to stanza 54 the following note:

CORINNA is no more; and with her should expire the fear, the flattery, and the envy, which threw too dazzling or too dark a cloud round the march of genius, and forbad the steady gaze of disinterested criticism... The dead have no sex; they can surprise by no new miracles; they can confer no privilege: Corinna has ceased to be a woman – she is only an author...²⁵

Corinna, Germaine de Staël, died in Paris on 14 July 1817. During her final illness, the Duke of Wellington is reported to have attended daily in hopes of news of improvement. On 18 July, just 4 days later, Jane Austen died quietly in Winchester. The *Gentleman's Magazine* gave three pages to obituary notices for de Staël and just three lines to record Austen's death.²⁶

From March 1817 John Murray's regular letters, sent *poste restante* to Byron in Venice, had included, amongst other literary and high society gossip, news of de Staël's failing health. Murray had published de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* to critical acclaim in 1813 and was in ongoing but ultimately unsuccessful negotiations for her latest work, *Considérations sur la révolution française*. Neither Murray nor Longmans, with whom he sought joint publication, was willing to accept de Staël's high terms (she asked for £4000 where Murray could stretch to no more than £1000 or, at most, guineas); the work was published posthumously by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy in 1818.²⁷

Two months after de Staël's death, on 9 September 1817, Murray wrote to Byron expressing his wish to announce the imminent publication of Canto IV of *Childe Harold* in a list to include Captain J. K. Tuckey, RN, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, usually called the Congo, in South Africa*, Henry Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, Henry Bankes's *The Civil and Constitutional History of Rome from its Foundation to the Age of Augustus*, and what he describes as 'Two new Novels left by Miss Austen – the ingenious Author of *Pride & Prejudice* – who I am sorry to say died about 6 weeks ago'. If, Murray writes, Byron's latest work might be placed 'at the Head of this List... then I can leave the remainder of the Season to Chance'; and he offered

25 Byron. *A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford, 1986), 203.

26 C. F. Viveash, 'Jane Austen and Madame de Staël', *Persuasions*, 13 (1991), 39–40; Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 471.

27 *Letters of Murray to Byron*, 208 and n. 18; 219 and n. 3; 234 and n. 14. To Byron on 15 March 1817 Murray suggests he will offer '1000G^s', but to de Staël's son in a letter of 19 July 1816 the offer at this stage was for 'One Thousand Pounds' (Murray Archive, 41908, a Letter Book containing copies of outgoing letters, March 1803–September 1823, 386).

1500 guineas for the copyright of a manuscript he has not at this stage seen.²⁸ Jane Austen's two new novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, were advertised in *The Courier*, 17 December 1817, as to be published on 20 December, in four volumes: 'Northanger Abbey, a Romance; and Persuasion, a Novel', a generic distinction not to be found on their title pages.²⁹ But Byron's latest canto did not make the list: William Gifford was reading it in manuscript only on 5 February 1818 and it was published on 28 April, with its eulogistic note to de Staël.³⁰

These glancing connections give us a sense of the diversity of Murray's list—its glamour, of course, in the middle years of the 1810s, and its range—a salutary reminder of the company Jane Austen's novels kept at the moment of publication, not unlike the mix of reading matter to be found on Fanny Price's table in *Mansfield Park* (travel, history, modern poetry).³¹ They also invite a more specific Austenian observation. If, according to Byron's prediction, after July 1817 'Corinna has ceased to be a woman – she is only an author', the opposite was true for Jane Austen. Publicly named as an author only in the months after her death and in her brother Henry's 'Biographical Notice of the Author' attached to Murray's edition of *Northanger Abbey*, she became from this time progressively confined by a particular definition of womanliness—modest, retiring, family-centred, artless in her natural, unforced instinct as a writer. If Canto IV of *Childe Harold* had indeed appeared in the same list as *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, we might be tempted to draw a comparison between the two authors/the two women as their identities were reassessed and refashioned by those who had known them and at a particular moment in their publishing history.

As far as we know, Austen's name appeared in print only twice in her lifetime: she features as 'Miss J. Austen, Steventon' in the subscription list in Frances Burney's *Camilla* in 1796 and as 'Miss Jane Austen', alongside 'Mr and Mrs Edward Austen of Godmersham' in the list in *Two Sermons* (1808), by the Revd T. Jefferson of Tunbridge. Further instances of this kind may still come to light, but subscription, formerly fashionable, was falling out of favour. In any case, it was always an expensive option for a reader with Austen's limited means and in an age when books were luxury commodities. This is implied in her decision, on 26 June 1808, to 'have my name put down as a subscriber to M^r Jefferson's works' ('I have now some money to spare . . . how possible, how right, & how gratifying such a

28 *Letters of Murray to Byron*, 246. Byron demanded more: 'I ask two thousand five hundred guineas for it – which you will either give or not as you think proper.' (*So Late into the Night. Byron's Letters and Journals*, vol. 5: 1816–1817, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London, 1976), 263.) Murray agreed but got *Beppo* thrown in as well. See too, Murray to Lady Abercorn: 'I am printing two, short, but very clever Novels by poor Miss Austin, the author of *Pride & Prejudice*.' She replied: 'Pray send us Miss Austin's novels the moment you can' (Murray Archive, 40512).

29 See Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 84.

30 *Letters of Murray to Byron*, 249–50.

31 *Mansfield Park*, vol. 1, ch. 16.

measure w^d be').³² In contrast, it is tempting to see her earlier subscription in a different light: by 1796 she was a novelist, with drafts of 'Elinor and Marianne' and 'First Impressions' well in hand (works later transformed into *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*). As a subscriber, her name circulates in print in 1796 not just in appreciative association with that of 'F. d'Arblay' (as Burney signs herself in her 'Dedication') and 'The Author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*' (as she is styled on the title page) but in the same list as Miss Edgeworth and Mrs Hannah More. In this distinguished company, the subscription looks like a secret pledge to her own art, anticipatory of the letter her father would soon write to Thomas Cadell, *Camilla's* publisher (in November 1797) offering 'a manuscript novel . . . about the length of Miss Burney's "Evelina"'.³³

Austen's lifetime anonymity was a shrewd move for an ambitious author, reducing though not obliterating the focus on her female perspective as a writer. Although her name did not appear on any of her title pages, there was no particular anxiety to conceal it, as a letter of 25 September 1813 makes clear. Responding to her sailor brother Frank's warning that to use the names of his old ships in her latest novel, *Mansfield Park*, will lay her authorship open to detection, she replies: 'the truth is that the Secret has spread so far as to be scarcely the Shadow of a secret now – & that I beleive whenever the 3^d appears, I shall not even attempt to tell Lies about it. – I shall rather try to make all the Money than all the Mystery I can of it.' But she adds a telling comment: 'I am trying to harden myself. – After all, what a trifle it is in all its Bearings, to the really important points of one's existence even in this World! –'³⁴ If she was unimpressed or even discomforted by the idea of public attention, she was, by contrast, eager for the economic advantage it might bring. Strictly speaking, her title pages mark out a shared territory. Only the first edition of *Sense and Sensibility* is 'By A Lady'; all that follow celebrate their relationship one to another: 'Pride and Prejudice: A Novel . . . by the Author of "Sense and Sensibility"'; 'Mansfield Park: A Novel . . . By the Author of "Sense and Sensibility" and "Pride and Prejudice"'. Viewed in this light, anonymity was not simply evidence of womanly modesty, as brother Henry would later assert, or a more likely wariness of public exposure. Although it may include both these, it also registers the decisive withdrawal on aesthetic grounds of a writer for whom the novel is an end in itself. Austen appears to look hard at the novel in and for itself, as almost an abstract

32 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 127 and 133; both subscriptions were for one guinea each. Further evidence relating to subscription by the Austens can be found in P. D. Garside, 'Jane Austen and Subscription Fiction', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10 (1987), 175–88.

33 *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 105. For details of the publication of *Camilla*, see Garside et al., *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 1, entry 1796: 26 (666–7). Austen's subscription copy of *Camilla* is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (David Gilson, 'Jane Austen's Books', *Collected Articles and Introductions* (privately printed, 1998), 81–2).

34 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 231.

shape and structure, and as an 'extraordinary illusion of actuality' into which the name of an author (real or pseudonymous) would be an intrusion.³⁵

Henry Austen recast his 1818 'Biographical Notice' in 1832, to accompany a reprinting of Austen's novels by Richard Bentley in his 'Standard Novels' series. But as recently as May 1831 it would seem that John Murray was considering a re-issue of all the novels, possibly as a collected edition. An important letter in the Murray Archive from Jane Austen's sister and heir, Cassandra Austen, dated 20 May 1831 reads:

Sir,

In answer to your letter received the 14th, | I beg to inform you that I am not disposed to part | with the Copy-right of my late Sister's works, but | I feel inclined to accept your proposal for the publishing | another Edition. Previous, however, to my final | agreement, I wish to know,

First, whether you have made any arrangement with | the Executors of the late M^r Egerton, for including | *Pride & Prejudice* in your intended publication?

2^{dly}. How large an Edition you propose to publish?

3^{dly}. In what Number of Volumes & size you mean | to bring it out?

4^{thly} At what price per set you mean to sell | it & what proportion of that price will be divisible | as profit?

And 5^{thly}, in case of our coming to an || agreement, When do you propose to bring it out | & at what period from your publishing, will you | render an account to me or my Agent of the | Proceeds?

I am Sir y^r hum: Sert:

Cass. Elizth. Austen³⁶

The letter has the appended inscription '1831. May. 28.th | Austin M^{rs}', which may refer either to the date the letter was received and read or, more likely, when it was dealt with. But we do not have Murray's reply or the answers to any of Cassandra Austen's very pertinent questions. If Murray had acquired all six copy-rights in 1831 and issued a collected edition at that time, his house, rather than Bentley's, would have shaped and been responsive to (through subsequent re-prints) Austen's rising nineteenth-century reputation. Did the scheme fail because Cassandra would not sell or because Murray lost interest or confidence in the project? In the years 1829 to 1834, his resources were seriously overstretched: by his Family Library, a venture to bring cheap new non-fiction to a wide readership; and by its shorter lived companion, the Dramatic Series.³⁷ Was he also considering other inexpensive series: perhaps reviving his plans of 1808 for a series of reprint fiction now to include an edition of Austen's novels?

We do know that only a year later Cassandra Austen has changed her mind, and in spectacular fashion. She and Henry Austen are in negotiation with Richard

35 The phrase belongs to Mary Lascelles, in her essay 'Jane Austen and the Novel', in John Halperin (ed.), *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1975), 241.

36 Murray Archive, 42001.

37 See Scott Bennett, 'John Murray's Family Library and the Cheapening of Books in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Studies in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 139–66.

Bentley for the sale of the five copyrights refused to Murray, Cassandra parting with all five for a mere £210, less than half of the £450 Murray had offered in 1815 for copyrights for three novels, and considerably less than the total profits Austen had made by on commission publication of one moderate edition of *Mansfield Park* in 1814.³⁸

By the end of 1833, all six Austen novels were available in the Standard Novels series. Single-volume reprints, the Standard Novels provided cheap editions of recent fiction, including works by living authors.³⁹ Henry's revised 'Memoir', now prefixed to *Sense and Sensibility*, the first Austen title issued, is described in a letter to Bentley of 4 October 1832 as intended 'to supersede that already publishd' (that is, the 1818 'Biographical Notice' from Murray);⁴⁰ Bentley continued to issue it until 1869, when it was replaced by James Edward Austen-Leigh's much longer *Memoir of Jane Austen*. There is a greater impersonality to Henry's new piece, fewer intimate touches, and the inclusion of a wholly new anecdote: of Jane Austen's refusal of an invitation to meet Madame de Staël. Henry writes:

Miss Austen was on a visit in London soon after the publication of *Mansfield Park*: a nobleman, personally unknown to her, but who had good reasons for considering her to be the authoress of that work, was desirous of her joining a literary circle at his house. He communicated his wish in the politest manner, through a mutual friend, adding, what his Lordship doubtless thought would be an irresistible inducement, that the celebrated Madame de Staël would be of the party. Miss Austen immediately declined the invitation. To her truly delicate mind such a display would have given pain instead of pleasure.⁴¹

What are we to make of this meeting that never was? Henry Austen is our only authority for the rejection of the handful of stardust a glittering literary soirée might have sprinkled over his sister. Yet the style of the anecdote (for example, Henry's local shift to the formal 'Miss Austen') smacks of the intrusion at this point of an external source rather than personal memory. Jane Austen may have admired de Staël's novel *Corinne, or Italy*, though her allusion to it, in a letter of

38 Henry Austen's letter of 24 July 1832, outlining terms for transference of the five copyrights to Richard Bentley, is reproduced in *Austen Papers, 1704-1856*, ed. R. A. Austen-Leigh (London, 1942), 286-7. Bentley seems to have offered £250 for all six copyrights, and Henry Austen was prepared to accept this sum for five, having pointed out that for *Pride and Prejudice* application must be made to the executors of the recently deceased Egerton. In the event, Bentley reduced the sum to the Austens by £40, paying that amount for the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice* (Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 211). By November 1814, a first edition of *Mansfield Park* had cleared £350 in profits (Gilson, *Bibliography of Jane Austen*, 49); for Murray's offer (rejected) of £450 for three copyrights, see *Jane Austen's Letters*, 291. Jane Austen's relevant financial dealings and likely final profits for her novels are set out in Fergus, *A Literary Life*, 171 and 193, n. 90; and see 'Profits of my Novels', Austen's own late summary of profits up to 1816, in *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts: A Digital Edition* (published online October 2010) (<<http://www.janeausten.ac.uk/manuscripts/pmprofits/1.html>> accessed 17 January 2012).

39 For further details of the series, which ran to 127 volumes, see Royal A. Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers* (Cambridge, 1960), 45-54.

40 For the text of the letter, see Deirdre Le Faye, 'Jane Austen: New Biographical Comments', *Notes and Queries*, 237 (1992), 162-3.

41 'Memoir of Miss Austen', *Sense and Sensibility* (London, 1833), ix.

December 1808 (where she recounts that she recommended it to Mr Fitzhugh, the stone-deaf inmate of a Southampton boarding house), is teasing and hard to interpret;⁴² and by 1815, when she switched publisher, she and de Staël would have John Murray in common. But 'soon after the publication of *Mansfield Park*' can only be May 1814, the same month the novel appeared and de Staël left England for good. (She was in England, living in London and later in Richmond, from mid-June 1813 until May 1814.) It is more likely that the conjectured meeting was for November 1813, when *Mansfield Park* was near completion and Jane Austen was in London staying with Henry and attending to the second edition of *Sense and Sensibility*. The 'nobleman' may have been Lord Holland (Henry Fox), famous for his literary salons, and a friend of Sir James Mackintosh, who like Murray frequented de Staël's entertainments at Richmond and unsuccessfully recommended Austen's novels to her;⁴³ or it could have been any one of several Henry Austen's' valuable social contacts.

However we look at it, this is a frustrating little anecdote; until, that is, we set it in the only context available—the context of publishing history rather than biography. For in 1833 the circumstantial evidence is wholly bibliographic. *Sense and Sensibility* is No. 23 in Bentley's Standard Novels, and advertised within its boards on the verso of the series title page, before the full title for *Sense and Sensibility*, is No. 24, *Corinne*, by Germaine de Staël. Can this planned proximity explain Henry's late conjuring into narrative existence of the missed meeting between the two novelists?⁴⁴ Did Henry redraft the 'Memoir' as part of the break with Murray, at Bentley's direction, and with the shape of Bentley's series in mind? Whatever the reason, at this point in the posthumous careers of both authors their novels effect the meeting their persons did not and the explosive *Corinne* functions as both epigraph and sequel to *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's critique of romanticism and female passion (Figs 1–3).

Although not a collected edition proper of Austen's works, Bentley's Standard Novels provided the first new English edition of any of the novels since Murray's posthumous *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. Small cloth-bound octavos, they were the first single-volume editions (*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* appeared together) and the first English illustrated editions. A posthumous edition is a significant event in a writer's career—a moment when the work changes its relation to the life of the author (as both Byron and Henry Austen testify), intensifying some connections and dissolving others, specifically the author's ability to control

42 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 161.

43 De Staël is said to have described *Pride and Prejudice* as 'vulgaire', in a note written to Sir James Mackintosh (quoted in *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, 111).

44 Valérie Cossy points out a possible connection between Henry Austen's anecdote and the advertisement of *Corinne* in *Sense and Sensibility* (1833), making the interesting suggestion that he was attempting to place distance between the reputations of the two writers; in 'Germaine de Staël, Jane Austen et leurs éditeurs: l'image de l'auteur à travers quelques éditions du XIXe siècle', *Études de lettres: revue de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Lausanne*, 236 (1993), 69–86 (especially, 84).

KATHRYN SUTHERLAND

S T A N D A R D

N O V E L S .

N^o XXIII.

"No kind of literature is so generally attractive as Fiction. Pictures of life and manners, and Stories of adventure, are more eagerly received by the many than graver productions, however important these latter may be. -ARULIAN is better remembered by his fable of Cupid and Psyche than by his abstruser Platonic writings; and the Decameron of Boccaccio has outlived the Latin Treatises, and other learned works of that author."

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY.

BY JANE AUSTEN.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
(LATE COLBURN AND BENTLEY):BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
CUMMING, DUBLIN; AND
GALLIGNANI, PARIS.

1833.

FIG. 1. Bentley's Standard Novels No. 23. Series title page.

The next Number of "The Standard Novels," to be published on the 1st of February, will contain a new translation, by Miss ISABEL HILL, of MADAME DE STAEL'S celebrated Romance,

CORINNE; OR, ITALY,

complete in One Volume, with metrical versions of the "Chants," or Odes, by Miss LAMB; and graphic illustrations, consisting of an engraving from the well known picture of Gerard, and a view of Coppet (the residence of Madame de Stael) from the pencil of Fielding.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

FIG. 2. Advertisement for *Corinne* on the verso of the Series title page.

S E N S E
AND
S E N S I B I L I T Y :

A NOVEL.

BY JANE AUSTEN.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
(LATE COLBURN AND BENTLEY):
BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
CUMMING, DUBLIN; AND
GALIGNANI, PARIS.
1833.

FIG. 3. Title page for *Sense and Sensibility*. (All reproduced from *Sense and Sensibility* (London, 1833) with permission from the English Subject Librarian, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University.)

her text. In 1833 two things happen: all six Austen novels appear, as by 'Jane Austen', numbers 23, 25, 27, 28, and 30 in the Standard Novels, preceded by titles from Jane Porter, Mary Shelley, Mary Brunton, and Harriet and Sophia Lee, and in the immediate company of William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (No. 22), de Staël's *Corinne* (No. 24), Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* and *Nature and Art* (No. 26), and John Banim's *The Smuggler* (No. 29); and an editorial paragraph, issued from Bentley's office, supplements Henry Austen's revised 'Memoir'. It reads:

The Editor of 'The Standard Novels' feels happy in being able to state, that arrangements have been made for including several other of the works of Miss Austen in this collection. Miss Austen is the founder of a school of novelists; and her followers are not confined to her own sex, but comprise in their number some male writers of considerable merit.⁴⁵

With its echoes of Walter Scott's pioneering review in the *Quarterly*, the statement firmly counters Henry Austen's defensive portrait and suggests, in the context of

45 *Sense and Sensibility* (1833), xv.

Bentley's mixed series at least, that Byron was right after all: the dead possess no sex.

'He sends more praise however than I expected'⁴⁶:

Jane Austen and William Gifford

Whether or not Henry Austen first approached John Murray on his sister's behalf, we know that William Gifford, editor of Murray's *Quarterly Review*, and a regular reader and advisor on manuscripts, was engaged in late summer 1815 to read several of Jane Austen's novels with an immediate view to publication. There is small but precious evidence in the Murray Archive to confirm that he was reading *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* in print and that he would move on to read *Emma* in manuscript. The pickings are tantalizingly meagre but they are more than we have suspected, mainly because Austen scholars have relied almost without exception on the snippets in Samuel Smiles's Victorian biography of John Murray II rather than turning to the Archive itself. This is not surprising: Gifford's hand is horribly illegible; his letters to Murray are those of one busy man to another—brief notes, sometimes drafted and unsent because a meeting makes them redundant, or written twice over, and with different emphases, because he cannot remember if this topic has been dealt with already; there are huge hiatuses—gaps that may be missing letters or may reflect the fact that the two men's regular meetings (daily when they were both in London) continue in conversation what began in written form; and the letters themselves deal with several topics, several manuscripts, several working schedules in swift succession, all tumbled together in the one informal note. We cannot turn to the Archive and hope to recover a neat section labelled: 'Murray House dealings over Jane Austen'. And nor should we: the cross-contamination of one topic by another, the setting of one author in relation to another, are what provoke new insights. This infection—the dependence of one critical judgement, one decision to publish or reject, on another—gives us our best clues to the economic and aesthetic measures of the time, often lost when a 'great' writer is re-assessed and set apart.

Quite reasonably, in view of her relative insignificance in Murray's list, Smiles dispatches Jane Austen in less than two pages of his weighty two-volume work. He quotes from parts of what he states are two letters, both from Gifford to Murray: one is undated, though purportedly written, according to Smiles, after 'Miss Austen had finished "Emma"': and the other is dated to 'September 29th, 1815'. Using the Murray Archive, Smiles's first, undated extract can be re-assigned precisely to 21 November 1814, and it shows Gifford first reading *Pride and Prejudice* almost a year before the date, generally proposed from Jane

⁴⁶ *Jane Austen's Letters*, 291, 17 October 1815, to Cassandra Austen, describing Murray's offer (based on Gifford's reader's report) to publish her work.

Austen's extant letters (and supported by Smiles's mis-dating), for an initial contact between the Austens and Murray. In this November 1814 letter, Gifford is reading and commenting on several submissions, *Pride and Prejudice* among them, and offering Murray his views. Smiles's second extract, which I will examine first, conflates two further letters. One letter is indeed dated, as he states, to 'September 29th, 1815' and includes what he prints as his second paragraph, on the manuscript of *Emma*; but the first paragraph from this second extract is taken from a different letter altogether and, in its original expanded form, contains fresh interesting matter that Smiles wholly omits. This letter, in the Murray Archive, is simply headed 'James S^t. Friday morn.':

My dear Sir

By this time you have | probably received Roworth's Estimates | – Five hundred pounds seems a good | deal for a novel, though M^{rs} D'arblay, | I believe, got more – but then such | exquisite performances as the Wanderer | do not often turn up. Cannot you | get the third novel ^ thrown in, *Pride and Pre- | judice*? I have lately read it again | – tis very good – wretchedly printed | in some places, & so pointed as to | be unintelligible.

This offers something more than Smiles's briefer version:

I have read 'Pride and Prejudice' *again* – 'tis very good – wretchedly printed, and so pointed as to be almost unintelligible.⁴⁷

Its position in the Archive suggests that this letter too can be dated to September or early October 1815, and it seems clear that Gifford is urging Murray in both September/October 1815 letters to make a better bargain over *Emma*, Austen's latest novel, by asking for *Pride and Prejudice* to be 'thrown in' as well as one further novel. Yet another undated letter, missed by Smiles and previously unreferenced, intriguingly inserted in correspondence with two others dated to July 1814 and assigned on its outer page a pencilled date of '1814' adds something more to the above bargaining. In it Gifford writes:

Mansfield | Park which I will return next week | is a good novel, & after M^{rs} D'arblay's | quite amusing.⁴⁸

A mere sentence, it raises the possibility that Gifford read *Mansfield Park* before he read *Pride and Prejudice*, and that this is all we have of his first critical impression. If so, it is interesting, though not unexpected that, in 1814 with her long anticipated novel *The Wanderer* finally published, Burney (Madame d'Arblay) should remain the measure against which Austen's fictions are tried; as she was in 1797 when George Austen offered to send the first manuscript ('about the length of Miss Burney's "Evelina"') to Cadell. For Gifford at least, Burney's novels continued to set a certain standard.

Already here we have four new pieces of information: that Gifford was reading for Murray one, possibly two of Jane Austen's novels, as early as 1814, a whole

47 Murray Archive, 42248; Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends*, vol. 1, 282.

48 Murray Archive, 42248 (also numbered on the outer page, 230).

year before we hear of her negotiating a move from Egerton; that, unsurprisingly, Charles Roworth has been set in September 1815 to calculate costs of production for *Emma* before an offer is made; that, as has long been suspected, Murray had his sights on the attractive copyright of *Pride and Prejudice*; and that when *Pride and Prejudice* proved unavailable £50 was shaved off the price offered for her three others. Jane Austen's own letters substantiate this. She wrote to Cassandra on 17 October 1815 that 'M^r Murray's Letter is come; he is a Rogue of course, but a civil one. He offers £450- but wants to have the Copyright of MP. & S&S included.'⁴⁹ In its unedited version from the Archive, Gifford's letter of 'Friday morn.' casts new light on this, the first evidence of a correspondence with Murray recorded in Deirdre Le Faye's edition of *Jane Austen's Letters*. It explains too the draft of a letter dictated by Henry Austen a few days later, on 20–21 October 1815: 'Your official opinion of the Merits of *Emma*, is very valuable & satisfactory...but Documents in my possession appear to prove that the Sum offered by you for the Copyright of Sense & Sensibility, Mansfield Park & Emma, is not equal to the Money which my Sister has actually cleared by one very moderate Edition of Mansfield Park.'⁵⁰

The 'Friday morn.' letter shows, in case we doubted it, the respect in which Murray held Gifford as a critical reader and his power to influence publishing decisions: it seems Murray was prepared to offer a very respectable £500 for the manuscript of *Emma* alone before Gifford intervened and suggested having other titles 'thrown in'. Although there is no hint of this in her surviving correspondence, Gifford's dated and undated 1814 letters (21 November 1814 commenting on *Pride and Prejudice*, and the (possibly earlier) undated praise of *Mansfield Park*) also raise the possibility of an approach having been made to Murray in the very month that Austen was in London staying with Henry and negotiating with Egerton for a second edition of *Mansfield Park*. The last 10 days of November 1814 see her first resisting and then yielding to her brother's urging that she join him to 'settle about a 2^d Edit:'; and a letter to her niece Fanny Knight, dated 30 November 1814, includes the following: '[I]t is not settled yet whether I *do* hazard a 2^d Edition. We are to see Egerton today, when it will probably be determined.'⁵¹ Letters to Fanny Knight and to another niece, Anna Lefroy, reveal Austen in these last days of November mustering informal reviews of *Mansfield Park* ('M^{rs} Creed's opinion is gone down on my list'), perhaps as compensation for the absence of any professional notice of the work and to bolster her own confidence in approaching Egerton and Murray over a second edition.⁵² If contact had already been made with Murray some time in 1814, was it now being used to put pressure on Egerton?

We can tease out a little more information. The extract of the letter between Gifford and Murray concerning *Emma*, reproduced by Smiles as the second

49 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 291. 50 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 293–4.

51 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 281, 287.

52 *Jane Austen's Letters*, 282–3.

paragraph of his second extract, exists in the Archive in two slightly different versions. There is the letter from 'James S^t. Sep 29 – 1815':

My dear Sir

The wanderings of my letter | are to be regretted because ~~th~~ it con | tained some answers to questions | which I am not sure that I now re- | member. Not to waste time, however, | I will proceed with what I recol- | lect.

Of Emma I have nothing but | good to say. I was sure of the writer before you mentioned her. | The m.s. though plainly written has | yet some ^{indeed, many little} ^ omissions, & an expression | may now & then be mended in passing | through the press. If you print it | which I think you will do (though | I can say nothing as to its price) | I will readily undertake the revi :| sion. If it falls in with your views | I should prefer Roworth as the | printer, your little man, Dove, is | apt to give one rather too much | trouble – but this, as you like.

This is the source of Smiles's altered and abbreviated version, which is regularly repeated or cited by Austen critics:

Of 'Emma', I have nothing but good to say. I was sure of the writer before you mentioned her. The M.S., though plainly written has yet some, indeed many little omissions; and an expression may now and then be amended in passing through the press. I will readily undertake the revision.⁵³

And there is an earlier version from 'James S^t. Sep. 21st 1815' that gives no evidence of having been sent:

I have read the Novel, and like | it much – I was sure, before I rec'd | your letter, that the writer was the | author of P. & Prejudice &c. I know | not its value, but if you can pro- | cure it, it will certainly sell well. | It is very carelessly copied, though | the hand-writing is excellently plain, | & there are many short omissions ^{which must be inserted} ^ . I | will readily correct the proof for | you, & may do it a little good here | & there, though there is not much to || do, it must be confessed. If you pur- | chase it, & have no reasons for a | particular choice, I should prefer | correcting Roworth's proofs to | others – if you have views another | way, I have not a word to say – Little Dove is unfortunately very | raw, & gives one, poor man, more | trouble than he ought.⁵⁴

Emma was the first of Austen's novels that Gifford read in manuscript, and his complaints about the 'pointing' or punctuation of the printed *Pride and Prejudice* are carried over, more particularly in the first, unsent version of the letter, into his assessment of the handwritten and 'very carelessly copied' *Emma*. At the same time, his praise of the composition is emphatic: he believes it will sell, and he is firm about his choice of printer, Charles Roworth. Critics (generally hagiographic towards Austen) have been quick to dismiss the suggestion that Austen would permit Gifford to 'undertake the revision' of her work. Brian Southam writes: 'If his offer was passed on to the author, probably she refused it'; and 'It is unlikely that Jane Austen would have welcomed or adopted Gifford's additions or amendments, but the posthumous edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* may have

53 Murray Archive, 42248; Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends*, vol. 1, 282.

54 Murray Archive, 42252, filed under 'Letters from Gifford on *Quarterly Review*'.

been liable to such interference.⁵⁵ But the Archive inevitably casts relationships in a different light. What we read here should make us reassess what we attribute to the great author's pen or sole control.

There is the matter of context: as Gifford reads the manuscript he thinks, among other things, of its transformation into print and its marketability; he is already inserting it into a set of production relations and values that take it beyond the undivided authority of its creator. From 1808, Gifford was a regular reader for Murray;⁵⁶ whether or not his verdicts amounted to what we might now think of as formal readers' reports, there is evidence in the Archive to suggest that his views on submitted manuscripts were accepted as decisive. Southam's choice of the term 'interference' risks expelling what was (and is) a legitimate activity in the transformation of manuscript into print, and shrouding deeper in mystery an author about whose ways of working so little is known. In the event, Roworth printed volumes 1 and 2 and John Moyes printed volume 3 of *Emma*. Differences in print forms between the third volume and the first two appear to reflect this division ('surprize', 1 and 2, 'surprise', 3; 'chuse', 1 and 2, 'choose', 3; 'Randalls', 1 and 2, 'Randall's', 3) and apparently did not disturb either Austen or the punctilious Gifford. On the other hand, there is the firmly imposed syntactic regularity of Murray's second edition of *Mansfield Park*, after the looser paratactic forms of Egerton's first edition. This revision defies the standard followed by the same printers for the first edition and, in its hyper-correction, seems an unlikely re-entry into her novel by Austen herself. Can we set it to Gifford's account? And if we can, then why not unknown 'improvements' to *Emma*? Gifford was an accomplished textual critic (as his work on the text of Ben Jonson showed),⁵⁷ assiduous and welcomed in extending his editorial skills to refining or correcting Byron's punctuation. Why should we assume his offer to amend Austen's manuscript was not accepted or that he was not the first in a line of classically trained textual scholars (among them Verrall, Marsh, and Chapman, in the twentieth century) who saw fit to tackle, again and again, what they perceived to be her grammatical solecisms?⁵⁸

55 B. C. Southam, *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development through the Surviving Papers*, revised edn (London, 2001), 82, 98n.

56 See Gettman, *A Victorian Publisher*, 188; and Gifford to Murray: 'Make no apology for sending any | thing to me to read or revise. I am | always happy to do either, in the thought | that it may be useful to you' (Murray Archive, 42248).

57 William Gifford, *The Works of Ben Jonson. In Nine Volumes, with Notes Critical and Explanatory, and a Biographical Memoir* (London 1816). See *Letters of Murray to Byron*, 181: 'Giffords Ben Jonson has put to death all former Critics & is very much liked – you would like it greatly' (13 December 1816).

58 There is sufficient evidence in the Murray–Byron correspondence to suggest that Gifford's regular habits when seeing Byron's poetry through the press—giving general critical advice, correcting punctuation, and going over proofs—would have extended to other authors in whom he took an interest. (*Letters of Murray to Byron*, 70–1 and n. 2, 173, 343, 363–4, 386, 399.) For attempts to improve and emend Austen's texts, see Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford, 2005), 266–313).

One of the challenges posed by the Archive is to assess how far we allow dealings with other authors around the same time by the same agents to intrude upon or fill gaps in the evidence for our own author. Smiles's two volumes tease out into separate author-focussed anecdotes what Gifford's letters reveal to be matters of comparative judgement about books. Take, for example, his first reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, which we can now date to November 1814, where he describes it as 'really a very pretty | thing. No dark passages – no | secret chambers, no wind howl- | ing in long galleries, no drops of | blood upon a rusty dagger – things | that should now be left to || lady's maids, and sentimental | washerwomen'.⁵⁹ As extracted by Smiles, this seems a most peculiar critique, an odd angle from which to judge a modern comedy of manners; until, that is, we see the rest of the letter. Then it becomes clear that Gifford has several works, some in manuscript, on his table, and that his early opinion of *Pride and Prejudice* is formed as a counter to his dissatisfaction with the stale conventions of another novel. His critique is worth quoting in full:

Of the Novel, I hardly | know what to say – It im- | proves; but there are radical | defects. The writer has copied | models of which the world is | tired: and she has descriptions | of characters which she wants | strength to fill up. Her chief | man, is a failure. He is described | as stern, commanding, dignified & | yet his language is mean & his | conduct vulgar. There is little | knowledge of the world, and none || of the language of high life. With | all this, it has much merit in | particular places: and some of | the characters are prettily drawn. | It begins with too much bluster, | & the old Lord who makes such a | figure in the outset dwindles into | a very poor personage in the second | & third vol^s.

The style wants compression, & | I have made a few scratches in | the opening pages to point out | what seems necessary to be done. | Briefly, the lady (for I presume | the writer is a lady) wants a | severe friend. With his assistance | she might rise far above the | herd of novel-writers, for she | has talents, and a facility of | expression; but this is a sine | qua non. The novel will be | read, but it will not last.

I have, for the first time, looked into *Pride & Prejudice* | & it is really a very pretty | thing ...⁶⁰

In light of such incisive criticism of another novelist, we might take as a sign of his appreciation of Austen's style Gifford's wish to mend it. Elsewhere, in the September 1815 letters in which he was weighing the merits of *Emma*, he was also commenting on Helen Maria Williams's latest 'Letters from Paris'. 'Helen Williams too should be sent to | the press' he writes in his letter of 29 September on *Emma*.⁶¹ Earlier, on 3 September, he had made clear his opinion of Williams's 'Letters':

Her letters | are ill written, not very lively in any | part, & in some very dull; but coming | from her, they will make some noise | ... I have not touched them; but | I will correct the

59 This is transcribed from the Murray Archive, 42248, a letter of 21 November 1814. It appears with slight differences in Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends*, vol. 1, 282.

60 Murray Archive, 42248.

61 Murray Archive, 42248, a letter of 29 September 1815.

proofs, so as to | make them intelligible at least. She | cannot write English; but her manner | must be preserved. I think that | you should not venture too much | for them.⁶²

We do not know whether Austen had particular views on how a printed page from her manuscript should look nor do we know in what state she submitted copy to the press. How carelessly copied was the copy of *Emma* that Gifford considered 'very carelessly copied'? Would our verdict differ from Gifford's? The publisher's archive invites, even requires, speculation on the shift from manuscript to print, and re-attributes intentions through the interpretation of evidence beyond that of the author. What comes across most powerfully in reading Gifford's letters is the confidence of his critical judgements, the prodigious range of his labours on behalf of others, and a severe, uncompromising zeal to serve the interests of what he considered good writing. By these hard standards, he appears to esteem Austen highly and to mean to serve her well.

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62 Murray Archive, 42248, a letter of 3 September 1815. In his 21 September letter (Murray Archive 42252), Gifford is dealing with both *Emma* and Williams's *Letters*.