ROMANTIC AUSTEN
Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon

Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon is the first full-length scholarly monograph to examine Jane Austen’s writings within the traditions of Romanticism. It argues that Austen’s central position within the literary canon can be fully understood only by locating her work within Romantic cultural traditions. Taking the contemporary Austen revival as its cue, the study presents a series of historically contextualized readings of Austen’s juvenilia (Catharine, or The Bower and The History of England), Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park and Austen’s posthumously published novel, Sanditon, to examine ways in which Romantic-period definitions of nation, culture and literature continue to function in contemporary readings of Austen and her period. An investigation of the sexual politics of national culture, heritage culture and literary canon-formation informs the study’s discussion of the relationship between Romanticism, Austen and the literary canon.

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ROMANTIC AUSTEN
This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those 'great national events' that were 'almost daily taking place': the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion and literature were reworked in texts such as Frankenstein and Biographia Literaria; gender relations in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Don Juan; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; poetic form, content and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of response or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of 'literature' and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

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ROMANTIC AUSTEN

Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon

CLARA TUITE

Lecturer in English, University of Melbourne
To Susan Conley
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4. William Wellings, silhouette of the presentation of Edward Austen to Mr and Mrs Knight by the Reverend George Austen. Thanks to the Trustees of Jane Austen House, Chawton. Reproduced by kind permission of private family collection.
This book has developed over many years, during which time I have incurred a number of debts of heartfelt gratitude. First of all, at the University of Sydney, to Judith Barbour, whom I was lucky enough to have as a supervisor, for her intellectual inspiration, enormous generosity and style tout court. To Deirdre Coleman, also at the University of Sydney, for her generosity as an early reader, and whose wit, humour and critical acumen then and since have been appreciated. To Gillian Russell, at the Australian National University, for her friendship and support, as well as some customarily shrewd critical advice and valuable editorial suggestions in the final stages of the project. All three are exemplary.

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Note on texts