Jane Austen was received by her contemporaries as a new voice, but her late twentieth-century reputation as a nostalgic reactionary still lingers on. In this radical revision of her engagement with the culture and politics of her age, Peter Knox-Shaw argues that Austen was a writer steeped in the Enlightenment, and that her allegiance to a sceptical tradition within it, shaped by figures such as Adam Smith and David Hume, lasted throughout her career. Knox-Shaw draws on archival and other neglected sources to reconstruct the intellectual atmosphere of the Steventon Rectory where Austen wrote her juvenilia, and follows the course of her work through the 1790s and onwards, showing how minutely responsive it was to the many shifting movements of those turbulent years. *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* is an important contribution to the study both of Jane Austen and of intellectual history at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Peter Knox-Shaw is a Research Associate at the University of Cape Town. He is author of *The Explorer in English Fiction* (1987) and has published widely on eighteenth-century and Romantic literature. He is a contributor to the new Cambridge edition of the works of Jane Austen.
JANE AUSTEN AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

PETER KNOX-SHAW
For Barbara
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Acknowledgements


My thanks are also due to the librarians and staff of the institutions where I did my research: the British Library, the Cambridge University Library, the Hampshire Record Office, the India Office, the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, the Kent Archives, the National Maritime Museum, the Oppenheimer Library, the Public Record Office, and the South African Library. I am especially thankful to Tom Carpenter for his help at Chawton, and to Tanya Barben for her readiness to seek out items from the Special Collections at the University of Cape Town.

No encouragement is required by those who choose to study a writer as endlessly rewarding as Jane Austen, but I am grateful to the many friends and colleagues who gave advice, discussed ideas, defended the opposite view, kindly took me aside to explain the error of my ways, or allowed me the luxury of forgetting my work altogether. I should like particularly to thank the following for their stimulus and support: John Baatjies, John Coulton, Janette Deacon, Niel and Ina Du Plessis, Rodney Edgecombe, Geoff and Tish Hughes, Lucy Iago, Robert and Caroline Jackson, Lesley Marx, Ermiën van Pletzen, Frank and Ida Raimondo, Francis and Anne Thackeray, Constance Walker, and Stephen Watson. I am greatly indebted to the two anonymous readers of the manuscript without whose...
Acknowledgements

insightful criticism and comments the book would be very much the worse; and grateful to Linda Bree for her patience and good counsel at every stage in guiding it through the press, as also to Maureen Leach for her skilful and sensitive editing. To Barbara, whose love of the novels remains undiminished, I owe as always the most.
Note on chronology

Of the six novels by Jane Austen published between 1811 and 1817, three were first drafted before 1800, and two of these unsuccessfully offered to publishers. 'First Impressions', drafted in 1796–7 and rejected unseen by Cadell in 1797, later became *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). 'Susan', drafted in 1798–9 and accepted by Crosby in 1803, was left untouched by them until bought back in 1816 to be published posthumously as *Northanger Abbey* (1817). How much these novels changed between their first submission and their final state is a matter of conjecture, but it is clear that they were revised rather than reconceived. In the case of 'First Impressions', Cassandra Austen noted 'alterations & contractions', and Jane wrote of having 'lopt & cropped' the manuscript. In a brief preface to *Northanger Abbey* she stressed that the novel had been 'finished' thirteen years back and was in parts 'comparatively obsolete'. *Sense and Sensibility* which began life in 1795 as 'Elinor and Marianne', and was redrafted in 1797, became the earliest of her published works in 1811.

To draw out the contexts of the novels I have taken them in the sequence that they were first prepared for publication rather than in the order in which they finally appeared. Provided due weight is given to the original period of composition, this format seems to be the one best suited to a historical approach.