THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Named in many surveys as Britain’s best-loved work of fiction, *Pride and Prejudice* is now a global brand, with film and television adaptations making Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy household names. With a combination of original readings and factual background information, this *Companion* investigates some of the sources of the novel’s power. It explores key themes and topics in detail: money, land, characters and style. The history of the book’s composition and first publication is set out, both in individual essays and in the section of chronology. Chapters on the critical reception, adaptations and cult of the novel reveal why it has become an enduring classic with a unique and timeless appeal.

Janet Todd is the President of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge.
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   Image courtesy of Goucher College Library and Special Collections 132

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Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve (1988). He is
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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PREFACE

*Pride and Prejudice* is the Austen title everyone knows. Its opening sentence is one of the most exploited in the language. In some surveys the nation’s best-loved novel, it is now a global brand and, mainly through film and television versions, the central lovers Elizabeth and Darcy have become household names.

For this extraordinary reason the chapters in this *Companion* are both about the book itself and about its immense fame, influence and legacy. They explore the critical response, the adaptations and spin-offs as well as the style and themes of the original novel and its literary and historical context. *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen’s second published work, is not usually selected by contemporary academic critics as her greatest achievement, but it is the book she and her friends most valued and, very early on, it became her most loved and celebrated work. Created to mark the bicentenary of the first publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, the *Companion* investigates some of the sources of the novel’s power through the ages and the reason why so many readers have felt it to be true about human relations and about romance.

The *Companion* opens with Thomas Keymer’s chapter on ‘Narrative’. Setting the novel in a context especially of Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding and Frances Burney, it makes the controversial argument that *Pride and Prejudice* is more likely to have been written in epistolary form than *Sense and Sensibility*, the usual candidate for a novel in letters. Touching on her fame for unmediated dialogue and slippery narrative voice, Keymer notes Austen’s occasional use of intrusive explanations which provide a bedrock of moral analysis for the reader. Free indirect style, the technique which catches in narrative prose the distinctive qualities of particular speech, was not invented by Jane Austen but she employed it very flexibly in *Pride and Prejudice* to deliver a character’s idiolect, often while placing him or her within a narrator’s syntax.

The delivery of character, Austen’s power of creating personalities who can enter and inhabit a reader’s mind, is the subject of Robert Miles’s chapter.
This discusses the way fictional characters come to reveal and to know themselves. Miles argues that Austen is one of the last significant Aristotelian moralists in the English tradition; consequently self-knowledge is connected with telos, the end towards which our nature strives if we are to know our true place and purpose in life. Peter Knox-Shaw also associates Jane Austen with Aristotle through the notion of greatness of mind or pride as conscious worth. Moving nearer to her time, he finds her within the sceptical tradition of John Locke, whose notion of the frequently dangerous power of first impressions is related to the title of the original draft of *Pride and Prejudice*. Drawing on *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* by the philosopher David Hume, he argues that both Austen and Hume differ from many of their contemporary moralists in seeing human nature as mixed, and in refusing to celebrate good nature sentimentally. Both Miles and Knox-Shaw stress Austen’s psychological realism. Miles argues that, while revealing her epistemological concerns, Austen never loses sight of the commonplace, material motivation in actions, while Knox-Shaw notes that, for Austen, ideas are organic, fluctuating, felt on the pulse, and subject to dramatic change.

In ‘Composition and Publication’ Anthony Mandal notes the complexity of Jane Austen’s publishing career and the difficulty of compartmentalising the six novels into Steventon and Chawton works. He places *Pride and Prejudice* within a continuum of her writings, beginning with her juvenile works from 1787 and continuing through the period of original composition and redrafting of the novel until it reaches publication in 1813. He also discusses the book industry when Jane Austen entered the market and describes the literary context of women writers, especially Burney, who was such a profound influence on Jane Austen. This influence is investigated more fully in Linda Bree’s chapter on the literary background. Stressing the voluminous nature of Austen’s reading, Bree comments on Austen’s ambivalent attitudes to the early masters of the novel, Fielding and Richardson, and her relationship to her most famous female contemporaries, Burney and Edgeworth. Bree focuses on those works that Austen singles out for special praise in *Northanger Abbey: Cecilia, Camilla* and *Belinda*. While assessing what Austen learnt and rejected in these, Bree concludes that in aims and themes Austen often followed Burney but that her wit is closer to Edgeworth’s wit than to Burney’s broader humour.

In his chapter on the historical background, Bharat Tandon follows Mandal in noting the changes in publishing and book-buying from the revolutionary decade when *Pride and Prejudice* began its life to the Regency when it was printed. He too argues that the novel has literary memories within it, harking back to the juvenile tales and relating securely to the late fictions. The fifteen or so years of its gestation form one of the most turbulent
periods in recent English history, and Tandon argues that Austen has a ‘glancing involvement’ with this history rather than a direct engagement. *Pride and Prejudice* manifests some of the historical changes and continuities in, for example, the use of the militia and in the attitude to money. The concern for money and its power is the main focus of Robert Markley’s chapter on the economic background of *Pride and Prejudice*. Characters view the world through a lens of finance and inheritance customs and accept the responsibilities imposed by ownership of property. Discussing the economic changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Markley indicates how Austen’s novels capture the sense of entitlement that many upper-class people displayed while revealing the underlying anxiety about the effect of fluctuating amounts of money on lifestyle and status. Money, social position and hierarchical values inform the worldview of Austen’s characters in general, but *Pride and Prejudice* seems finally to endorse an expansive rather than a simply hierarchical view of upper-class social relations.

Two chapters concentrate on the external world of the novel. Judith W. Page investigates the estate – houses and grounds – of *Pride and Prejudice*, noting the link between characters and class on the one hand and property and landscape on the other; she comments on the way the reader is led to appreciate the value attached to the outdoors and to special places. Austen uses the picturesque aesthetic as a useful tool for viewing, as well as for conveying a more Romantic vision that emphasises the emotional effect of the natural world more than the visual effect. Andrew Elfenbein makes a similar point with reference to both inside and outside space in *Pride and Prejudice*. Seemingly engaged in an experimental minimalism, Austen often appears indifferent to setting, excluding most of what other writers would consider essential, especially in an age that loved detail and was obsessed with the aesthetic style of the picturesque. In fact in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen is closer to the Johnsonian aesthetic that prohibited minute description, although she does not follow him into stressing universality of response; instead she insists on the influence of circumstance and the interaction of bodies with social space.

In her chapter on the translations of *Pride and Prejudice*, Gillian Dow shows how the style and skill of the translator control the critical reaction of the novel in languages outside English and how theories of translation influence practice in different periods. In the nineteenth century *Pride and Prejudice* was not the most frequently translated of Austen’s novels – though in adapted form it had the distinction of being the first: the Franco-Swiss version appearing in 1813 conformed the novel to the conventions of current sentimental romance fiction and largely avoided its irony and realism about marriage markets and money. Austen’s later omnipresence in foreign parts is
predominantly a late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century phenomenon, mirroring the Anglo-American Austen cult. The trend of romanticising her work continues globally – as the chapters of Devoney Looser and Emily Auerbach suggest.

Very different is the tradition of academic Austen criticism in the English-speaking world, the subject of my own first chapter. Although from the late nineteenth century up to the present the most serious literary comment and philosophical claims have been made for Mansfield Park and Emma, even Pride and Prejudice, seemingly the most escapist of Austen’s works, has been found by critics to reveal a satiric edge to its comic realism, a latent hostility to a damaging society, and a deep moral seriousness. When in the twentieth century the novel was set in its supposed historical context, discussion turned on whether Austen approved or disapproved the heroine’s initial rebelliousness and whether Elizabeth was in the end reduced and tamed to contemporary patriarchal structure. Repeatedly criticism found contradictory ethics emerging from the novel and judged it reactionary or enlightened according to desire or expectation. The debate continues in this volume and beyond.

The enormous proliferation of Pride and Prejudice is the subject of the final four chapters. My own second chapter, on romance, concentrates on Jane Austen’s Mr Darcy as a figure differing substantially from the polite hero created in the eighteenth century by writers such as Richardson and Burney. I discuss Mr Darcy as a character who will later be reinterpreted in the light of subsequent romantic heroes created especially by Lord Byron and the Brontë novelists. Adumbrating the archetypal romantic pattern of threatening, overbearing hero and socially inferior girl who yet tames him into love, Pride and Prejudice had considerable influence on the genre of popular feminine romance in the twentieth century. In filmic adaptations Mr Darcy in part resembles the character Jane Austen authored and in part morphs into the more Brontësque romantic hero. The chapter considers the elements in the original novel that allow this development. Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire continue this subject by addressing screen adaptations, noting that almost as many are made of this one book as of all the other Austen novels put together. This is because it appears to encapsulate the promise of romantic love. However, Carroll and Wiltshire argue that, although the very popular film adaptations do centre on this subject, in fact they falsify the book, which is really about the nature of true marriage. Following this argument, they relate Pride and Prejudice to the screwball comedies of the 1930s where the chief characters quarrel, then with witty dialogue make up, learn and forgive.

Writing on the cult of Jane Austen, Devoney Looser traces the afterlife of Pride and Prejudice through changing sets of readers at discrete historical moments until the novel reaches near ubiquity in the late twentieth century.
Austen is known to have been associated with a male elite readership in the late nineteenth century and reputed to have given literary sustenance to men in the trenches of the First World War; Looser argues that she was also appreciated by first-wave feminists such as Rebecca West, who imagined her intentionally writing novels of energetic, proto-feminist critique. At the same time she achieved a popular readership catered for in mass-market editions of her works. Since then she has been used for a variety of purposes, repackaged for children, even toddlers, employed for contemporary self-help books on manners and dating and internet games, and reduced to pens, tea towels and mugs. Looser raises the question of how we make sense of this extraordinary exploitation of Austen and why it has occurred. Auerbach’s chapter complements Looser’s by describing the adaptations, permutations, sequels and prequels of Pride and Prejudice through various print and screen media. My chapter on romance mentions the role of Mr Darcy in the female romance tradition: in adaptations he is given a childhood, inner thoughts (some anti-semitic) and myriad sexual exploits – not only with Elizabeth but also with Bingley and Wickham, while being turned into a rock star, a rancher, a vampire and a werewolf. Other characters come out of the novel to write diaries and interact with new creations, American cowboys and French cousins for example, in the endlessly growing Pride and Prejudice industry. So speedy is the proliferation that, as Auerbach notes, this chapter will be out of date by the time the volume is published.

Janet Todd
NOTE ON TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Quotations from the novel are given with the abbreviation P&P and a page number. These numbers refer to the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Pat Rogers (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

**Context**  

**E**  

**Juvenilia**  
*Juvenilia*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge University Press, 2006)

**Letters**  

**LM**  

**MP**  

**NA**  

**P**  

**S&S**  
### CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1764–7</td>
<td>Revd George Austen, rector of Steventon, marries Cassandra Leigh. Three children, James (1765), George (1766) and Edward (1767), are born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>The Austens move to Steventon, Hampshire. Five more children – Henry (1771), Cassandra (1773), Francis (1774), Jane (1775) and Charles (1779) – are born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>16 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781 Winter</td>
<td>JA’s cousin, Eliza Hancock, marries Jean-François Capot de Feuillide, in France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Austen family amateur theatricals first recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1783</td>
<td>JA’s third brother, Edward, is adopted by Mr and Mrs Thomas Knight of Godmersham in Kent. Later he will take their name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785 Spring</td>
<td>JA and Cassandra attend the Abbey House School, Reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786 April</td>
<td>JA’s fifth brother, Francis, enters the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>JA and Cassandra leave school and return to Steventon. Between now and 1793 JA writes what will become her three volumes of <em>Juvenilia</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788 Summer</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Austen, JA and Cassandra on a trip to Kent and London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Francis leaves the RN Academy and sails to East Indies; does not return until Winter 1793.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>JA writes ‘Love &amp; Freindship’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791 September</td>
<td>Charles enters the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 December</td>
<td>Edward Austen marries Elizabeth Bridges, and they live in Rowling in Kent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>JA’s eldest brother, James, marries Anne Mathew; they live at Deane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? Winter</td>
<td>Cassandra becomes engaged to the Revd Tom Fowle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>Edward Austen’s first child, Fanny, born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>War declared between Britain and France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>JA’s fourth brother, Henry, becomes a lieutenant in the Oxfordshire Militia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April</td>
<td>James Austen’s first child, Anna, born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 June</td>
<td>‘Ode to Pity’, last item of JA’s <em>Juvenilia</em>, composed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>M. de Feuillide guillotined in Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Charles goes to sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>‘Lady Susan’ possibly written this year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>‘Elinor and Marianne’ probably written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>James’s wife Anne dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797 September</td>
<td>Tom Lefroy visits Ashe Rectory – he and JA have a brief flirtation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>JA starts writing ‘First Impressions’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797 January</td>
<td>JA finishes ‘First Impressions’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>George Austen offers a JA manuscript for publication to Thomas Cadell – rejected sight unseen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>JA begins rewriting ‘Elinor and Marianne’ as <em>Sense and Sensibility</em>. Mrs Austen and daughters visit Bath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December</td>
<td>Henry Austen marries his cousin, the widowed Eliza de Feuillide, in London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798–9</td>
<td>JA probably writes ‘Susan’ (later <em>Northanger Abbey</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>George Austen decides to retire and move to Bath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>Henry Austen resigns commission and sets up as a banker and army agent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Austen family leave Steventon for Bath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>25 March Peace of Amiens appears to end Anglo-France war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>JA and Cassandra visit Steventon. Landowner Harris Bigg-Wither proposes to JA; she accepts, but declines the following day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>JA revises ‘Susan’ (<em>Northanger Abbey</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Spring JA sells ‘Susan’ (<em>Northanger Abbey</em>) to publisher Benjamin Crosby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>18 May War with France recommences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Austens visit Ramsgate in Kent, and possibly West Country; in November they visit Lyme Regis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>JA probably starts writing ‘The Watsons’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>George Austen dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Martha Lloyd joins Mrs Austen and her daughters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 October</td>
<td>Battle of Trafalgar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>July Austen women visit Clifton, Adlestrop, Stoneleigh and Hamstall Ridware, before settling in Southampton in the autumn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

1808
October
Edward Austen's wife Elizabeth dies at Godmersham.

1809
April
JA tries to secure publication of 'Susan' (Northanger Abbey).
July
Mrs Austen, Jane and Cassandra and Martha Lloyd move to Chawton, Hants.

1810
Sense and Sensibility accepted for publication by Thomas Egerton.

1811
February
JA starts planning Mansfield Park.
30 October
Sense and Sensibility published.
JA starts revising 'First Impressions' into Pride and Prejudice.

1812
Autumn
JA sells copyright of Pride and Prejudice to Egerton.

1813
January
Pride and Prejudice published.
July
JA finishes Mansfield Park. Accepted for publication by Egerton.

1814
January
JA starts Emma.
5 April
Napoleon abdicates and is exiled to Elba.
May
Mansfield Park published.

1815
March
Napoleon escapes and resumes power in France.
March
Emma finished.
18 June
Battle of Waterloo ends war with France.
August
JA starts Persuasion.
October
Henry Austen takes JA to London; he falls ill.
November
JA visits Carlton House, is invited to dedicate future work to Prince Regent.
December
Emma published by John Murray, dedicated to Prince Regent (title page 1816).
CHRONOLOGY

1816
Spring  JA ill. Henry Austen buys back manuscript of ‘Susan’ (Northanger Abbey), which JA revises.
August  Persuasion finished.

1817
January  JA starts ‘Sanditon’.
18 March  JA too ill to work.
24 May  JA goes to Winchester for medical attention.
18 July  JA dies; buried on 24 July, Winchester Cathedral.

December  Northanger Abbey and Persuasion published together, by Murray, with a ‘Biographical Notice’ added by Henry Austen (title page 1818).