

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

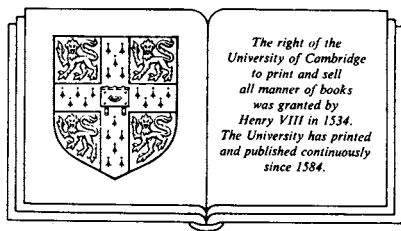
JANE AUSTEN'S
ART OF MEMORY

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

JANE AUSTEN'S ART OF MEMORY



JOCELYN HARRIS
Associate Professor in English, University of Otago



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge
New York Port Chester
Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press
 0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
 Jocelyn Harris
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1989

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1989

First paperback edition 2003

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Harris, Jocelyn.

Jane Austen's art of memory / Jocelyn Harris.

p. cm.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 36391 8 hardback

1. Austen, Jane, 1775-1817 — Knowledge — Literature. 2. Austen,
 Jane, 1775-1817 — Books and reading. 3. Influence (Literary,
 artistic, etc.) 4. Memory in literature. 5. Allusions. I. Title.

PR4038.L5H37 1989

823'.7 — dc 19 89-502 CIP

ISBN 0 521 36391 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 54207 3 paperback

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

For Margot and Angus Ross

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	page ix
1	<i>Northanger Abbey</i>	1
	Catherine Morland's education	2
	'The dark room of the understanding'	9
	Catherine Morland's general integrity	13
	'A right popular philosopher'	26
2	The return to Richardson	34
3	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	48
	<i>Pamela</i> and <i>Sir Charles Grandison</i>	49
	<i>Clarissa</i>	55
	<i>Paradise Lost</i>	71
4	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	84
	'A new set of company'	84
	'Intricate characters are the most amusing'	98
	'In a more gentleman-like manner': three proposals	112
5	<i>Mansfield Park</i>	130
	'And the Women but barely swim'	130
	'My Tutor, my Brother, my Friend!'	145
	'Careless as a woman and a friend'	149
	The paradisaal park	159
	'If not Authors, Carvers'	164
6	<i>Emma</i>	169
7	<i>Persuasion</i>	188
	The Loathly Lady	190
	Gentillesse as rank, wealth, and beauty	195
	Gentillesse as outward appearance	201

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii

Contents

Maistrie	205
The constancy of women	208
Conclusion 'Nothing can come of nothing'	213
Appendix 1 <i>The History of Sir Charles Grandison</i>	222
Appendix 2 <i>Sir Charles Grandison</i> in the juvenilia	228
<i>Notes</i>	239
<i>Bibliography</i>	256
<i>Index</i>	267

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

Jane Austen read very extensively in history and *belles-lettres*, and her memory was extremely tenacious.¹ Her invention sprang largely from books, for in the English classics that were once women's liberal education, Jane Austen found languages to write with. I here set her books against other books to show how memory gives origins to art, and without claiming to have discovered everything, explore how her mind might have worked.

Jane Austen uses 'allusions' and 'influences' neither by chance nor merely for embellishment. *Northanger Abbey* for instance, far from being the slightest of her novels, dramatises Locke to display a method and a manifesto. This, the first of her longer works to be completed in 1803, seems virtually unaffected by Richardson, whom she had satirised ruthlessly in the juvenilia. The 1804 publication of his *Correspondence* may have revived her respect for a favourite author, because difficult critical cruxes in *Sense and Sensibility* disappear if Jane Austen built her book on *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Grandison*, and if she was prompted by the *Correspondence* to revise her novel in the 'lost years' 1805–9, as I shall argue. *Sense and Sensibility* contains particularly nice contrasts between some scenes she fully reworked from Richardson and Milton, and others she hardly assimilated at all. *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrates the dazzling variety of ways in which she rewrote *Grandison*, along with glances towards *Pamela* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. *Mansfield Park* calls upon *Grandison* yet again to develop Richardson's Miltonic hints into the important scene in the wilderness. It shows what she can do, essentially, with a change of key. By contrast, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* more thoroughly diffuses all of *Emma*, as Chaucer's Wife of Bath does *Persuasion*. By this stage the literary-critical impulse of her Richardson-based books dissolves for the most part into

a method more open, confident, and free. Although her differences are at least as important as her similarities, books do seem thus to have provided her beginnings. And if Jane Austen invigorated herself by reading Chaucer, Shakespeare, Locke, Milton, Pope, Richardson, Fielding, and Coleridge, she only did as they all did when she made them new and when she made them hers.

Some people will resist the idea. One early critic, Richard Simpson, wrote 'If she had no personal help from her contemporaries, she cannot be said to have derived much from books', and A. Walton Litz decided recently that while 'her novels are filled with literary references, many of them are either trivial or misleading, and conventional source studies ... show how little vital background is uncovered by an investigation of these allusions'.² But I am not the first to try and catch her in the act of greatness³ by guessing where she began. Q.D. Leavis names the early works as a major source, though R. W. Chapman and B. C. Southam do not agree; Mary Lascelles argues that she used conventions similar to Fanny Burney's; Clara Thomson shows that Maria Edgeworth influenced her in ways that Marilyn Butler calls 'anti-jacobin'; Kenneth Moler and Frank Bradbrook uncover a host of allusions to other books; Henrietta Ten Harmsel sees her drawing on a diffused network of conventions; Peter L. De Rose looks to Samuel Johnson; and Juliet McMaster argues for Shakespeare. Alvin Metcalfe, Jan Fergus, and Gerard Barker perceive the special importance of *Grandison*. Alistair Duckworth places her in the conservative tradition, while Margaret Kirkham sets her among eighteenth-century feminist debates.⁴ These critics assume as I do, that to know her reading is to understand her better.

Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar, drawing on Frank Kermode's and Harold Bloom's Freudian paradigms about the necessary 'anxiety' of writers confronted by the burden of the past, sketch a Jane Austen who resists male-dominated art. Dale Spender endows her with a matriarchal novelistic inheritance, and Jane Spencer explores thematic links with female forerunners.⁵ I myself believe that Jane Austen took what she wanted from anywhere, not just from women, and not just from fiction either, and that her memory energised her art in a manner far more coherent even than 'intertextuality'. In spite of Freud and his followers, I detect no trace of anxiety in her, for to paraphrase

Cambridge University Press
0521542073 - Jane Austen's Art of Memory
Jocelyn Harris
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

xi

Dryden on Jonson, she 'invades Authors like a Monarch, and what would be theft in other Poets, is only victory in her' (*Of Dramatick Poesie*, p. 90). Every detail of my argument may not strike others as forcefully as it did me, but I hope that the accumulation of detail will. In any case, we flatter ourselves to think we know more than she did, for if we know even part of it, we are doing pretty well.

What, as Jane Austen said in echo of Harriet Byron, am I to do with my gratitude? I am grateful to Pat Brückmann, John Burrows, Marilyn Butler, Margaret Dalziel, Ian Donaldson, Margaret Anne Doody, Alistair Duckworth, E. E. Duncan-Jones, David Erdman, Catherine Fitzgerald, Colin Gibson, David Gilson, John Hardy, Lenore Harty, David Hoeniger, Park Honan, Jonathan Lamb, Mary Lascelles, D. C. Measham, the late Ellen Moers, Michael Neill, Ruth Perry, Clive Probyn, Claude Rawson, Barry Roth, Juliet Sheen, George Starr, Janet Todd, Howard Weinbrot, my editor Kevin Taylor, and my copy-editor Andrea Smith. Anaig Fenby, Lynnsay Francis, Michael Hamel, John Jackson, Jane Jones, and Mary Sullivan were expert friends, while John, James, and Lison Harris simply made everything possible.