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JANE AUSTEN
AND THE FICTION OF HER TIME

This book presents Jane Austen as a radical innovator. It explores the nature of her confrontation with the popular novelists of her time, and demonstrates how her challenge to them transformed fiction. It is evident from letters and other sources, as well as the novels themselves, that the Austen family developed a strong scepticism about contemporary notions of the proper content and purpose of fiction. Austen's own writing can be seen as a conscious demonstration of these disagreements. In thus identifying her literary motivation, this book (moving away from the questions of ideology which have so dominated Austen studies in this century) offers a unifying critique of the novels and helps to explain their unequalled durability with the reading public.

Mary Waldron is the author of *Lactilla: The Life and Writings of Ann Yearsley, 1753–1806* (1996) and has taught on the continuing education programme at the University of Essex. She has published articles on women's writing and eighteenth-century literature in a number of scholarly books and journals.

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To Daniel, Rachel, Adam, Anna, Marion and Alice

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– pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked
(Letter to Fanny Knight, 23 March [1817])

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[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Texts and abbreviations</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 The juvenilia, the early unfinished novels and <i>Northanger Abbey</i>	16
2 The non-heiresses: <i>The Watsons</i> and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	37
3 Sense and the single girl	62
4 The frailties of Fanny	84
5 Men of sense and silly wives – the confusions of Mr Knightley	112
6 Rationality and rebellion: <i>Persuasion</i> and the model girl	135
7 <i>Sanditon</i> – conclusion	157
<i>Notes</i>	167
<i>Bibliography</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	190

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Texts and abbreviations

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The Novels of Jane Austen, ed. R. W. Chapman, 5 vols., 3rd edition (London; Oxford University Press, 1933), reprinted 1960

Minor Works, ed. R. W. Chapman (London; Oxford University Press, 1954), reprinted with revisions, 1963

Jane Austen's Letters, collected and edited by R. W. Chapman, 2nd edition (London; Oxford University Press, 1952), reprinted with corrections, 1964

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>E</i>	<i>Emma</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Mansfield Park</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>Minor Works</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Northanger Abbey</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>Persuasion</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>