Jane Austen’s fiction is itself philosophy, a fact to which Stanley Cavell attested when he honored his philosophical teacher, J. L. Austin, through homage to her and her work. Engaging equally in criticism and in philosophy, *Jane Austen and Other Minds* demonstrates the standing of Austen’s fiction as a philosophical investigation, both in its own right and as a resource to ordinary language philosophy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Eric Reid Lindstrom addresses a long-standing shortcoming of Austen scholarship by locating in her fiction a linguistic phenomenology available to the novelistic everyday but not afforded her in intellectual history. He simultaneously advances recognition and understanding of J. L. Austin and Stanley Cavell, and of ordinary language philosophy, within Austen scholarship and the broader field of contemporary literary studies. This book argues compellingly for Cavell’s choice of Austen as a means to pursue “passionate exchange,” reimagining her common association with restriction and confinement.

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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; and 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 commentary 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.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge University Press, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

See the end of the book for a complete list of published titles.
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Acknowledgments

In order to reach something closer to its best form, this book has required many years longer than I had initially planned for it, when it took shape out of my talk “Austen and Austin,” at the 2009 New Directions in Jane Austen Studies Conference at Chawton. I had a summer cold at that conference, and I think it cost me a chance for a timely meeting with Linda Bree; thanks should go, I suspect, to Linda and to the whirligig of time at a much later date for bringing Cambridge University Press back into the picture as the ideal home for this book. At CUP, Bethany Thomas’s commitment to this project has seen it through more than one dire strait over the past couple years. Her support and flexibility have been in every sense decisive. George Paul Laver has seen it through production with alacrity. The final study has benefited greatly from the comments of three anonymous press readers of the script, all of whom insisted on needed elements of structure, clarity, and concision that have strengthened my aim and made it possible to find an audience at all. They gave me some well-deserved pains and saved me many more. Five other anonymous external readers of the manuscript – this time serving in the cause of a promotion review in 2020 – sharpened, validated, and challenged much that is here too. In the person behind two of these reports, especially, I found precious community. Jim Chandler’s and Bethany Thomas’s suggestion to bring the book into the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism series was unexpected and professionally gratifying. I am honored to have *Jane Austen and Other Minds* enter and be in the world within this distinguished line of studies.

For her supportive and pointedly helpful initial response to its proposal as a first communication, I wish to thank and remember Helen Tartar. Valerie Rohy and Todd McGowan, colleagues at the University of Vermont, responded with readiness and insight to an in-house version of that initial proposal back in 2013. At Vermont, thanks also to Tony Magistrale, Val Rohy, Dan Fogle, and John Gennari: Each of these
Chairpersons of English during the decade-plus spent on this project have given it, and me, critical support. In very different forms and much compacted, portions of Chapters 1 and 2 have appeared in print in my article “Austen and Austin” at European Romantic Review (2011). Much of Chapter 3 appeared as “Sense and Sensibility and Suffering; or, Wittgenstein’s Marianne?” in English Literary History (2013). A small slice of Chapter 5 was taken, further divided, and revised from my essay “Perlocution and the ‘Rights of Desire’: Cavell, Nietzsche, and Austen (and Austin),” published online in Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies (2016). A group of eight students and myself “lab” composed the essay “Lady Catherine, Out of Order,” which now has appeared in Persuasions On-Line (2021). This essay expands a subject touched on at the end of Chapter 4 here, without strict overlap, in my own solo voice. The students in that 2019 Masters seminar “Austen and the Ordinary” contributed to my thinking and reading during a key push toward a view of the finish. Lively, generative panels at the American Comparative Literature Association conference in 2016, 2019, and 2021, and at the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism conference in 2015, 2016, and 2018 were resources to my exploration of Romanticism, Austen, and ordinary language philosophy and criticism.

For their friendship and further perspectives at Vermont, I am keen to thank Dale Jaffe, Ellie Miller, Mark Usher, Tyler Doggett, and Katie Gough. Sabbatical periods granted in 2012–2013 and in Fall 2019 enabled my writing and rewriting. The University of Vermont Humanities Center, led by Luis Vivanco, stepped in with perfect timing to offer a generous subvention to pay for the production of this book’s index. The opportunity to think about Austen and philosophy as a presenter (twice) in the affable context of Burlington’s Public Philosophy Week (created by Tyler) was a gift. When we met after his talk at St. Michael’s College, Christopher Ricks generously shared his then-scarce Austin audio lecture file with me and recharged my sense of purpose.

Among many friends, colleagues, and fellow travelers in Romantic Studies, Emily Sun, Eric Walker, Nancy Yousef, Anne-Lise François, and (crossing into philosophy) Richard Eldridge have most nourished this book, in equal parts through their conversation, shared work, and example as writers. I’ve concluded that Paul Fry seeded this book with wise inadvertency, sometime back in the early 2000s, when he once let pass that my dissertation was smart to bring up Cavell only at the end, because it clearly was too indebted to dig out. I think Paul rightly surmised I only learn by being spiritually behind-hand. (And if I’m making all this up, there are a dozen other reasons to thank Paul.)
An awaited acknowledgment of Stanley Cavell himself could be done very simply – I never met him in person – and also could be rightly understood to take nothing less than the scope of the work itself. I have learned to think productively and even joyfully, not back in regret, about this, from Cavell’s own stories about the intimacy of a major acquaintance he made too late to force. His words in print do plenty. It is enough to eat from the gleaning. A talk I gave at Harvard in Spring 2013, “Stanley Cavell and (British) Romantic Perfectionism: Godwin, Austen, Keats,” found its way into his hands. Warm thanks to Andrew Warren for inviting me.

A short-term fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge, in late 2019 just before the global-health curtain fell, enabled me to conduct research on the unpublished writings of D. W. Harding, held in the Library of Emmanuel College. (See the largesse there?) I am particularly grateful to Anne Toner as a truly thoughtful and gracious host for this period and to Cambridge for providing a range of sociable atmospheres for me and Kira, and (not least) a wonderful audience for hearing about the next project.

My parents, Esther Hartzheim and Steve Lindstrom, have given not only unconditional love to me but a respect for each other that makes the thinking in this book possible. This book is dedicated to Veronica Lindstrom and Maren Lindstrom, for their warmth of intelligence, and their distinctively individual measures of enthusiasm and dubiety toward my schemes. I feel known because they do really know me. For companionship, comradeship, and endless conversation, my biggest thanks beyond thanks are to Kira Braham, and to our shared life of pleasurable labor and eventful rest.
Abbreviations


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