

Jane Austen's "Susan" Restored

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Footnote number 3 of the Introductory Note to Dr. R. W. Chapman's 1923 edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, repeated verbatim in the Third Edition (1933 and reprinted with revisions as recently as 1988), reports that the British Library copy of *Flowers of Literature* lacks the advertisement announcing to the world that Jane Austen had arrived on the scene:

Flowers of Literature for 1801-2 (published 1803) contains a list of 'New and Useful Books published by Crosby & Co.', in which is announced as in the press 'Susan; a Novel in 2 volumes'. I owe this reference to the kindness of Mr. A. Crosby Lockwood; the British Museum copy lacks the list of advertisements. Lists included in later issues of *Flowers of Literature* do not mention *Susan*. (xi)

During my work in London in the winter of 1992, I confirmed that the British Library copy of *Flowers of Literature* ends with page 462 and that the advertisement of the forthcoming appearance of *Susan* is indeed missing as Chapman reported.

Reading Jan Fergus's *Jane Austen: A Literary Life*, however, convinced me that the last pages of this volume must be intact in some library's copy, since Dr. Fergus writes as though she has actually seen that final leaf:

In the last two pages of the *Flowers of Literature*, the firm inserted a list of fourteen 'New and Useful Books; Published by B. Crosby & Co.', including five novels, and a list of two works 'In the Press': 'Susan; a Novel, in 2 vols.' and 'Dict[ionar]y of Celebrated Women, by Miss Beetham, in one vol.' (112)

Unfortunately, although Dr. Fergus provides very full information about this volume in her footnote (page 185), she does not cite the location of the copy that she consulted.

It occurred to me that more than enough time had elapsed between Dr. Chapman's observation in 1923 that the British Library copy is lacking this page and my verification of his footnote in 1992, and I felt certain that it could not be very difficult to remedy the problem. The solution turned out to be even easier than expected. On telephoning to the Bodleian Library, I was luckily put in touch with Mr. Richard Bell, Head of Reader Services, who confirmed that a copy of *Flowers of Literature*, 1803, is in the Oxford collection (*Hope* 8° 397). On March 30, Mr. Bell mailed to me in London photocopies of the final, unnumbered leaf, headed "NEW and USEFUL BOOKS; Published by B. Crosby and Co. Stationers' Court, London." Far more important, however, is the information appearing on the verso of this leaf, which closes with the essential notice that we are interested in:

In the Press..

15. SUSAN; a Novel, in 2 vols.
16. DICTIONARY OF CELEBRATED WOMEN. By Miss Beetham, in one volume.

I submitted this material to Dr. Elizabeth James, Curator of Nineteenth-Century British Books at the British Library, who is making arrangements for a copy of the advertisement to be tipped in at the end of the relevant volume. Users of the British Library will now have a complete volume of *Flowers of Literature*, and owners of the Chapman edition of *Northanger Abbey* can amend footnote number 3.

The identification of "Susan" with the original manuscript version of *Northanger Abbey* is not provable. However, on the basis of the coincidence of Jane Austen's reference to *Susan* in her letter to Richard Crosby on April 5, 1809, the "Advertisement by the Authoress" included in the December 1817 edition of *Northanger Abbey*, and passages in James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* (published 1870; reissued 1871 with some interesting changes relating to the manuscript), we can safely assume that "Susan" was indeed the original of *Northanger Abbey* and that this notice in *Flowers of Literature* was the first printed reference, however indirect and inconclusive, to Jane Austen.

Those readers who are fortunate enough to work in the British Library should take the opportunity to view the book personally. Because the volume is difficult to locate in the catalogue, I am supplying the call number: 12355. d. 23. Since there are several volumes of *Flowers of Literature* with this identical call number, one must specify Volume I, published in 1803.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Elizabeth James (British Library) and Mr. Richard Bell (Bodleian Library), without whose assistance I could not have completed this project. Dr. James merits particular thanks for reviewing this article for technical accuracy.

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