

Running mad as often as we choose.

Love and Freindship and Other Youthful Writings.

By Jane Austen, edited and with an Introduction and Notes by Christine Alexander.

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Review by Elaine Bander.

Dozens of editions of Jane Austen's juvenilia have appeared since James Edward Austen-Leigh first included excerpts in his 1869 *Memoir of Jane Austen*. Once dismissed by surviving family members as immature but clever nonsense, and by R. W. Chapman as apprentice-works of small interest, these youthful effusions of fancy have only gradually received serious critical attention, thanks in part to the pioneering work of juvenilia studies by JASNA scholars Juliet McMaster and Christine Alexander.

Characters like "the beautiful Cassandra," the dazzling Charles Adams, Jack and Alice, the Stanhope sisters, Catherine ("Kitty") Percival, and Lady Susan have now become almost as familiar to us as Lizzie and Darcy. (And like Lizzie and Darcy, Lady Susan is now a movie character, seducing audiences in Whit Stillman's delightful new film paradoxically titled *Love and Friendship*.) We can recite with relish young Austen's comic place names, such as the "sweet village" of "Crankhumdunberry" (in the early "Frederic and Elfrida"), the village of "Pammydiddle" (in "Jack and Alice"), or the mock-Irish nonsense of "Kilhoobery Park" (in "Sir William Mountague").



Footwear in the DAR costume exhibit.

Photo Courtesy of Gaye Stevick Fouch.

We laugh at the comic inversions of food references in "The Visit," in which elegant ladies and gentlemen, attended by their liveried servants, sit down in a formal "Dining Parlour" to humble cottage fare like "fried Cowheel and Onion" washed down with "Elder wine." We delight in the transgressive energy of characters who both exaggerate and defy literary conventions. We admire the "partial, prejudiced, and ignorant" author of "The History of England" as she sends up the conventions of real, solemn history while defending her heroine, Mary Stuart, against the loathed Tudors. We quote our favorite lines from "Love and Freindship." "We fainted Alternately on a Sofa" and "Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint—." By the time we get to "Catherine," we flatter ourselves that we can detect elements of the greatness to come. The juvenilia, surely, have come of age.

Now Christine Alexander has given us a superb new reader's edition of Austen's complete juvenilia, comprising *Volume the First*, *Volume the Second*, *Volume the Third*, *Lady Susan* (which Alexander argues belongs with the juvenilia), and, in appendices, an early occasional verse and the "Sophia Sentiment" letter (of disputed authorship) published in James and Henry Austen's periodical, *The Loiterer*.

This is a thoroughly scholarly edition, based upon a careful study of the original manuscripts and taking into account the work of previous academic editors. This edition includes an excellent introduction, copious contextualizing notes to help readers recover the literary "cant" and conventions being burlesqued, useful bibliography and chronology, and a list of Austen's "significant" textual emendations. (Alexander refers readers to Sabor's 2006 Cambridge edition or Sutherland's 2014 facsimile edition for a complete inventory of Austen's textual emendations.) The text is illustrated with facsimiles of the first manuscript page of each of the three *Volumes* as well as black-and-white reproductions of Cassandra's illustrations for "The History of England," each inserted into

its proper place in the original text. That's quite a lot of apparatus for a popular edition at a popular price.

Alexander's introduction covers all aspects of these works, from their original, physical production to their eventual publication, but she stresses the teleology of the juvenilia. In these playful pieces, she argues, young Austen "is consciously constructing herself as 'author,'" aware of her audience, playing with the thematic implications of her mock dedications, both burlesquing and paying tribute to the literary conventions she mocks. As Alexander points out, "The juvenilia can be read as an astute exercise in intertextuality: their formal structure mimics and mocks conventional publication practice, their events play with paradigms in the popular novel, and the speeches echo contemporary texts."

The introduction also contains an interesting discussion of the family context in which Jane Austen produced and performed these works. "The History of England," Alexander suggests, is not simply a work written by Jane and illustrated by Cassandra, but rather the result of a thorough collaboration between two very talented sisters.

"These immature or fragmentary fictions call for hardly any comment," Chapman wrote in his Preface to *Minor Works*, the afterthought (1954) sixth volume of his Oxford Edition. Readers of Jane Austen should be grateful that Christine Alexander believes juvenilia to be always worthy of comment.

Elaine Bander, recently retired from the English Department of Dawson College in Montreal, has published numerous articles on Austen and other authors. She is currently assisting editor Stewart J. Cooke with Volume Three of The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney: 1794-1801, forthcoming from Oxford UP.

