

A collage of items related to Jane Austen. At the top, a dark blue box contains the title 'Recreating Jane Austen' and the author 'JOHN WILTSHIRE'. Below this, there are several DVD covers for 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Emma'. A black mug in the center features a quote from Jane Austen: 'Nature had marked it out . . . The finest, purest sea breeze on the coast.' and the name 'Jane Austen SANDITON'. A fountain pen lies on a wooden surface in the foreground. The background is filled with more books and DVD cases, including one for 'Clueless' and another for 'Emma'.

JOHN WILTSHIRE

Nature had marked
it out . . . The finest,
purest sea breeze on
the coast.

Jane Austen
SANDITON

*Run mad as often as you chuse;
but do not faint*

JANE AUSTEN

Recreating Jane Austen is a book for readers who know and love Austen's work. Stimulated by the recent crop of film and television versions of Austen's novels, John Wiltshire examines how they have been 'recreated' in another age and medium. Written in an engaging and readable style, this accessible study approaches the central question of the role Jane Austen plays in the contemporary cultural imagination.

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RECREATING JANE AUSTEN

Recreating Jane Austen is a book for readers who know and love Austen's work. Stimulated by the recent crop of film and television versions of Austen's novels, John Wiltshire examines how they have been transposed and 'recreated' in another age and medium. Wiltshire illuminates the process of 'recreation' through the work of the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, and offers Jane Austen's own relation to Shakespeare as a suggestive parallel. Exploring the romantic impulse in Austenian biography, 'Jane Austen' as a commodity, and offering a re-interpretation of *Pride and Prejudice*, this book approaches the central question of the role Jane Austen plays in the contemporary cultural imagination.

JOHN WILTSHIRE is a Reader in English at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. His previous books include *Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: the Doctor and the patient* (Cambridge, 1991) and *Jane Austen and the Body: 'The Picture of Health'* (Cambridge, 1992). He is also a contributor to the *Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* and *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*.

RECREATING JANE AUSTEN

JOHN WILTSHIRE



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For Miki, with love

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Preface and acknowledgments

This book derives its inspiration, in part, from the recent crop of films based on Jane Austen's novels. But it does not offer a systematic study of any one of these films: instead it makes use of them, or parts of some of them, in order to throw renewed light upon the classic texts from which they derive and depart, and to propose a general theory of adaptation. Films directly based on the novels are not the only ones discussed, for perhaps even more interesting are others which, besides imitating her work, raise in the course of their action and dialogue the nature and status of 'Jane Austen' within our culture. I am interested in the general topic of artistic recreation and remaking, and the role Jane Austen plays in the contemporary cultural imagination. I have wagered that 'object-relations' psychoanalysis, which has studied the various phenomena of human love, might throw some light on our love of aesthetic objects as well, but this theory is drawn upon selectively. As a consequence, this book's handling of psychoanalytic theory may strike professionals in the field as decidedly sketchy. My excuse is it has been rarely applied to the discussion not of the internal life of 'characters' but to the understanding of the artistic processes of recreation itself.

I should like to thank the friends and colleagues who have helped me with this book. Chris Palmer, Max Richards and Iain Topliss have encouraged me in dozens of ways for many years: it is something to be able to thank them now for their support. Dick Freadman and Kay Torney Souter read parts of the book in early drafts and they too gave me helpful feedback and support. Among others, Jo Barnes, Terry Collits, Gilliana Del Alectos, Susannah Fullerton, Paul Komesaroff, Karen Lynch, Alison Ravenscroft, Carl Stanyon, Bruce Williams and Ruth Wiltshire have made (possibly unwitting) contributions. I am especially indebted to Laura Carroll for my understanding of film criticism. Thanks, too, to James Healey for the cover photo.

I hope Lorna Clark and my other friends in the Burney Society will forgive my treatment of Fanny (oops! Frances) in this book. Marcia McClintock Folsom in Boston exchanged ideas with me and has been extraordinarily generous and supportive of my work on Austen over the past four years. With characteristic grace, she has allowed me to borrow the title of one of her papers for Chapter 3. Justin Kelly SJ helped clarify my thinking about *Pride and Prejudice* at an important moment. I especially thank Ann Blake for her conversation as we thought together about Jane Austen and Shakespeare. She has been generous in allowing me to make use of our work, in Chapters 3 and 4. My editor, Linda Bree, has taken an interest in this book which has been a constant encouragement. To my wife, Zaiga, I owe much more than I can say.

An early version of Chapter 1, 'Imagining Jane Austen's Life: Biography and Transitional Space' was published as a review in the *Cambridge Quarterly* 27: 4, 1998, pp. 372–84; a condensed version of Chapter 3 was given as a paper at the JASNA conference in Colorado Springs in October 1999 and published in *Persuasions* 21, 1999, pp. 212–23. Parts of Chapters 3 and 4 are based on papers which I gave with Ann Blake at conferences in Brisbane, July 1998 and Auckland, July 2000. I am grateful to Ann for allowing me to make use of this material. A much condensed version of Chapter 5 was given at the JASNA conference in Boston, October 2000. I thank Judy Simons for the invitation to contribute to a volume on Jane Austen and the cinema that resulted in Chapter 2, and Marcia McClintock Folsom for the invitation to contribute to one on *Emma* that led to Chapter 6.

A note on texts

Citations of Jane Austen's novels are made in the text by following quotations with the title and page numbers. The page numbers refer to the text which has been used throughout, the *Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen*, edited by R. W. Chapman, 6 volumes, 1923–54. Where a number of references to the same novel is made, the title is omitted after the first. Citations of Shakespeare are from *William Shakespeare, The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Introduction: 'Jane Austen' and Jane Austen

TOM: . . . nearly everything Jane Austen wrote seems ridiculous from today's perspective.

AUDREY: Has it ever occurred to you that today, looked at from Jane Austen's perspective, would look even worse?

Whit Stillman, *Metropolitan*, 1990¹

Lots of fun with Jane Austen's novels is had in Helen Fielding's two volumes of Bridget Jones's *Diary*. The man of Bridget's dreams, as is now well known, is called Mark Darcy.² She and Mark are introduced at a New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet, arranged by friends of Bridget's parents. When she first meets him, Mark (a 'top human rights lawyer') is standing aloof, scrutinising the contents of their bookshelves. Bridget, prejudiced against Darcy from the first, thinks him a snob, and her new boyfriend, the rake, Daniel, confirms this opinion when he tells her that he's known Mark since Cambridge and he's a nerdish old maid. Bridget and Mark continue to bump into each other at parties and cross swords, in a series of conversations, though Bridget gradually comes to see that Mark might really care for her. When Darcy goes to great lengths to rescue the family from the financial disaster that Bridget's insufferable mother's romantic escapade has plunged them into, she is ready to fall into his arms – or rather to climb the stairs to his bedroom.

Bridget – daffy, honest, good-natured Bridget, daughter of *Cosmopolitan* culture, traumatised by supermodels – resembles *Northanger Abbey*'s Catherine Morland more than she does Lizzy Bennet, but it's not hard to read the novel as a reworking of *Pride and Prejudice*. What is more interesting is that the book calls the reader's attention to the issues this involves, as in what one might call a meta-novelistic conversation where Bridget and her friends discuss television adaptations of classics. Bridget works for a publisher, and at a book launch Mark's stuck-up fiancée (as inclined to sneer at Bridget's enthusiasm for the TV show *Blind Date* as Miss Bingley was at Elizabeth's traipsing across the fields) weighs in against what she calls 'the ultimate *vandalisation* of the cultural