

indeterminacy. Many readers have struggled to articulate their sense of the nuances of *Rasselas*—the ineffable combination of openness and purposefulness—so Keymer can be forgiven for sometimes emphasizing the inconclusiveness a little too firmly, and sometimes the teleology (can we really say that chapter 32 on the pyramids and chapter 10 on poetry “look forward to ... well-known moment[s] in Shelley” [139]?). But mostly Keymer presents the text with admirable sensitivity to its narrative niceties, noticing that its open-endedness counteracts the very teleology which it flaunts, and (like Montaigne and Cicero) registering emphatic warnings against its own method (xxx–xxxi).

J.D. Fleeman’s Johnsonian bibliography lists 527 editions of *Rasselas* down to 1984 and translations into 18 languages. *Rasselas*’s global popularity is unquestioned, something this new edition will maintain and enhance. I found only one error in the volume: James Clifford’s *Young Samuel Johnson* (1955) is attributed to George Sherburn (126).

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Annette Upfal and Christine Alexander, eds. *Jane Austen’s “The History of England” & Cassandra’s Portraits*. Sydney: Juvenilia Press, 2009. lv+73pp. AUS\$15. ISBN 978-0-7334-2780-0.

This full-colour version of Jane Austen’s *History of England* for Juvenilia Press replaces the one edited by Jan Fergus in 1995 for the same publisher. Where Fergus suggested that a few of Cassandra’s portraits of historical figures could represent people whom she and Jane knew (iv), Annette Upfal and Christine Alexander believe that all of them might do so. Even when Cassandra copied other artists, it is said that she modified features to match the sitter. Drawing on the forensic expertise of Pamela Craig and Clifford Ogleby, who superimposed Cassandra’s images onto portraits of family members, friends, and sometimes siblings, the editors deduce that her sketches, together with Jane’s texts, reveal the sisters’ actual opinions about their subjects.

In the most intriguing result, Craig considers that “the portrait of ‘Mary Queen of Scots’ is that of Jane Austen.” In her opinion, the face shape and the nose provide the most striking similarities—Fergus perceived a likeness to Mary Tudor (iv). Craig also thinks it is “possible” that “Elizabeth I” represents Mrs Austen, and suggests of the attribution of “Henry VI” with Tom Fowle that “the similarities are such that it could be his brother if the two resembled each other.” Cassandra’s “James I,” she writes, “may represent” James Austen, while portraits of Edward Austen and “Edward VI” are “probably of the same person.” Although

“several similarities” may be seen between the Tudor Queen Mary and Martha Lloyd’s sister Mary, she draws no conclusions (66–68). Upfal points out, however, that these last similarities include scars and signs of the dental disease that Mary Lloyd is known to have suffered (62–63). In short, Craig argues that some of Cassandra’s illustrations could represent people known to herself and Jane.

To my eye, the features in Cassandra’s three-quarter sketch of Jane Austen in later life fit remarkably well over those in her three-quarter miniature of Mary, Queen of Scots. Upfal’s supporting evidence includes Jane’s passionate and life-long defence of Mary, the costume identified as dating from late 1792 or early 1793 when Jane was about seventeen, the curly hair and full cheeks known to be characteristic of her, and the head-band she was known to have worn on special occasions (56–58). This attribution therefore seems highly likely.

Mrs Austen’s profile corresponds nearly as well to Cassandra’s Elizabeth I, but here the trouble starts, for Upfal goes on to argue that the relationship between the Austen sisters and their mother was as toxic as that between Scottish Mary and English Elizabeth. “The hostile image of her mother,” she writes, reflects “a brutal element in Cassandra’s wit that is also a feature of Jane Austen’s text.” Together they make up “a secret and sometimes traumatic history of family life at Steventon Rectory” that explains the savagery of the *Juvenilia* (xxxix, xliii). Upfal then declares herself: “the real nature of this work [is] autobiography. Austen makes this clear when she reveals, ‘my principal reason for undertaking the History of England being to prove the innocence of the Queen of Scotland, [myself] ... and to abuse Elizabeth [my mother]’” (xlii, Upfal’s insertions).

The case is tantalizing indeed, but in her commentary, notes, and appendices, Upfal too often over-states like this, arguing for instance from the fact that the manuscript remained “buried” for some time that “the youthful Jane and Cassandra had detested their mother when they were young was a scandalous piece of family history that needed to be hidden from the next generation” (53). Alexander writes more tentatively that “Cassandra’s illustrations *can also be seen* as constructing a sophisticated double vision that draws on covert family prejudice and relationships,” and again, the *History* “*perhaps* also betrays a rivalry much closer to home for the Austen family, between the sisters and their domineering mother” (xiii; emphasis added).

And yet other critics cited by Upfal suggest a difficult relationship between Jane and Mrs Austen. Claire Tomalin also remarks that “the emotional distance between child and mother is obvious throughout her life,” perhaps because Mrs Austen handed the fourteen-week-old Jane over to a woman in the village for more than a year. Austen’s letters, says Tomalin, are written by “someone who does not open her

heart; and in the adult who avoids intimacy you sense the child who was uncertain where to expect love or to look for security, and armoured herself against rejection." As she adds, "First as an infant, then as a child of seven, Jane had been sent away from home, frightening and unpleasant experiences over which she had no control and which required periods of recovery" (Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* [London: Viking, 1997], 5–7, 173). Whatever her upbringing, Jane Austen was only human. She did not care for her aunt Leigh, she satirized her snobbish relation Samuel Egerton Brydges, and she may not have found her mother congenial.

When I reviewed Tomalin's book, I found it hard to forgive Mrs Austen for occupying the sofa while Jane lay dying on three chairs pushed uncomfortably together. Mrs Austen, who appears to have lacked empathy, exasperated her daughter by reading *Pride and Prejudice* "too fast, and tho' she perfectly understands the Characters herself, she cannot speak as they ought," said Jane (see Tomalin, 221). And in 2002, Kathryn Sutherland, holder of the prestigious chair of Bibliography and Textual Studies at Oxford, published a quietly revolutionary edition of various family memoirs. Here she challenged the family's affectionate memories of their famous relative, exposing their perspective beyond a certain point as "irrelevant, even dishonest" (*J.E. Austen-Leigh: A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], xx). James Austen-Leigh's memoir of his aunt, she wrote, "is the production of a particular family view of Jane Austen" (xxv), as were later ones. Cassandra's portrait, "sharp-faced, pursed-lipped, unsmiling, scornful even, and withdrawn" (xlv) gave way to the familiar air-brushed version with its softer face, more pliant expression, and pensively averted eyes. As Sutherland writes, they portrayed her as a perfect Victorian lady, a "saintly heroine whose emotional and intellectual life never ranged beyond the family circle" (xx). Thus was Jane Austen reduced to a symbol of domesticity, gentility, heritage culture, and an England that never was. But what has been called "idolatry" towards Austen and her family should never inhibit enquiry, even if over-played.

Upfal and Alexander's edition is not the final word about the *History*. It simply takes its place in an ongoing and healthy debate about a great writer. Jane Austen can take it, for as critics show, she was keenly alert to literature, history, philosophy, politics, news, and scandal. As a woman of the Regency, she found much to laugh at in the human condition, including her own. Her satires could be as savage as those of Gillray and Cruikshank, whose caricatures were everywhere. Peter Sabor remarks in his brilliant edition of the *Juvenilia* that the reluctance of Austen's Victorian descendants to publish her juvenilia

is “understandable: they are, after all, writings in which murder, suicide, violence, theft, verbal abuse, gluttony, and drunkenness all play a prominent part” (Austen, *Juvenilia*, ed. Peter Sabor [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], lxii). In the *History*, she jokes about homosexuality (17), in *Mansfield Park* she refers to sodomy (chapter 6), and in letters she writes about “fleas, naked Cupids and bad breath,” as Roger Sales puts it in *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (London: Routledge: 1994), 10.

I agree that coincidences between royal names and family ones such as Edward, James, Henry, and Mary could well have tempted Cassandra and Jane, in the same devil-may-care mood with which they tackled Oliver Goldsmith, into basing at least some of their portraits on family members. It does not follow, however, that each detail about a monarch applies to the corresponding individual. For one obvious example, James Austen was not homosexual like King James. Jane Austen’s tone is light-hearted, wildly parodic, surreal rather than real. Her ironies render certainty of interpretation impossible. Her narrator is no self-portrait, but a comic construction, “intrusive, authoritarian and belligerent, demanding the total support of the reader for her blatantly biased views,” as Upfal nicely puts it (xvi). And yet her theory should not be dismissed just because she argues that Austen was not the picture of perfection that she herself would have mocked. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Austen dearly loved a laugh. The final revelation of this new edition of *The History of England* is that Cassandra, when young, may have loved one too.

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