

Plan of the Series

. . . *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. Our purpose is to make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the reading public, while satisfying the needs of teachers and researchers.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a usable format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Bruccoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978. In order to make *DLB* more than a dictionary and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to

**From an unpublished section of Mark Twain's autobiography, copyright by the Mark Twain Company*

organize volumes by topic, period, or genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the placement and treatment of authors. Certain figures will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920–1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910–1945* with an entry surveying his entire career, as well as in *American Short-Story Writers, 1910–1945, Second Series* with an entry concentrating on his short fiction. Each volume includes a cumulative index of the subject authors and articles.

Between 1981 and 2002 the series was augmented and updated by the *DLB Yearbooks*. There have also been nineteen *DLB Documentary Series* volumes, which provide illustrations, facsimiles, and biographical and critical source materials for figures, works, or groups judged to have particular interest for students. In 1999 the *Documentary Series* was incorporated into the *DLB* volume numbering system beginning with *DLB 210: Ernest Hemingway*.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to “creative writers” but extend to other figures who in their time and in their way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, book collectors, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of intellectual high priests but firmly positioned at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought

in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be. Wherever possible, useful references are made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has an expert volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark Layman editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for accuracy and utility of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environ-

ment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special feature of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was perceived in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts and letters are included when feasible.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Preface

DLB 365: Jane Austen's Popular and Critical Reputation: A Documentary Volume—the sequel to *DLB 363: Jane Austen's Life and Novels*—shows how Austen's reputation evolved throughout the nineteenth century and how she became established in the academy in the twentieth. The chronological presentation of the evolving commentary on Austen allows readers to trace a slowly developing cultural consensus on an author who, despite her growing acceptance, always had her detractors. As Mrs. Charles Malden observed in her 1889 book *Jane Austen*:

... Those who do appreciate her novels will think no praise too high for them, while those who do not, will marvel at the infatuation of her admirers; for no one ever cares moderately for Jane Austen's works: her readers either award them unbounded praise or find them insufferably dull.

The final chapter of *DLB 363: Jane Austen's Life and Novels* begins the examination of her posthumous reputation by reprinting the only two critical articles written on her novels in the first fifteen years after her death on 18 July 1817—a period in which her books went out of print. Maria Jane Jewsbury in her 1831 essay “Literary Women. No. II. Jane Austen” makes the point that readers had not forgotten the novelist:

Unlike that of many writers, Miss Austen's fame has grown the fastest since she died; there was no éclat about her first, or second, or third appearance; the public took time to make up its mind; and she, not having staked her hopes of happiness on success or failure, and not being obliged by circumstances to stake something more tangible on these results, could afford to wait for the decision of her claims. Those claims have long been established beyond a question; but the merit of first recognizing them, belongs less to reviewers than to general readers.

As is shown, however, at the beginning of the first chapter of this volume, “Jane Austen's Slow Rise in Popularity,” book reviewers had not forgotten her, either. Austen was remembered, even though sometimes as a foil, as when the reviewer of Susan Fer-

rier's *The Inheritance* argued that Ferrier was more than just “a Scotch Miss Austin.”

Publisher Richard Bentley's decision to bring out a new edition of Austen's novels in 1833 brought her books back before readers and critics. After Austen's titles appeared in Bentley's Standard Novels series, they were never again out of print. The novels not only engaged private readers such as Sara Coleridge, William Charles Macready, and Charles Darwin, but they also began to seem—in a small way, at least—*important*, a literary landmark worth citing, as Austen was given brief entries in references such as Allan Cunningham's *Biographical and Critical History of the British Literature of the Last Fifty Years* (1834) and Samuel L. Knapp's *Female Biography* (1834). In 1841, Austen was one of twenty-nine authors included in Anne Katherine Elwood's *Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England*. By mid century, Austen's writing was being championed by such notable critics as Thomas Babington Macaulay and George Henry Lewes, both of whom compared her to William Shakespeare in her ability to create believable characters. Such enthusiastic praise only elicited amazement and scorn from Charlotte Brontë, who was moved to ask Lewes, “Why do you like Miss Austen so very much?”

As the second chapter, “Answering the Demand for a Growing Interest in Jane Austen,” makes clear, after Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh published *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870; revised and enlarged, 1871), Austen's critical and popular stock began to soar. Even though some critics were disappointed by the memoir and then especially by *Jane Austen's Letters* (1884), edited by Edward Lord Brabourne, an Austen grandnephew, these books served to focus the debate on Austen and her place in literary history. While *A Memoir of Jane Austen* presented an idealized vision of the novelist, the critic Margaret Oliphant, writing for the March 1870 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, was able to detect a “fine vein of feminine cynicism” in Austen's life and art. Important assessments by critics George Pellew and Goldwin Smith followed. By the end of the century, Austin Dobson was

writing scholarly introductions for the new Macmillan edition of Austen's works, even as Mark Twain was confiding to a friend, "Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone!"

The documents in the third and last chapter of this documentary volume, "Jane Austen Enters the Academy," show the recognition of Austen as a major figure in the evolution of the novel. George Saintsbury in *The English Novel* (1913) and other literary scholars began praising Jane Austen as a pioneer of the modern novel. Creating a scholarly edition of Austen's works, R. W. Chapman prepared the way for future criticism and scholarship.

DLB 365: Jane Austen's Popular and Critical Reputation provides the evidence for a reader to trace the appreciation of Jane Austen's achievement as it developed over the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It does not answer the question of *why* Jane Austen's reputation rose, but it affords the reader the opportunity to come to her or his own conclusion. The editor, however, will admit to a belief in the eventual rightness of literary history's

judgment of the accomplishments of this clergyman's daughter, born more than 235 years ago and read widely today by general readers and literary critics alike.

—Joan Klingel Ray

Editorial Practices

The footnotes and endnotes provided by the original authors or editors of documents have been retained or omitted at the discretion of the editor, who has revised, regularized, and integrated selected notes into her own scheme of endnotes. Elaborations of original notes are shown in brackets. Added notes by the editor are indicated with a parenthetical credit—(J. K. RAY).

While all instances of the long swash-*S* have been regularized as the modern letter *s*, the editor otherwise has left the text alone, retaining the spelling peculiarities and some of the accidental misidentifications—for example, "Caroline" Morland instead of Catherine Morland—of the original documents without comment or correction.

Acknowledgments

This book was produced by Bruccoli Clark Layman, Inc. George Parker Anderson was the in-house editor. Special thanks to Arlyn F. Bruccoli for editorial advice.

Senior editor is Philip B. Dematteis.

Production manager is Janet E. Hill.

Administrative support was provided by Khrystyna Zh. Layman.

Accountant is Ann-Marie Holland.

Copyediting supervisor is Phyllis A. Avant. The copyediting staff includes Eileen R. Newman.

Pipeline manager is James F. Tidd Jr.

Permissions editor is Dickson Monk.

Office manager is Kathy Lawler Merlette.

Digital photographic copy work and photo editing was performed by Dickson Monk.

The typesetting and graphics department includes Kathleen M. Flanagan and Patricia M. Flanagan.

Library research was facilitated by the following librarians at the Thomas Cooper Library of the University of South Carolina: Elizabeth Sudduth and the rare-book department; circulation department head Tucker Taylor; reference department head Virginia W. Weathers; reference department staff Marilee Birchfield, Karen Brown, Mary Bull, Gerri Corson, Joshua Garris, Beki Gettys, Laura Ladwig, Tom Marcil, Bob Skinder, and Sharon Verba; inter-library loan department head Marna Hostetler; and interlibrary loan staff Robert Amerson and Timothy Simmons.

In *Spectator* 453, Joseph Addison stated, "There is not a more pleasing exercise of the mind than Gratitude." As I write my acknowledgments for this project, I am pleased and honored to express my sincere gratitude to many individuals and institutions. Kudos to my wonderful colleague, Professor Susan Taylor, a veteran of *DLB 340: The Brontës: A Documentary Volume*. For graciousness and generosity in housing me and assisting me with their collection of books, journals, manuscripts, and images, I thank the Chawton House Library in England, particularly Steve Lawrence, Corinne Saint, Jacqui Grainger, Ray Moseley, Sarah Parry, Ray Clarke, Heather Shearer,

and Graeme Cottam. For supplying photographs, access to incredible archives, and immense goodwill at Jane Austen's House (The Jane Austen Memorial Trust), I thank Louise West, Tom Carpenter, Ann Channon, and Isabel Snowden; Isabel is a wonderfully talented photographer. In Winchester, my old friend Helen Lefroy supplied images and insights, as well as coffee and biscuits. Jean Bowden provided tea and friendship. Joyce Bown drove me around those winding English country roads and hosted me at Steventon. Maggie Lane cheerfully drove me to Blaise Castle near Bristol. Richard and Simon Wheeler graciously provided access to James Stanier Clarke's "Friendship Book" over lunch at Brighton. The British Library provided numerous scans of rare books and journals. Librarians and staff at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Kraemer Family Library have been immensely resourceful and patient: Inter-Library Loan Librarian Don Pawl located books and journals that I requested and sometimes doubted could ever be secured; librarians Christina Martínez, Sue Byerley, and Judith Rice Jones assisted with research tools I did not know existed; Judy Baranowski anticipated the renewals of too many checked-out books to enumerate; Liz Taylor, Carol Pacheco, and Kevin Jacobs provided good-humored assistance with my nearly daily visits, and Kevin even carried stacks of books to my car. Student assistants at the campus Teaching and Learning Center directed by Dr. Kathy Andrus introduced me to the art of scanning. Crystal Dussart and Amanda (Mandy) Burch at the campus Visual Arts Center worked magic with their photography skills and equipment, even removing my thumb from some photos I had taken. Program assistants Rose Johnson and Rosemary Kelbel cheerfully printed and photocopied, as requested. Judith Rice Jones and Professor Teresa Meadows assisted with French to English translations. Librarians at the Tutt Library at the Colorado College provided immense assistance with copying texts from their excellent nineteenth-century periodicals collection, including microfilm. For help with images, I thank Catherine Hilliard at St. John's College, Oxford University; I thank my dear friends, the Drs. Laurie and Rick Kaplan for

their warm hospitality at the Old Parsonage near Oxford. Laurie, along with Professors Susan Allen Ford and Juliette Wells, knowledgeably discussed recent Jane Austen criticism with me. To members of the Jane Austen Society of North America, some of whom wish to remain unidentified, I offer my deep appreciation for access to rare books, journals, and images; special thanks to Marsha Huff and her camera, to Professor Eric Nye (University of Wyoming) for scanning texts for me at the Coe Library, and to Freydis Welland and Cheryl Kinney, M.D. Maggie Sullivan of Philadelphia maintains the Mollands website (<www.jasna.org>), which greatly facilitates searching the novels. All contemporary research on Jane Austen's life owes a huge debt to Deirdre Le Faye for her edition of *Jane Austen's Letters* and her highly detailed *A Chronology of Jane Austen*.

The late Professors Lillian (Rhode Island College) and Edward Bloom (Brown University) mentored me in the intricacies of archival research methods during my graduate student years at Brown University: the *DLB* exemplifies the fruition of their attentive training. Most of all, for rest and recreation, I thank family and friends, most especially Kathleen, Mike, Erin, Piper (goddaughter extraordinaire), and Sampson Beatty; Susan Taylor and Steve Getty and their great kiddos Kevin, Drew, and Julia; Linda Bunnell, Kate Buffetti, Judy Price, Jan and Ken Myers, Emily Brown, and, of course, Calvin. The many libraries and archives that supplied materials are acknowledged in the text.

—J. K. Ray

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Oxford University Press. Selections from *Essays By Divers Hands Being the The Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*: Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, "Jane

Austen," new series, 7, (1927), pp. 81–104; H. W. Garrod, "Jane Austen: A Depreciation," new series, 8 (1928), pp. 21–40; and R. W. Chapman, "Jane Austen: A Reply to Mr. Garrod," new series, 10 (1931), pp. 17–34.