

## “Wills” [from *Jane Austen’s Sense and Sensibility*]

[In this essay, Gene W. Ruoff discusses inheritance as a central issue in *Sense and Sensibility*, providing historical context and finding in the novel a critique of Burkean principles regarding the “linear family.”]

*Sense and Sensibility* is a darker, more serious and more troubled novel than Austen’s other two mature works begun in the 1790s. But its peculiar kind of darkness, so often given a psychological reading, is starkly social in nature. Take its opening movement, as stunning a public advent of a new writer as we have ever witnessed. The first two chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* are in the purest sense expository. They introduce the family on which the novel will center, provide brief descriptions of central characters, create a physical and socio-economic setting, and in general give the necessary background for the action to come, which might be said, since the novel bases its plot on the physical movement of characters, to begin with the removal of the surviving family of Henry Dashwood from the family seat at Norland Park in Sussex to Barton Cottage in Devonshire. But neither Marianne, Elinor, nor Mrs. Dashwood appears in a scene, and none of the young ladies’ love interests is mentioned. Marianne and Elinor first appear in a scene, and are first given dialogue, in Chapter III. From all indications provided by its first two chapters, the novel will not be about romantic entanglements but about inheritance. This appearance is not wholly misleading.

The first two chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* are fictively excessive. To the degree that their narrative function is to get two young ladies on the road so that they can get about their educations, nothing like the amount of detail we are given on family history, family finances or inheritance practices is necessary. The excess functions thematically rather than narratively, as it pertains to the social matrix in which the characters find themselves rather than the development of their individual characters. For many readers, who have minimized Austen’s social and political vision, the chapters are just intrusive, if maddeningly, brilliantly, so. Both contemporary reviewers recognized their power, and the notice in the *Critical Review* closed by reprinting extensive selections from Chapter II ([Southam] 39; 40).

Austen is precise about the succession of the Norland Park estate. The family of Henry Dashwood—including himself, his second wife

and three daughters—has lived with his uncle, the current bachelor owner of Norland, for the ten years following the death of his sister. Since Henry Dashwood is described as both the “legal inheritor” of Norland and the person to whom his uncle “intended to bequeath it” (3), we can only conclude that the estate lies within the uncle’s unrestricted gift. It is not, in the language of the day, under “strict settlement” during the uncle’s lifetime. Were he to die intestate, by common law it would legally pass to Henry Dashwood without restrictions.

That succession is disrupted by the will of the “old Gentleman” (4), which entails the estate through three generations: providing life tenancies for Henry Dashwood, then for Henry’s son John by his first marriage, with the actual inheritor to be on his father’s death John’s four-year-old son, “poor little Harry” (8), as his mother is wont to call him. The value of the estate, we are able to compute later, is about £80,000 (its £4,000 annual income multiplied by twenty). One current estimate would make the inherited fortune approximately 16 million in today’s US dollars (Brown 7–8; Gaull 379). “Not to be unkind, however, and as a mark of his affection for the three girls [who have attended him for ten years], he left them a thousand pounds a-piece” (4). Although the equivalent of two hundred thousand dollars is hardly a small amount, the income it would generate—£50 per year—would not permit any of the girls individually to move easily within the class of the gentry to which they were born: “borderline gentlemen and their families lived on about £700 to £1,000 a year” (Brown 7). One is tempted in this context to recall the generously sentimental grandfather of Austen’s adolescent romp, *Love and Freindship*, who miraculously encounters for the first time four grandchildren in the space of five minutes at a Scottish inn. After describing their places on the family tree, with careful attention to birth order (“Philander the son of my Laurina’s 3d Girl the amiable Bertha”) he hands each of them a fifty-pound note and takes his leave, saying “remember I have done the Duty of a Grandfather” (31–2).

It should be noted that estates of the magnitude of Norland Park were seldom conveyed by wills, because the current owner would then remain free until his death to change the terms of the settlement of the estate. Normally estates were conveyed by deed upon such an occasion as the coming of age or the marriage of the heir in tail. At such times the life tenant and heir in tail joined to break the existing settlement and resettle the estate. The heir was normally given his independence through an annuity made at this time—a strong inducement for him to agree to restrict his future absolute hold on the

property by joining with his father in the resettlement—and suitable provisions could be made for a jointure for the current life-incumbent's widow and portions for the other surviving children (English and Saville 132–40). The will in *Sense and Sensibility* is entirely of the uncle's devising, and Austen chooses for him the mode of conveyance that leaves the Dashwood women most precariously exposed.

Henry Dashwood survives his uncle by only a year, leaving an estate of ten thousand pounds, “including the late legacies ... for his widow and daughters” (4). All he can do on his deathbed is call for his son and recommend “with all the strength and urgency which illness could command, the interest of his mother-in-law and sisters” (5). Though lacking “the strong feelings of the rest of the family” (5), John Dashwood is still moved by his father's request and promises “to do everything in his power to make them comfortable” (5). What lies within his “power” becomes the issue.

From some perspectives that power might seem substantial. He received half the fortune of his mother, described only as “large” (3), upon his coming of age. His marriage soon thereafter “added to his wealth” (3). Austen sets up John's fulfillment of his filial obligation beautifully:

When he gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds a-piece. He then really thought himself equal to it. The prospect of four thousand a-year, in addition to his present income, besides the remaining half of his own mother's fortune, warmed his heart and made him feel capable of generosity.—“Yes, he would give them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome! It would be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! he could spare so considerable a sum with little inconvenience.”—He thought of it all day long, and for many days successively, and he did not repent. (5)

We are led to conceive of his father's eighty thousand pounds as an “addition” to the son's wealth, by no means the bulk of it. By inference, John Dashwood commands a fortune close to that which we will see later in Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice*, perhaps ten thousand a year from holdings of, say, two hundred thousand pounds. Although our figures do not have to be exact to understand how three thousand might be spared “with little inconvenience,” it requires a bit of a stretch to accept his description of his intention as “liberal and handsome!” (5). And we can only conclude that Austen's ironic treatment

of the wealthy gentry's fantasies about its benevolence is mercilessly broad and direct. John and Fanny Dashwood are near to being fabulously wealthy—only 300 to 400 families in England had incomes of over £10,000 a year (Brown 7)—yet they manage to justify giving the Dashwood women not even a crumb.

John's "repentance," formulated as a recognition of the stern demands of stewardship which entailment entails, begins in Chapter II under the guidance of his wife Fanny:

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the fortune of their dear little boy, would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. She begged him to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount. It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages; and why was he to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his money to his half sisters? (8)

Robbery, impoverishment, half-blood (the precise relationship, if my generic understanding is good, of a father to his son). John protests, "It was my father's last request to me," but steadily, in a sequence of enormous power, his intention is whittled to five hundred pounds apiece, then to a life annuity only for the mother of a hundred pounds a year, then to "a present of fifty pounds now and then" (11), and finally to occasional "presents of fish and game" (12). As Fanny verbally impoverishes her husband, herself and poor little Harry, she enriches Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters:

"Do but consider, my dear Mr. Dashwood, how excessively comfortable your mother-in-law and her daughters may live on the interest of seven thousand pounds, besides the thousand pounds belonging to each of the girls, which brings them in fifty pounds a-year a-piece, and, of course, they will pay their mother for their board out of it. Altogether, they will have five hundred a-year amongst them, and what on earth can four women want for more than that?—They will live so cheap! Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no

expences of any kind! Only conceive how comfortable they will be! Five hundred a-year! I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it; and as to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give you something."

Fanny ends in some resentment of the quality of the china and linen Mrs. Dashwood will retain: "... the set of breakfast china is twice as handsome as what belongs to this house. A great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for any place *they* can ever afford to live. But, however, so it is. Your father thought only of *them*" (13).

A few observations: by the end of Chapter II Austen has broadened the term *will* from a simple legal document into a weapon of family and class warfare. Notice its thudding repetition as an auxiliary verb in Fanny's diatribe: "they *will* have ... they *will* pay ... they *will* live so cheap ... they *will* have no carriage ... they *will* keep no company" (12). Wills become purely willful, simple, arbitrary exercises of power. As Johnson observes (51–2), that surely is the point of Austen's not having placed Norland Park under a tradition of entail in the male line, consequently turning the principle of entailment itself into what Edmund Burke might call an "innovation." Further, the chapter is an exercise in perverse hermeneutics, as John and Fanny struggle to understand what John's father could possibly have meant: "He did not know what he was talking of, I dare say: ten to one he was light-headed at the time. Had he been in his right senses, he could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child" (9). "I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all" (12).

But aside from a thoroughgoing demonstration that John is not a generous son or brother, and that his wife is worse, what is the point of all this? Even Mary Poovey, who is nothing if not attentive to the cultural constructions of women's narratives, finds in the episode little more than a setting of John's and Fanny's actions against an "implicit system" of "undeniably Christian values" (*Proper Lady* 184). I would offer, in agreement with Johnson and Margaret Doody, that the values under examination are considerably more specific and local than such a formulation would suggest.

In an essay isolating the features of the Romantic novel, including the work of Austen, Joseph Kestner insisted some years ago that its "great symbolic subject in both the matter and the method is the *entail*, a legal conception whose essence is restriction and limitation, and whose decisive element is the restriction of choice" ("Jane

Austen" 305). He suggested how focus on the entail enabled such writers as Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, John Galt and Sir Walter Scott to explore their twinned themes of law and education, but he offered no historical explanation for the prevalence of the theme. Situated as we now are, both after pioneering feminist studies of Austen by such critics as Doody, Johnson, Poovey, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Margaret Kirkham and Alison Sulloway, and after new historicist analyses of other writers and of the period generally, we may be able to fit out the foundations and sketch a structure for Kestner's observation.

As Austen assures us, wills, inheritance and inheritance laws have always been the subject of as much private discontent as joy. The emergence of inheritance as a central subject of public political discourse, however, is most easily traced to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), a work whose widespread influence is at last again being taken for granted. Burke's treatise sold 30,000 copies in its first few years and generated no fewer than seventy responses by 1793. One of these, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), was reprinted in massive numbers: its circulation has been estimated as having been up to 1.5 million copies (Chandler 17–18).

Burke's premise is familiar, and it has been used to bolster conservative interpretations of Austen's social thought from Avrom Fleishman's *A Reading of Mansfield Park* (1967) and Alistair M. Duckworth's *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971) through the studies of Marilyn Butler to the present. The government of England must be considered as a family. Englishmen "claim and assert" their liberties "as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity" (45). According to Burke, "the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. Whatever advantages are obtained by a state proceeding on these maxims, are locked fast as in a sort of family settlement; grasped as in a kind of mortmain for ever" (45). "In this choice of inheritance," he continues,

we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood, binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our states, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars. (46)

Burke places his security in the linear family: "People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors" (45). Indeed, the linear family serves as a check upon what we might call the lateral family, metaphorically the society living in a given generation, the shallow and selfish discontents of which can lead to dangerous acts of innovation.

Burke further claims that the principle of inheritance is the nursemaid of public as well as private morality:

The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue; it grafts benevolence even upon avarice. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction which attends hereditary possession (as most concerned in it) are the natural securities for this transmission. (64)

As an experienced member of Parliament, Burke would have known that his argument was playing fast and loose with history. Between 1500 and 1660 current owners of estates had been relatively free to dispose of their properties as they chose (Stone 166), and eighteenth-century entailments were strengthened by relatively new laws and practices. In effect, the viability of strict settlements depended on their being broken and resettled every generation or two. Much of the business of the parliaments in which Burke sat consisted of considering private acts to change the terms of settlements: an average of twenty to thirty such acts per year were executed throughout the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries (English and Saville 80). But the point of Burke's hyperbolic identification of family virtue and civic virtue, with inheritance as its governing trope, is not lost on radical writers of the 1790s.

Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), provides a brief sketch noted by Doody (xv) that foresees the situation of the Dashwood women. She imagines girls who are "weakly educated"—for Wollstonecraft these would be girls not educated for independence—"cruelly left by their parents without any provision." They become dependent, then, "not only on the reason, but the bounty of their brothers. These brothers are, to view the fairest side of the question, good sort of men, and give as a favour what children of the same parents had an equal right to." But when the brother marries, she goes on to observe, the following occurs:

The wife, a cold-hearted, narrow-minded, woman, and this is not an unfair supposition, for the present mode of education does not tend to enlarge the heart any more than the understanding—is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shows to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of *her* children lavished on an helpless sister. (157)

Austen's language in describing John and Fanny Dashwood echoes Wollstonecraft's, though with an even harder ironic edge:

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was:—he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself;—more narrow-minded and selfish. (5)

Austen softens the economic situation of the Dashwood women, who have an adequate if less than lavish provision, and she complicates the family situation by making them half-sisters. But she also exonerates the father, who is powerless to change the transmission of the estate, shifting the problem of equity squarely on to the shoulders of the inheriting son and his wife. Whereas Wollstonecraft sees a solution for such situations in improved education for women, which would both enable discarded sisters to become economically independent and enlarge the social vision of selfish and narrow-minded wives, Austen provides the materials for a structural critique of the system of inheritance. In this she is closer to Paine.

*The Rights of Man* argues that social justice in England is poisoned at its source, Burke's governing idea of family inheritance, as Paine provides a scathing account of "the law of *primogenitureship*" (320). He says:

The nature and character of aristocracy shows itself to us in this law. It is a law against every law of nature, and nature itself calls for its destruction. Establish family justice, and aristocracy falls. By the aristocratical law of *primogenitureship*, in a family of six children, five are exposed. Aristocracy has never more than *one* child. The rest are begotten to be devoured. They are thrown to

the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast.

With what kind of parental reflections can the father or mother contemplate their younger offspring? By nature they are children, and by marriage they are heirs; but by aristocracy they are bastards and orphans. They are flesh and blood of their parents in one line, and nothing akin to them in the other. To restore, then, parents to their children, and children to their parents—relations to each other, and man to society—and to exterminate the monster, aristocracy, root and branch, the French Constitution has destroyed the law of *Primogenitureship*. (320–1)

Paine further argues that

there is an unusual unfitness in an aristocracy to be legislators for a nation. Their ideas of *distributive justice* are corrupted at the very source. They begin life by trampling on all their younger brothers and sisters, and relations of every kind, and are taught and educated to do so. With what ideas of justice or honor can that man enter a house of legislation, who absorbs in his own person the inheritance of a whole family of children, or doles out to them some pitiful portion with the insolence of a gift? (321)

Like Burke, Paine would probably have known that his depiction of the near-abandonment of younger children had little basis in the facts of estate settlement; he is responding to Burke's fiction of inter-generational continuity with a counter-fiction of intra-generational savagery.

Such are the broad political implications of the discourse of inheritance in the 1790s, a discourse widely enough understood to have been assumed as a given by writers otherwise as far removed from one another as William Wordsworth (in "Michael") and Maria Edgeworth (in *Castle Rackrent*), both published in 1800 (see Ruoff, "1800" *passim*). Without attempting to demonstrate the indemonstrable, we may safely assume Austen's awareness of it. Her representation of inheritance in *Sense and Sensibility* more closely reflects its polemical role in the debate over political principles than any concrete observation of actual inheritance practices. A discourse that at both political extremes posits the wholesale convertibility of domestic and civic virtue places the emergence of the domestic novel in England in a rather different light than that in which it used to be routinely depicted. Arguably, family history has become political history.

If we set the first two chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* against appropriate passages from Burke and Paine, it is clear, again as Johnson (53) and Doody (xliv) observe, that they constitute a powerful critique of Burkean claims. Naked self-interest shines through Fanny's concerns for poor dear Harry and the future, even as she rhetorically effaces all concern for herself or the present. Her whining arguments about the tiresomeness of paying annuities to superannuated servants effectively puncture claims that the privileges of the gentry beget a spirit of benevolence, or even a willingness to meet contractual obligations that have been undertaken as a condition of inheritance. It is revealing that at one point John woundedly remarks of his father's request, "Perhaps it would have been as well if he had left it wholly to myself. He could hardly suppose I should neglect them" (9)—as he then proceeds to do. It is as though John has internalized Burke's assertion of the natural, hereditarily-generated benevolence of his class, and is resentful of an effort to compel him to perform acts of generosity which should come unbidden, even when they will not. John's and Fanny's actions seem inevitably to confirm Paine's critique of hereditary principle: that it provides a schooling in self-interest which blinds its adherents to notions of distributive justice.

What remains to be determined is whether Austen's opening representation of abusive practices suggests a gentry which must clean up its act—reform itself in genuine alignment with Burkean principles—or a gentry which is so far past amendment as to call for other principles for establishing social justice. By definition, apologists display and account for abuses in systems which are under attack, and reformist and radical critiques often share points of affinity. For this reason novelists give us books, not just scenes. Whatever else, we find no relief in John and Fanny Dashwood, whose every reappearance provides evidence of thoughtless arrogance: fresh instances of lavish expenditures coupled with fresh protestations of impoverishment. Nor are they to be written off as upstarts, newer gentry with no understanding of tradition: the Dashwood family "had long been settled in Sussex" and had been respectable "for many generations" (3). John may reach his apex of venality, and simultaneously his strongest advocacy of Burkean principles of stewardship, in his reflections on his wife's brother, Edward Ferrars, another victim of parental will.

Edward, who allows himself to fall in love with Elinor despite his secret engagement to Lucy Steele, is an eldest son. His mother controls him by withholding his independence, as his current portion lies in her gift rather than having (like John Dashwood's) descended upon his coming of age. His family wishes to see him take a profession, but

not for any potential service to society. Edward is described in this way:

His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished—as—they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the mean while, till one of these superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother who was more promising. (15–16)

Elinor is forced time and again to account for abrupt changes in Edward's mood and behavior. In general she attributes his gloomy and withdrawn periods to the "inevitable necessity of temporizing with his mother. The old, well-established grievance of duty against will, parent against child, was the cause of all" (102). Austen splits radically the Burkean formula: instead of the will generating in the privileged property-holder a sense of duty, the will becomes an oppressive force which compels the duty of the subject child. Both Austen's presentation and Elinor's analysis of Edward's situation recall, if indirectly, the observations of Wollstonecraft:

Parental affection is, perhaps, the blindest modification of self-love. ... Parents often love their children in the most brutal manner, and sacrifice every relative duty to promote their advancement in the world. To promote, such is the perversity of unprincipled prejudices, the future welfare of the very beings whose present existence they imbitter by the most despotic stretch of power. (*Vindication* 150)

Mrs. Dashwood echoes Elinor's internal language when she attempts to reassure Edward: "Your mother will secure to you, in time, that independence you are so anxious for; it is her duty, and it will, it must ere long become her happiness to prevent your whole youth from being wasted in discontent" (103). Mrs. Dashwood's words are

darkly and ironically prophetic, because Edward's literal independence follows his figurative death.

When Edward's engagement to Lucy Steele becomes known, he is disinherited, "dismissed for ever from his mother's notice" (268). When his "more promising" younger brother Robert, given his economic independence in a fit of retributive pique by Mrs. Ferrars, later marries the same objectionable young lady, he too is disowned and dismissed. Austen's description of Mrs. Ferrars's situation is delicious:

Her family of late had been exceedingly fluctuating. For many years of her life she had had two sons; but the crime and annihilation of Edward a few weeks ago, had robbed her of one. The similar annihilation of Robert had left her for a fortnight without any; and now, by the resuscitation of Edward, she had one again.

In spite of his being allowed once more to live, however, he did not feel continuance of his existence secure, till he had revealed his present engagement [to Elinor]; for the publication of that circumstance, he feared, might give a sudden turn to his constitution, and carry him off as rapidly as before. (373)

The linear family, secured by the firm principle of inheritance, seems a shaky cornerstone for the English nation, and Austen's ironic adaptation of Paine's rhetoric of family savagery has more than comic effects. Mrs. Ferrars is given to capital punishment, in both its senses. To literalize Burke's term, her hold on her sons is a mortmain indeed. (1992)

## Bibliography<sup>1</sup>

- Austen, Jane. *The Novels of Jane Austen*. Edited by R.W. Chapman. 5 vols. 3rd edn. London: Oxford University Press, 1932–4.
- Austen, Jane. *Minor Works*. Edited by R.W. Chapman. Vol. VI of *Novels of Jane Austen*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Brown, Julia Prewitt. *A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. New York: Macmillan, 1985.
- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.
- Butler, Marilyn. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

---

1 This list has been excerpted to include only references relevant to the material reprinted here.

- Chandler, James K. *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Duckworth, Alistair. *The Improvement of the Estate*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971.
- English, Barbara, and John Saville. *Strict Settlement: A Guide for Historians*. Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History, No. 10. Hull: University of Hull Press, 1983.
- Fleishman, Avrom. *A Reading of Mansfield Park*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1967.
- Gaull, Marilyn. *English Romanticism: The Human Context*. New York: Norton, 1988.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Kestner, Joseph. "Jane Austen: The Tradition of the English Romantic Novel, 1800–1832." *Wordsworth Circle*, 7 (1976), 297–311.
- Kirkham, Margaret. *Jane Austen, Feminism, and Fiction*. Sussex: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983.
- Paine, Thomas. *The Rights of Man*. In Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.
- Poovy, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Ruoff, Gene W. "1800 and the Future of the Novel: William Wordsworth, Maria Edgeworth, and the Vagaries of Literary History." In *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, eds Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene Ruoff. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987, pp. 291–314.
- Southam, B.C., ed. *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. Abr. edn. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Sulloway, Alison. *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Edited by Miriam Brody Kramnick. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.