

**Literary Heritage Writ Large at the Jane Austen Festival,
Bath**

JOHNSON, Katherine

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/23394/>

This document is the author deposited version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Published version

JOHNSON, Katherine (2018). Literary Heritage Writ Large at the Jane Austen Festival, Bath. In: HOPKINS, Lisa, (ed.) After Austen. Reinventions, rewritings, revisitings. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 267-285.

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Literary Heritage Writ Large at the Jane Austen Festival, Bath

Abstract

Jane Austen's novels and their many adaptations constitute a significant feature in the literary heritage and tourism landscape. Attracting thousands of visitors from across the world, the annual Jane Austen Festival in Bath, Britain, is a prominent example of this popular(ised) form of literary heritage. In this chapter, I analyse key examples of how the festival represents and recreates Austen's (literary) world by utilising, interweaving and, at times, blurring history and fiction, place and temporality, authenticity and (in)accuracy and, in so doing, promotes and emplaces Austen as British heritage for a global fanship.

Keywords

Adaptation
Fandom
Festival
Jane Austen
Literary heritage
Literary tourism
Living history
Reenactment

Stijn Reijnders asserts that some iconic literary works function as anchors of collectively imagined pasts, in which literature and notions of heritage merge, or blur.¹ Such conflation moves beyond academic notions of literary heritage, with fictional characters, narratives and life-worlds seeping into (romanticised and frequently inaccurate) perceptions of historical milieux and even, by extension, contemporary identities from both within and outside of the place/country in question. Significant to the functioning of such heritage narratives (and their role in heritage tourism) is an interconnection of (fictionalised) time and place, underpinned by both the literal and the literary.

The stories of Jane Austen (I use 'stories', rather than 'novels', deliberately here) and their after-effects are amongst the most prominent examples of this popular(ised) form of literary heritage. Their significance – as both objects of fandom and subjects of history – presents palpably at the annual Jane Austen Festival (JAF) in Bath, Britain. In this chapter, I utilise Ethnographic fieldwork and Cultural, Performance and Heritage Studies theory to analyse how reality and fiction, place and temporality, authenticity and (in)accuracy (and the interplay between them) (re)create Austen's 'world' at and through this festival, by and for her fanship.²

(Em)Placing Literary Heritage

JAF is organised by the Jane Austen Centre – a museum of modest proportions, comprising a permanent exhibition, Regency-themed tea room and gift shop. The

centre's website describes the festival as 'nine glorious days of costume, music, drama, dancing, food, fashion, talks, tours and fun at a variety of venues in and around the city'. The scores of events include workshops on Regency clothing, makeup, manners, entertaining, dance and music; theatre productions; concerts; dance performances; staged readings; walking tours of Bath; day trips to historic houses and villages; themed breakfasts and dinners; talks; costumed balls; a fashion show; a fair and, to commence the festival, a promenade through town, involving several hundred Regency-garbed participants.

JAF's self-descriptor on its Facebook page is, at the time of writing, 'event, historical place, entertainer'. Given the location (history-steeped Bath) and the fact that the festival celebrates one of England's most beloved authors, the festival's emphasis on heritage is hardly surprising. JAF conjoins heritage, living history, literature, pop-culture, tourism and fandom by employing Austen's well-documented (and well-utilised) connection with Bath (in her life, novels and the film locations of their adaptations) to integrate its diverse line-up within the all-inclusive package of festival. Aligning with Hannam and Halewood's depiction of living history tourism events generally, JAF represents a 'unique combination of two meaningful cultural themes: heritage and festival. Heritage, in terms of foregrounding a sedimented past, a historical and archaeological significance, and festival in terms of foregrounding a present embodied site of popular culture.'³ Media tourism is becoming, as Reijnders recognises, an increasingly popular form of tourism, with many official tours and private travel arrangements focused on an author, novel, show or film.⁴ Such tours visit and vivify sites that are, in many cases, transformed from ordinary to extraordinary through the significance that their literary/media history imbues them with, in the eyes of the fan. The 'Sex and the City' walking tour at JAF is one of many examples of this.

Weaving along the busy cobblestoned streets of Bath, our guide points out numerous places of interest, peeling back the layers of history around us. As we walk through the high, rounded archway of the Guildhall market, she informs us that the building was constructed in the nineteenth century, but that the location has been a market since Roman times. The American tourists near me exclaim at this longevity, expressing a sense of awe that even I, there in a research capacity, feel pressing upon me. After walking for a few more minutes, our guide comes to a halt, turns towards us and bids us to climb the steps of William Scott Art Gallery. She pauses for a moment, and I wonder if she is waiting to gain everyone's attention or to build anticipation – or both. 'I want you to get the view. I think most of you know you are looking at Pulteney Bridge. Jane lived at the end of this street for three years.'

Our guide's highlighting of this particular place – bringing us to a halt, positioning us in a spot where we could linger (being out of the main thoroughfare) and enjoy a better vantage point (being elevated on the steps) – communicated the significance she attached to the site and expected her participants to, as well. This importance was grounded in the factual—and presented in matter-of-fact terms and tone. Later in the tour, she spoke of a site's connection with Austen in more emotive language, communicating a more *affective* engagement.

*We walk on, our journey peppered with observations on the places we pass, until we are once again brought to a halt. This time, we are outside the New Theatre Royal, which, we are informed, was built in 1805 – before the publication of both *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*. As our heads tilt upwards to take in the*

majestic Georgian building before us, our guide explains that ‘the theatre was very important for social interaction. Thursday was the best day to go, as you would probably bump into somebody’. She had told us earlier in the tour that socialising and networking were crucial for young men and women ‘in Jane’s time’, especially when in Bath – a fact reflected in Northanger Abbey. An American woman stops chatting with her friend to ask, ‘did women continue to go out after they were married? I suppose they didn’t need to if they’d already snagged a guy’. The guide replies, ‘perhaps not as much, but they definitely did go out. Don’t forget, when you come to Bath, you’re on a holiday. So you might go out every night! [...] By Jane’s time, private parties were all the go’. She turns back towards the theatre and indicates for us to do the same. ‘Lady Russell [a character in Persuasion] would have arrived at the front, where the modern entrance is. People paying a pound to be in the pit would be at the far side. This side was where the middle and lower gentility would enter – where Jane would most likely have entered. This is the second-oldest continuing-running theatre in England. I’ll tell you something – you can so feel her here [original emphasis]’.

This tendency (or strategy) to enliven sites and their history through interlinking broader facts with the author and her novels pervaded not only this walking tour but the festival as a whole. ‘Sex and the City’ was one of many events in the festival that gathered people (most of whom shared an interest in at least one of the histories at play) to share and, at times, elicit cultural and historical insights through performance. These ‘convergence[s] of people, places and performance’ facilitate what Carnegie and McCabe describe as ‘a unique consumption experience’, evoking a liminal sense of temporal(ised) place.⁵ At JAF, such experiences were created by the emplacing of heritage through Austen, and vice versa.

While JAF explores and celebrates Austen’s lived experience in Bath, it places greater emphasis on the city’s manifestations in her novels. The sense of place in ‘Jane Austen’s Bath’ derives from (or is created by) this interplay of factuality and fictionality – from actual locations and their evocations in fictional scenes. The emplacing of characters’ experiences and interactions in real locations – through both reference in the novels and through filming in their televisual adaptations – creates these sites of fictional reality, cemented by the significance they are attributed by fans. On the afore-mentioned walking tour, our guide shared with us that, as well as being where Jane actually lived for some time, Great Pulteney Street is also the location of the lodgings of several of Jane’s characters.

The Allens in *Northanger Abbey* take lodgings in Great Pulteney Street, indicating that they are wealthy. This street (and its implications) are important to the plot – it causes Isabella’s brother to assume Catherine is worth pursuing. Mrs Allen is too lazy or stupid to warn her not to ride out in a carriage alone with a young man. It is on this street that Catherine, riding along in the carriage, sees her friends and is desperate to go to them, because they won’t understand why she’s broken her engagement.

This conjoining of fact and fiction in the attachment of significance to sites occurred more organically—and theatrically—at the beginning of the tour, with a late (yet rather opportune) arrival of one of the participants.

Standing outside the Pump Rooms, our guide talks to us about their use in Jane Austen’s time and in her novel, Northanger Abbey. A (rather accomplished)

busker plays her violin nearby. 'People always turned up at one o'clock, because that's when the music played. Catherine and Mrs Allen come to the Pump Room and promenade up and down for an hour. How else do you meet somebody? It is here that Catherine meets Isabella and her mother, Mrs Thorpe, a school acquaintance of Mrs Allen. (Any acquaintance is better than none!) Jane describes Mrs Thorpe's girls as "smart" – a coded word, perhaps, for a bit racy, a bit free and easy.' Our guide indicates that we should follow her. Just outside the square, she asks us to pause for a moment. 'You've just come under the famous archway that Isabella Thorpe rushed through in her (somewhat unseemly) pursuit of two young men.' A few women in the group make surprised, appreciative comments, while one or two others nod their head, as if already aware of this. We recommence our walk, and our guide continues, 'this is Cheap St – "cheap" meant "market". This, which is now a quiet street, was one of the busiest in Jane's time.' At this moment, a woman in a Regency-style red coat and bonnet comes rushing up and joins us in a fluster. A tall American man asks, grinning, 'is this Catherine?'. Our guide, casting her eye across the woman's boldly-coloured garments in an exaggerated look of appraisal, replies, 'perhaps Isabella'.

Such intersections of reality and fantasy (or, rather, fiction) pervade the festival and align with Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's claim that 'virtualities, even in the presence of actualities, show that which can otherwise not be seen. Tourists travel to actual destinations to experience virtual places.'⁶ For many participants of JAF, the appeal of the sites of Bath lies chiefly in their literary significance—as fictive places located in real spaces. In this way, JAF delivers on the implicit promise made by many heritage sites and events to create an 'experience that is more real, more immediate, or more complete, whether [...] an actuality [...] or a virtuality [...] or both at the very same place'.⁷ This sense of being more real, immediate and complete was derived from our embodied engagements with (what is perceived as) the authentic, (re)animated in physicalities and (emplaced) histories, both factual and fictional, real and imagined.

As suggested earlier, at Bath, heritage, place and temporality are inherently – or, perhaps, intentionally – entwined. The city is, as Visit Bath's webpage proudly proclaims, the 'only destination in the U.K. to have the whole city designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO' – an act which attributes the city with 'outstanding universal value and cultural significance'. The historicity of this place is, as one would expect, a substantial part of its appeal as a heritage tourism destination and site for this literary heritage festival. Bath is by no means alone in holding a Jane Austen Festival, but its architecture and history imbue it with a particular *sense* of authenticity – a perception of authentic experience created by the *affect* of sensory, bodily engagement.

I arrive at the Pump Room, a thrill of excitement pulsing through my Regency-clad body. I traverse a series of mundane-looking passageways before stepping into the courtyard of the ancient Roman baths. The flame-lit lanterns cast the costumed bodies in a soft, flickering light, which reflects off the green waters of this once holy bath. A resounding, polished male voice announces that the ball will commence shortly. I navigate the uneven stones of the eroding, ancient floor beneath me, presenting myself to the doorman. He announces me, and I enter the majestic hall of the Georgian Pump Room. As I weave my way through the men and women hovering on the dance floor, I come across the Jane Austen Centre's doorman, who led a dance workshop I participated in a few days earlier. His

round, ruddy face is as cheerful as ever, and he greets me cordially. 'My dear, how would you like to partake of the waters?' Although I am uncertain whether this is usually permitted, I cannot resist the opportunity. He comes back shortly with a small glass of cloudy water. 'I warn you, one does not drink it for the taste.' The liquid is warm and somewhat sharp in my mouth and, as I swallow another sip, I silently agree with him.

Ordinary and even disappointing as those once holy (or, in Austen's time, healing) waters may be to a present-day palate and perspective, the opportunity to consume history – literally and figuratively – here, in the place where Austen herself danced and 'partook of the waters' is not without significance. Such moments are central to what many fans/tourists seek at such events/sites – in this case, a sensation of being connected with Austen or, perhaps more commonly, Austen's depiction of Regency society. As McCabe suggests, participants of such events can enter 'the scene with a heady sense of "being there", [of] capturing an essential part of the lifeculture of the locality [and] some sense of meaningful experience'.⁸ This is, of course, somewhat problematic. Not only are such experiences not reflective of contemporary Bath (outside of its performance of place for tourists), they are also not reflective of Regency Bath – representing, as they do, an extra-daily experience belonging not to the many nor even the average, but only the elite.

It is evident that the history and culture of Bath – embodied visually and spatially in its Roman and Georgian architecture and roads, and intangibly in the re-enactment of accessible parts of its cultural heritage – enhance participants' experience of what is represented as Austen's world. But this experience is also heightened by the performative presence of the participants themselves – many of whom, at many events, dress in Regency-style outfits every bit as convincing, to the untrained eye, as costumes from BBC adaptations. Indeed, there are moments when participants became part of the (re)creation of the 'Regency' setting many of them seek and, simultaneously, of a set in which they perform as living, moving sites of interest for other tourists.

Six hundred Georgian-garbed bodies stroll past grand Georgian buildings in the annual festival-opening promenade from the Royal Crescent to the Parade Gardens. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of phones and cameras are held above the heads of the watching crowd, all lenses pointed in the direction of the gowned and bonneted women and the somewhat smaller number of men in breeches, coats and riding boots. As these striking figures stroll along – some ceremoniously, others quite casually – passers-by stop to watch or take pictures. The promenading party rounds a stone-paved corner, and a tour bus pulls up. Two-dozen tourists come tumbling out, cameras firing away.

To some extent, this drawing of a (potentially intrusive) crowd is the point. To promenade, even in Regency times, is to perform. (Recall Mr Darcy's comment to Elizabeth and Miss Bingley: 'your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking'). This twenty-first-century promenade was an explicit performance, intended for an audience (it does, after all, advertise the festival, as well as offer participants an opportunity to 'exhibit'). The performativity of this activity was framed by an environmental set—gathered, as they were at the beginning, in the cordoned-off lawns in front of the prestigious Georgian buildings of Bath's Royal Crescent. This theatricality was emphasised by the master of ceremony who, dressed in full Regency regalia, announced the commencement of the promenade in a booming voice, with language and a reference that interwove past and present. 'Ladies and gentlemen, be pleased to draw near. My lords, gentlemen, ladies, gentle folk all, those wanting to take

part in this promenade in the year of our Lord 2013, be pleased to draw near. We will depart through the gates. God save the King.' 2013 it may have been acknowledged to be, but the language and the monarch harken back to a Georgian past.

In such moments, JAF illustrates the way 'tourism stages the world as a museum of itself, even as museums try to emulate the experience of travel'.⁹ Such events make explicit the often-subtler mechanisms of heritage – literary or otherwise – and its function(ing) as 'a cultural process or performance that is engaged with the construction and reconstruction of [a] sense of place'.¹⁰ JAF elucidates, promotes and emplaces Austen and/as literary heritage in Bath; it also plays a part in (re)creating this heritage, and the sense of historic(ised), temporal(ised), yet commodified place to which it contributes.

Authenticity: a Novel Notion

Underlying JAF's engagement with Austen and/as heritage, tourism and object of fandom is the thorny issue of authenticity. There are three main mechanisms discernible in the way authenticity is conceived, approached and utilised at JAF – *locating authenticity within* Austen-related sources, *deriving authenticity from* these sources (to apply to subsequent representations) and being *authentic to* Austen and such sources. The loci of this authenticity also had three branches: Austen's life, Austen's novels and, somewhat ironically, BBC and other film and television productions of her works.

Austen's life as a focus of authenticity was particularly apparent at the Jane Austen Centre – in the collection, how it was displayed and how it and the author were discussed by the interpreters.

A young woman, dressed in period attire, gives an introductory talk to the centre's exhibition. The presenter tells us that Northanger Abbey and Persuasion are both set in Bath (as we have heard in many places already). Persuasion, we are told, 'was written after Jane lived here and shows Bath in a very different light'. She guides us through key places around England that Jane Austen graced with her presence, pointing, at times, to the map that hangs behind her and below an Austen family tree. 'There were many clergy figures in her daily life – that's why they crop up in her books so much.' Austen, she tells us, portrayed the gentry quite favourably, even if she did ridicule them a little. After a brief account of Austen's brother and sister, the presenter turns towards an iconic portrait of the author, displayed next to her on the wall. By the picture is written: 'thanks to Cassandra' (Jane Austen's sister). 'As it's the only authentic picture we have of Jane, all of our artistic representations are based on this. Despite being only postcard size, the original hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London.'

As the speaker commented, the portrait at the centre is a copy. The display of the original at England's National Portrait Gallery – despite its humble proportions and non-expert execution – speaks to the value attached to it as an authentic source of visual representation of the author (even if this authenticity is by default, in lieu of any other visual record to consult). The authenticity here is not, however, only attached to the original; as the 'only authentic' image of 'Jane', this copy is also valued. Authenticity is located in – or claimed for – the replicated depiction of Austen with little differentiation from the original. The significance attached to this piece is also evident in the

expression of gratitude to the artist, Austen's sister – a declaration which also acts to endow it with another rung of authenticity, highlighting, as it does, the artist's close relationship with the subject.

The exhibition conveys a sense of amicable closeness between Jane and Cassandra Austen through this portrait and, more particularly, correspondence between the sisters, which is quoted both in the exhibition itself and on their website. On the latter, the centre cites a letter written by Jane.

Elizabeth has given me a hat, and it is not only a pretty hat, but a pretty style of hat too. It is something like Eliza's, only, instead of being all straw, half of it is narrow purple ribbon [...].

Jane Austen to Cassandra
Queen's Square, Bath
June 2, 1799.

Similar snippets of correspondence between the Austen sisters feature on the walls in the exhibition, reflecting the value the centre locates in her letters. Perhaps more significantly, these letters are employed as sources to derive authenticity from. Featuring Austen's discussion of a bonnet on their website on dressing-up at the centre (the wardrobe for which includes bonnets) renders the activity authentic by associating bonnet-wearing with the author. Similarly, including the location of the writing, Queen's Square (highlighted on both their website and walking tour map as being close to their establishment), casts the location of the centre (and Bath as a whole) in a glow of authenticity. Their description of the centre, which 'houses a permanent exhibition telling the story of Jane's experience in the city [...] and the effect that living here had on her and her writing', mirrors this. The centre's Regency Tea Room and the dance classes and balls of the festival are similarly lent authenticity by connecting them with Austen's milieu. By visiting, their brochure claims, 'you can learn about the main entertainments of Jane Austen's day: dancing, socialising, card games and tea drinking'. There is, however, a tension underlying the celebration of 'Jane Austen's Bath'. The festival highlights Bath's presence in Austen's life and works and alludes to the authenticity this provides them, but the author herself disliked Bath, quite openly. The discordance between celebrating a person in and through a place she was relieved to escape and the arguable inauthenticity (in terms of being faithful to Austen) of doing so might be soothed for those involved, however, by focusing on Bath's positive connotations. Although the author's former interest in Bath declined greatly after living there, the fact remains that she did live, dance and even write there. And although Bath may have become tiresome for Austen, it remains a site of romance for two of her heroines.

A desire to be faithful to Austen and therefore, in this view, authentic, was evident in the untitled documentary on loop at the exhibition, which was made specifically for this purpose in 1999. 'If we profess to be her admirers', the presenter proclaims, 'we owe it to her to pursue the truth'. This conveys an endeavour to represent Austen's life 'truthfully' (a Pandora's box I will not open here) as a responsibility of all fans of the author. In the documentary, this 'truth' is pursued, in part, by including people associated with the author or the adaptations of her novels. The narrator, Amanda Root, played Anne Elliot (the protagonist of Austen's *Persuasion*) in the BBC's 1995 version. Root is a leading figure in British classic and period dramas; her filmography includes *Jane Eyre*, *Daniel Deronda*, *The*

Forsythe Saga, Midsomer Murders, A Touch of Frost, Foyle's War and *Agatha Christie's Poirot*. During the documentary, she interviews Austen's great niece, Diana Shervington, who informs the viewers about Austen family holidays in Lyme, a tourist destination that features in *Persuasion* and is where Shervington lives. The documentary clearly attaches authority to this descendant of Austen, who in turn lends authenticity to the documentary by her presence in it. The film also seeks to uncover something of Austen's character (her 'true' nature) through her novels, suggesting that, as readers, we get to know 'Jane' (a sense of what she may have been like) through her fiction. The documentary suggests that 'Northanger Abbey very much gives the impression that even in her early twenties, she was an observer, an outsider'. The novels are thus represented as primary sources, providing authentic insight into the author herself. Note, however, the equivocacy of the narrator's words, 'gives the impression that'. Even when drawing conclusions, the desire to be authentic to Jane – in this case, not to presume to know this great figure too well or to speak too much for and of her – overcomes the temptation to speculate. At least, it does in that instance. The documentary is not immune to romanticised speculation: 'we know she lived off an allowance of twenty pounds per year. But then, she didn't need to be the poor relation; she could have set her hat at finding a husband, [but] Jane Austen was too much a romantic at heart to marry for financial considerations.' While Austen did break-off an eligible match, the documentary's explanation for this – which it presents as a statement – is, in fact, (idealised) conjecture.

When navigating the slips and trips of fact and fiction, evidence and speculation, accuracy and faithfulness, many parts of the festival tacked back-and-forth along a spectrum of correctness and conjecture. Because Austen wrote of places she actually lived, there are many crossroads that connect her, as a historic figure, with the characters in her novels. Of course, the exact location of some of these sites is not definitive, even if they are represented as such. It is possible that some of these places were the inspiration for locations in Austen's novels, rather than the precise setting. Many of the sites have changed significantly since Austen's time, and some of them were obviously depicted by the author with a little artistic licence, leaving out the less desirable attributes.

Continuing on our walking tour, we reach the Cross Baths, which, we are told, have been baths since Roman times, but were rebuilt in the eighteenth century. They are opposite what were once the stables for the White Hart Inn. 'This is where Mary Musgrove sees Sir Walter Elliot and Mrs Clay taking a walk through the stables. Stables are another area where you can have a bit of a "how's your father?"'. Our guide looks towards the young woman wearing red Regency attire, whose breathless late arrival had caused a bit of a stir earlier. This 'Isabella' is chatting with a young dark-haired man, also in Regency garb, her body angled close to his. 'Her reputation was already in tatters', our guide jests dryly, one brow raised. Returning to her topic, she explains that, by situating Mrs Clay and Sir Walter Elliot's walk by the stables, Austen communicates that 'Mrs Clay is not a reputable woman'. We walk around to stand outside what used to be the front of the White Hart Inn. She shows us a picture of what it looked like 'in Jane's time'. 'Inns were places families would stay for a few days and for longer by young single men but weren't a place to stay for an extended period'. She turns and points towards a window. 'This is where Anne would have looked out of to see Mrs Clay and Mr Elliot.' We continue walking towards the Masonic temple, which was formerly a theatre and

is now open on selected days for public viewings. 'It was a very small theatre, rectangular in shape, with people seated facing each other. So, when Catherine is sitting opposite Mr Tilney, after having unintentionally slighted him, they really couldn't escape each other. The theatre was a place where friendships could be made and flirtations continued. It was also a place where prostitutes came – Jane would have seen these women, even if she never spoke of them.'

As we (re)traced Austen and her characters' steps, this re-enactment interwove the author's reality and fiction, what her literature included, excluded and alluded to. In so doing, our guide endeavoured to address some of the realities of Austen's life as well as the romances of her fiction. In these acts of storytelling, sites are imbued with significance through the (inter)play of subject and object, past and present, and history – real and imagined.

The interconnecting of fact and fiction also occurred in the kitchen of period house museum No. 1 Royal Crescent during a lecture titled 'Were the Austens Upstairs or Downstairs?' After outlining the different classes and their general standards and ways of living, the speaker situated the Austen family within this social hierarchy:

So where do the Austens fit? They were gentry, but not well off, except for Jane's brother, who was adopted by other relatives in need of an heir and became richer than Mr Darcy. Jane Austen would have been involved in the kitchen, by necessity, as the Austens didn't have enough servants, unlike Mrs Bennet, who was offended by Mr Collins' suggestion that her daughters helped cook the meal. There was, however, still a marked difference between the Austens and the servant class.

The speaker thus utilised Austen's characters to illustrate the author's own position in society. She went on to tell us that Austen 'did have to live on Trim Street briefly – a very disreputable part of Bath', where prostitutes lived and worked. 'Jane was aware of social differences and where she fitted' and reflected this in her novels. She illustrated this by quoting Fanny's pernicious portrayal of the Dashwood women's situation, which she read from a copy of *Sense and Sensibility*: 'all together they will have five hundred a year! 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 expenses of any kind!' As these examples demonstrate, Austen's books offer, for these festival contributors, a valid source and reference point, utilised to enliven the histories of both real sites and real lives, as well as fictional ones.

Drawing on Austen's books in this way was a common technique at the festival. During a performance at a soirée at Sir Walter Elliot's House (a bed and breakfast, named after its illustrious past as the film location of the Elliots' residence in the 1995 BBC production of *Persuasion*), the male singer played on Mr Bennet's words to his daughter Mary, made famous by the BBC's oft-cited 1995 production of *Pride and Prejudice*: 'Ms Blossom [the pianist] is now going to *exhibit* on her own – as if she hasn't already exhibited so well accompanying' (original emphasis). Similarly, in a makeup workshop titled 'How to Get the Regency Look', the demonstrator, as she was gathering rouge from a makeup box, instructed the audience to 'crush up your beetle. Use petroleum jelly as a primer if your skin is dry.' She demonstrated on the model as she continued, 'if you layer it, it will last longer. Apply the blush in a "C" shape from the temple and back. As Lady Catherine de Bourgh said, "it's practice, practice, practice".' Here, the presenter made a playful, contextual reference to the use of ground

beetles as rouge in the Regency period and cited a character from *Pride and Prejudice* to colour her point. These moments of intertextuality summoned the past—as narrated by Austen—in our present, not through an ignorant collapsing of temporalities but through a playful, post-modern exchange between reality now and the fiction of then.

Three of Austen's novels were far more frequently utilised in this way than her others: *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*. The frequent referencing of the first two is hardly surprising, given their already-discussed Bath setting. The third is Austen's most popular novel and was enjoying, in the year I attended the festival, its two-hundredth anniversary of its publication. Correspondingly, many of the activities and events were connected with it. This included a scratch performance of a new stage production of *Pride and Prejudice*, adapted to be performed by two people.

Sitting downstage left in the Mission Theatre, the director tells us that this production is 'in rehearsal, not ready for the world yet'. Jo (one of the two actors) wrote most of the adaptation and 'tried to avoid' using words that weren't Austen's. 'We don't have our set here – we need you to use your theatrical imaginations.' The set, we learn, will be on an angle, and the actors 'will move through it to indicate "'new" locations'. She gestures towards the plastic chairs on stage. 'This is a beige chaise longue [...]. It's all kind of grey and beige and beautiful and tasteful.' We are shown the opening scene, which employs a clever use of costume – Jo's dress pins back to reveal breeches underneath, facilitating her transition between male and female characters. Similarly, the male actor's coat, worn open when performing a male character, does up to look like a dress when he 'becomes' Jane Bennet and other female characters. After performing the scene, the actors take a seat on stage, and the director poses to the audience: 'so, we introduced a lot of characters here, are any of them not clear?'. A member of the audience suggests that Mary was indistinct. Murmurs and nods of agreement ripple around the room. 'We depict Mary playing a flute because Jo plays the flute so well.' A few people voice what I, too, am thinking: Mary is repeatedly and at times poignantly associated with the piano, in both the book and the BBC show, so changing her instrument causes confusion. Both the director and actors, however, seem resistant to this feedback. The director, standing up, suggests, 'let's rewind and go back. Jo missed the part where she usually introduces Mary with a gesture (she indicates towards the music stand). Let's run it again with that and see what you think.' The scene is re-performed, and some members of the audience respond a little more receptively. The male actor, nodding with satisfaction, comments, 'often it's the absolute precision of a gesture that solves a seemingly knotty problem'.

There is a dichotomy here between the actor-adaptors' desire to 'stay true' to the novel, in terms of dialogue and narration, and her willingness to change an iconic aspect of Mary's character because of her own ability with the flute. Despite the fact that this departure did not sit well with many amongst the audience (whether for reasons of clarity, accuracy or both), for those creating the (re)presentation, convenience and opportunity seem to trump authenticity, in this instance.

Contradictions also pervade the third focus of authenticity at the festival—BBC and other film and television adaptations of the novels. *Pride and Prejudice* was again prominent in this subset of authenticity, particularly in the dance events.

In the Georgian Guildhall, the Jane Austen Dancers, a group local to Bath, celebrate 'P and P's' anniversary with a themed dance workshop, 'Danced with Pride in 1813'. Many of the participants are in Regency attire. Speaking into a microphone to amplify her voice in this vast hall, the dance master explains, 'as you may have guessed, this workshop is Pride and Prejudice themed [...]. It will have dances from the shows and movies, as well as dances we've researched from 1813'. The dancing commences with a performance, accompanied by a tune that plays several times in the BBC production. The second dance is also to a song I recognise but cannot place from where. The third dance, we are told, is to a song called 'Contradance 38. Jane was 38 when Pride and Prejudice was published'. The dances whirl past, until we reach the final number, 'the dance [both the music and steps] that Lizzy and Darcy danced together'. These are, of course, the Lizzy and Darcy of the BBC's 1995 version.

In its performing of authenticity, this workshop transitioned between contextual, literary and pop-culture versions of 'Austen-ness', which functioned as a structuring theme, object of fandom and means of authentication in and of the event. The most enthusiastic responses from the audience were elicited by the dances from the widely popular 1995 BBC mini-series. These dances may well be twentieth-century constructions – inspired by, but not necessarily derived from, the period. Nevertheless, an experience of authenticity was evoked, for many participants, by the iconicity – the visual and aural recognisability – of dances and songs featured in twentieth-century productions. The authenticity attached to, and derived from, aspects of reconstruction in Austen-based shows and films was not limited to music and dance; it was also perceived to be embodied in the actors who played key roles in these performances. In her festival review, the organiser of JAF wrote: 'we were thrilled to welcome back Adrian Lukis (Mr Wickham) [...] performing Austen duologues in the portrait gallery of the Holburne Museum'. Recruiting the actor who played the charismatic but morally-flawed rogue of *Pride and Prejudice* to perform duologues and readings was a source of both excitement and authenticity for the organiser and many participants. Similarly, on the webpage narrating the history of the festival, the writer reminisces about the 'wonderful readings given by Ben Whitrow (the best ever Mr Bennet) partnered by Amanda Root (Anne Elliot) and then Joanna David (Mrs Gardiner)'. As mentioned earlier, Amanda Root, the narrator of the documentary played at the Jane Austen Centre, also played Anne Elliot in the 1995 movie version of *Persuasion*. A clip from the film, featuring Root as Elliot, is included in the documentary. Although festival-goers are obviously aware that these actors are not actually Mr Wickham or Anne Elliot, authenticity is still attributed to them as signifiers of Austen's characters. There are, of course, no 'real' Mr Wickham and Anne Elliot. Their representations in the adaptations are, thus, arguably of equal (if different) 'authenticity' to the characters conjured in the imaginations of Austen's readers – evocations which, it is widely acknowledged, can feel almost real in their vividness.

There were also a select number of 'originals' exhibited at the centre. Visitors can 'see the actual dress worn by Sally Hawkins as Anne Elliot in the 2007's *Persuasion*, as well as scripts and memorabilia from the 1995 version' (The Jane Austen Centre Guide 2017). The films offer accessible and attainable sources of 'original'

pieces for Austen admirers. These stand in for what may be considered more historical artefacts connected directly with Austen. Artefacts of any kind were rare at the centre and even more so in the festival. The limited number of displayed objects, however, does not necessarily detract from the authenticity or appeal of the festival, or even the exhibit. As Jackson and Kidd argue, ‘visits to heritage sites have in recent years become [...] less about the object and more about the experience: an “encounter” with a past that is “brought to life”’.¹¹ Indeed, none of the participants I spoke with mentioned artefacts amongst the attractions of the festival; they spoke of the balls, dance workshops, performances and opportunities to visit sites connected with the author and her works. As we have already seen, if authentic objects were scarce, authentic locations were in abundance – particularly because this authentication extended to locations where Austen adaptations were filmed.

Common to the three loci of authenticity outlined here (Austen’s life, Austen’s novels and the film adaptations) is a concentration on places, objects and experiences connected with them. The prominence of these places in festival events, marketing and discussions reflects the particular sense of value that many of the festival’s contributors and participants attach to such sites. Locating authenticity in places connected with the author’s life, as opposed to her narratives, is arguably more credible when looked at through the eyes of the historian, and yet, as Cohen suggests in relation to tourism, the question ‘is not whether the individual does or does not “really” have an authentic experience [...] but rather what endows his experience with authenticity in his [sic] own view’.¹² At JAF, authenticity does not necessarily correlate with either historical accuracy or reality. Rather, authenticity is conceived in terms of what Charles Guignon describes as the ‘core meaning’ of the word – ‘*faithful to an original*’ (emphasis mine).¹³ As has been alluded to throughout this chapter, the festival’s originals are most often not strictly historical, but rather fictional – located in the tales told and themes explored in Austen’s literature and their adaptations. In this sense, visiting the setting of a scene from *Persuasion* or *Northanger Abbey* (in book or on screen) does evoke authenticity, in that it is faithful to a genuine product – an intangible original, woven into and through a fictitious world of Regency romance.

While dancing at Regency-themed balls in the splendour of the Assembly and Pump Rooms does not reflect the reality of life for the majority of people in early nineteenth-century England, or even the day-to-day reality of Jane Austen’s own life, it does reflect a significant component of the lives of many of her characters. The romanticised, sanitised ideals of fiction may not be accurate depictions of English history, but they are being fashioned into a particular form of English heritage (however partial, by which I mean both biased and incomplete, this may be). Visibly preserved in the tourist sites of Bath and (re)invoked by the activities of the festival, the authenticity of this heritage ‘lies not in its physical fabric, but in the legitimacy given to the social and cultural values we imbue places of heritage with through the performance we construct at them’.¹⁴ Some of these Austen fans locate authenticity within fiction – an authenticity that extends to real places and objects through connection with those fictions. As oxymoronic as it may seem, ‘new originals’, such as Austen film adaptations, are also perceived as authentic. Most significantly, they function as sources for tangible authenticities for their fans: objects, sites and, unlike the novels, characters embodied in the ‘real’ people (actor or re-enactor), who played them.

At this Jane Austen Festival, both authenticity and heritage are frequently affective, emplaced and, in many respects and cases, literary rather than literal – stemming from originals that are, themselves, fictions. This is, in part, an authenticity created by fandom, attached to objects (both tangible and intangible) of worship (in a modern, secular sense of the word). It is evoked, for some, by being there, in the very place, for example, where *Northanger Abbey's* heroine, Catherine, is whisked away from the man of her affections – a literary moment which, like the ethnographic present, is frozen in a perpetual now that may, by reading its present tense, always be revisited. Except, of course, this moment never happened – not outside of its many representations and the imaginations of its innumerable fans, at any rate. As I have argued, in this form of literary heritage, the fact that such moments are imagined fictions does not, necessarily, detract from the authenticity – indeed, it is rather the point.

Bibliography

- Carnegie, Elizabeth, and Scott McCabe. 2008. Reenactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity. *Current Issues on Tourism* 11 (4): 349–368.
- Cohen, Erik. 1988. Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1): 371–386.
- Guignon, Charles. 2008. Authenticity. *Philosophy Compass* 3 (2): 277–290.
- Hannam, Kevin, and Chris Halewood. 2006. European Viking Themed Festivals. *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 1 (1): 17–31.
- Jackson, Anthony, and Jenny Kidd. 2011. Introduction. In *Performing Heritage: Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*, 1–8. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McCabe, Scott. 2004. The Historic Sporting Festival. Paper presented at *JoE Conference on Festivals as Transnational Practice, Innsbruck, Austria, May*.
- Reijnders, Stijn. 2011. *Places of the Imagination. Media, Tourism, Culture*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.
- Smith, Laurajane. 2011. The ‘Doing’ of Heritage: Heritage as Performance. In *Performing Heritage. Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*, ed. Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd, 69–81. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹

Stijn Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination. Media, Tourism, Culture* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), pp. 8 and 14.

²

Some might find the explicit presence of the researcher in the field notes, which are given in italics, surprising or even perturbing. Ethnography’s relatively recent turn to active involvement marks a ‘methodological conversion or paradigm shift, away from

an emphasis on “objective” observation and toward one on embodied participation’ⁱ. Ahmed suggests that ‘if the researcher’s own body is positioned in the research then the interaction can be made more explicit and the “facts” enriched by being set in a more detailed context’ⁱⁱ. Examining the ethnographer’s presence and experience as participant-researcher also enables us to address the influence of our being there, softening the objectifying gaze of the traditional ethnographer by including one’s self in the field of viewⁱⁱⁱ. It is for these reasons—and through this methodological framework—that I examine ‘the bodily experience of the fieldworker as research process and source of knowledge’^{iv}.

ⁱ Sally Ann Ness, ‘Being a Body in a Cultural Way: Understanding the Cultural in the Embodiment of Dance’, in *Cultural Bodies. Ethnography and Theory*, edited by Helen Thomas and Jamilah Ahmed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 123–144, p. 123.

ⁱⁱ Jamilah Ahmed, ‘Reaching the Body: Future Directions’ in *Cultural Bodies. Ethnography and Theory*, edited by Helen Thomas and Jamilah Ahmed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 283–300, p. 296.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tami Spry, ‘A “Performative-I” Copresence: Embodying the Ethnographic Turn in Performance and the Performative Turn in Ethnography’, *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26: 4 (2006), pp. 339–346. ⁱ

^v Judith Okeley, ‘Fieldwork Embodied’, *The Sociological Review* 55: 1 (2007), pp. 65–79, p. 66.

³

— Kevin Hannam and Chris Halewood, ‘European Viking themed festivals’, *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 1:1 (2006), pp. 17–31, p. 29.

⁴

— Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination*, p. 4.

⁵

— Elizabeth Carnegie and Scott McCabe, ‘Reenactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity’, *Current Issues on Tourism* 11:4 (2008), pp. 349–368, p. 352.

⁶

— Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (California: University of California Press, 1998), p. 9.

⁷

— Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, p. 131.

⁸

— Scott McCabe, ‘The Historic Sporting Festival’, paper presented at JoE Conference on Festivals as Transnational Practice, Innsbruck, May 2004.

⁹

— Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, p. 7.

¹⁰

— Laurajane Smith, ‘The “Doing” of Heritage: Heritage as Performance’, in *Performing Heritage. Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*, edited by Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 69–81, p. 80.

¹¹

— Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd, ‘Introduction’, in *Performing Heritage: Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 1–8, p. 1.

¹²

— Erik Cohen, ‘Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism’, *Annals of Tourism Research* 15:1 (1988), pp. 371–386, p. 378.

¹³

Charles Guignon, 'Authenticity', *Philosophy Compass* 3.2 (2008), pp. 277–290, p. 277.

¹⁴

Smith, 'The "Doing" of Heritage', p. 80.