



Unfinished Austen: Interpreting "Catharine", "Lady Susan", "The Watsons" and "Sanditon"

By Joanne Wilkes

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The first detailed study of four texts left incomplete and unpublished by Jane Austen.

Unfinished Austen examines four texts that Jane Austen left incomplete: *Catharine, or the Bower* (1792--3), *Lady Susan* (1795?), *The Watsons* (1803--4?) and *Sanditon* (1817), none of them published till well after her death. Since very little in manuscript form survives from the six famous novels, these four manuscript texts offer insight into the novelist in the process of creation. They also problematize the romance plot prominent in the published novels by presenting this in a nebulous or incipient state that underlines its artificiality.

These texts sometimes show how the romance plot is inflected by the financial condition in which young marriageable women can find themselves. Moreover, the stories (other than *Catharine*) have aroused the interest of many later writers—including writers for theatre and screen—who are eager to complete or to amplify them. They may do this through developing the stories to some kind of dénouement. Perhaps more intriguingly, however, these texts induce some writers to question the very enterprise of concluding an unfinished text.

Contents

Introduction; 1. "Catharine, or the Bower"; 2. Lady Susan; 3. The Watsons; 4. Sanditon; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Joanne Wilkes is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, and has published especially on nineteenth-century fiction, including Jane Austen.

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