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JANE AUSTEN AND JOSEPH BONOMI

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Jane Austen (1775–1817) (Fig. 1) is one of a handful of novelists who has helped to shape the image of the English country house in the popular imagination – her novels are enjoyed and picked over for every detail of late Georgian life. She never included a fictional portrait of an architect, unlike Dickens who created the glorious portrait of the haughty booby of an architect Mr Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. But she did mention one contemporary architect: Joseph Bonomi (1739–1808) (Fig. 2), an Italian who had been brought to England by the Adam brothers.[1] Did she think Bonomi a booby or a brilliant architect of the day? This article considers the motive and significance of this singular appearance of a named architect of the grander type in the work of a novelist who could happily exclude notice of the great events of the day, such as the Napoleonic Wars.[2] I would suggest that Austen did not seek to ridicule the man Bonomi but rather that she uses him an example of a well-known architect whose work she actually knew, and who would be immediately recognisable to her own family circle, always the first audience for her story-telling.

Fig. 1. Engraved portrait of Jane Austen, after a sketch by Cassandra Austen.

Fig. 2. Portrait of Joseph Bonomi, by William Daniell after George Dance. (© *National Portrait Gallery, London*)

Architecture, like landscape, is ever-present in Austen's novels and yet while landscape descriptions are numerous and enthusiastic, the architecture is more elusive in detail. Despite the nature of the stories – studies of the emotional preoccupations of small groups of 'county' families – full descriptions of the key country houses are relatively few. This was noted with interest by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* in 1968. Austen, he wrote, was 'without exception vague, when it comes to describing buildings. . . . But in spite of this contrast between precision in dialogue and imprecision in the description of setting there is enough to be got out of the novels for anyone eager to know what life was lived by the narrow range of classes which Jane Austen knew well and which she wisely confined herself to.'[3] Was this vagueness only true of her fictional works? Nigel Nicolson considered it was also true of her correspondence, writing that 'one never finds in her letters close descriptions of a building and seldom an expression of delight at its appearance.'[4]

But Austen certainly had some interest in architecture. First, a degree of understanding and interest in architecture would have been regarded as one of the essential accomplishments of polite society, and, secondly, country houses provided the social hub of the landed and clerical world in which she moved. These houses were difficult to avoid, and the quality of their appointment was of continued interest. New buildings and improvements to houses are also at least alluded to in her letters. Thirdly, Austen gives sufficient hints of an intelligent interest in architecture. In her correspondence she describes dining with the Holder brothers, Hampshire neighbours who had made money in the West Indies and who rented Ashe Park, near to her parents' home. Of that visit, she wrote: 'to sit in idleness over a good fire in a well-proportioned room is a luxurious sensation.'[5] This is not an observation which would be made by someone without some interest and indeed real pleasure in architecture.

It is true that the language used by Austen to describe the houses in her fiction is sparse and conventional. Even Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice* is described only as 'a large, handsome building, standing well on rising ground', while Lady Catherine de Burgh's Rosings is 'a handsome modern building, well situated on rising ground,' which phrases, as Pevsner pointed out, could, in fact, easily have been descriptions of the same house.[6] Mansfield Park is described only as a 'spacious, modern-built house' and is said to 'deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen's seats.' These 'collections' would have been the popular accounts of country houses published usually with subscriptions from the owners of the houses: William Angus, *Seats of the Nobility and Gentry* published in 1787 and William Watts, *Seats of the Nobility and Gentry*, published a decade later in 1797, which crystallised the descriptive language of architecture used in genteel society at the time.[7]

These were the kind of books which provided the relatively modest range of descriptive phrases for architecture employed by Austen.[8] The descriptions accompanying the plates are universally couched in adjectives such as 'noble', 'beautiful', 'remarkably neat' and 'situated upon rising ground'. Godmersham in Kent (Fig. 3), often thought to be, at least loosely, the model for Mansfield Park, was described in Watts' *Seats* as 'situated in a pleasant valley'. Thomas Knight, the Austens' cousin, who adopted her brother Edward, was a subscriber, but died in 1794.[9] Watts' *Seats* was published just the year before Edward took up residence at Godmersham, so it would be surprising if a copy had not passed under Austen's notice, even perhaps finding a place in her father's library of 500 books. There were certainly a number of architectural books in her brother's library at Godmersham, including Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728), and numerous country histories.[10]

Perhaps Austen's most evocative description of Mansfield Park in the novel itself actually comes by contrast with the deprivations of another house.

Fig. 3. Godmersham Park, Kent from Edward Hasted
The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent (1778–99).

Fanny Price is staying with her own parents and siblings in a cramped house in Portsmouth: 'The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony – and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquility of Mansfield, were brought to her remembrances every hour of the day, by the prevalence of every thing that was opposite to them *here*.'[11]These words echo (if not actually reproduce) the traditional architectural discourse on the qualities of good building which had been used by Alberti and Palladio, and which were in turn derived from the Classical treatise of Vitruvius. In Isaac Ware's mid eighteenth-century translation of Palladio, 'utility, duration and beauty' – observations of decorum – made a building 'beautiful, graceful and durable'.[12] Ware's was among the architectural works listed in the Godmersham Park library catalogue, dated 1818, and it is the space, order and serenity of the architecture of Mansfield Park that is celebrated by Austen rather than the character of the inhabitants.

Film adaptations of Jane Austen have created a largely 'Georgian' vision of the fictional houses of her novels.[13] It is true that the grander country houses Austen knew in Hampshire and in Kent were mostly 'modern', that is to say built during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries.[14] In Hampshire, she attended balls at Lord Dorchester's Kempshott Park, as well as Hurstbourne Park, home of the Earl of Portsmouth, and designed in the 1780s by James Wyatt, and Lord Bolton's Hackwood Park, remodelled in 1801 by Lewis Wyatt. In Kent, 1730s Godmersham Park, with pavilion wings added in 1758, was the family seat of the Knights. [15] Austen's brother, Edward (later Knight) made his home at Godmersham from 1798, and Austen wrote of her impressions of the house and her brother's various improvements to the interiors. Another cousin, Lady Knatchbull, lived at Mersham-le-Hatch, also in Kent, a house designed in the 1760s by Robert Adam – his first entirely new house completed after his return from Rome.[16]

Older houses also played an important role in Austen's orbit and imagination. William Chute lived at The Vyne in Hampshire, one of the centres of their social scene, and it is likely that Jane would also have seen Knole when staying with her great-uncle at Sevenoaks in Kent, as he was the lawyer for the Sackvilles.[17] As well as Godmersham her brother Edward also inherited the venerable Chawton House in Hampshire,[18] and for that reason, after her father's death, she and her mother and sister settled at Chawton Cottage. One of her mother's clergyman cousins, Thomas Leigh, inherited the venerable Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire (Fig. 10).[19]

These houses, ancient and modern, were mentioned as the sites of social encounters in Austen's many letters, and provided the experience for her novels and the material for visualising the houses and families she invented for her readers' entertainment: the Dashwoods' Norland Park and the Middletons' Brandon Park in *Sense and Sensibility* (published in 1811); the Bennets' Longbourne, Lady Catherine de Bourgh's Rosings Park and Mr Darcy's Pemberley, in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); the Bertrams' Mansfield Park (modelled on life at Godmersham) and the Rushworths' Sotherton in *Mansfield Park* (1814); Mr Knight's Donwell Abbey in *Emma* (1815); the Tilneys' Northanger Abbey (1818); and the Elliots' at Kellynch Hall and the Musgroves' Uppercross in *Persuasion* (also 1818). [20] In only one of these is the name of an architect even so much as alluded to.

The scene in which Bonomi is mentioned comes in *Sense and Sensibility*. Bonomi's 'cameo' appearance has usually been taken to be a deliberately negative in intent.[21] The foppish dandy, Robert Ferrars, is pontificating on the merits of the then newly fashionable cottage style residence, presumably in the *cottage orné* or early Gothic Revival style.[22] Ferrars describes himself as

> '.... excessively fond of a cottage: there is always so much comfort, so much of elegance about them. And I protest if I had any money to spare, I should buy a little land and build one myself, within a short distance of London, where I might drive myself down at any time, and collect a few friends around me and be happy. I advise everyone who is going to build, to build a cottage. My friend Lord Courtland came to me the other day on purpose to ask my advice, and laid before me three different plans of Bonomi's. I was to decide on the best of them. "My dear Courtland", said I, immediately throwing them all in the fire, "do not adopt either of them, but by all means build a cottage." And that I fancy, will be the end of it.'

So in this scene, from the pen of Austen, poor Bonomi's plans were consigned to the fire. Was this really inspired by a dislike of Bonomi's work, which she clearly knew? Nigel Nicolson thought she had an unfavourable opinion of Bonomi, because she was 'not sympathetic to change. She was also a xenophobic. Bonomi was born Italian.' [23] Maggie Lane, in *Jane Austen's England* (1986), again thought Bonomi's appearance was 'in a somewhat unfavourable context' and quoted John Summerson's disapproval of Bonomi's work from his *Architecture in Britain: 1530–1830* (1956).[24] Lane added: 'Jane Austen's contempt of foreigners was not likely to be lessened by such flaunting (*sic*) of the rules,' referring to some of Bonomi's architectural quirks.

But surely it is the character of Ferrars that is under scrutiny as he attempts to demonstrate his standing as a man of fashion to whom a young hapless peer turns for advice. Austen clearly drew him as a self-important and pretentious fool, so Bonomi may well not have been the intended target of the satire. His inclusion may have been prompted simply by the fact that he was the best-known architect of the country houses she knew best, and one who must have been discussed within her family circle. He was a builder of large-scale classical mansions and certainly not a designer of 'cottages'. Her letters suggest that, far from criticizing Bonomi's architecture, she admired and even had a family affection for it. She herself suggested that her characters would not too obviously be people she knew. She wrote: 'I am too proud of my gentlemen to admit that they were only Mr A or Col B. Besides it

would be an invasion of the social proprieties.'[25] So the question raises itself: would she have risked any too close identification of a negative opinion of the works of Bonomi in her novels?

In 1797–98 when Austen was revising *Sense and Sensibility*, first composed as 'Elinor and Marianne', Bonomi was at the peak of his career but he died in 1808, long before the book was finally published in 1811.[26] Bonomi was not a cheap architect. His standard rates were recorded in a letter he wrote to F.F. Turville in 1789, after he had been approached to design an addition to Bosworth Hall, Leicestershire: 'My terms are, my Journeys paid; two guineas per day, during my stay in the Country; and the plans, front, sections, parts at full size for the execution, and estimate (which I do in London) are to be paid separately, the amount of them, being a plain and small mansion, will be about thirty or forty pounds.'[27] So we can estimate that Ferrars's hasty gesture probably cost his friend Courtland more than £50, a fair sum in the early 1800s. Austen knew some clients of Bonomi's and was aware of just how expensive he was. And though she certainly knew houses by Adam and Wyatt, she knew more by Bonomi.[28]

The clients who knew the Austens may also possibly have related the dramatic scene at the Royal Academy in 1790, one of Bonomi's greatest disappointments. Sir Joshua Reynolds, eager to have Bonomi elected as an RA, so that he could be appointed Professor of Perspective, had allowed Bonomi to submit some of his perspectives on the day of the election; this action, and Reynolds' high-handedness, irritated certain Academicians as an irregular practice, and they threw the drawings out of the room. Fuseli was elected instead.[29] Is this in fact this scene being echoed in *Sense and Sensibility*? Bonomi was subject to a court case, which may also have caught the attention of the Austen family for reasons which will be mentioned below.[30]

Bonomi was born in Rome in 1739, and had studied under Mario Asprucci, the architect to the Prince Borghese; another early mentor was the Marchese Teodoli. A talented draughtsman, Bonomi came to the notice of James Adam, perhaps through Charles-Louis Clerisseau.[31] He was then employed by James Adam in Rome and brought by him to London in 1767. Bonomi worked for the Adam brothers for the next fourteen years, after which he set up on his own account.[32] His most memorable works were at Packington Hall (Warwickshire) for Lord Aylesford, Longford Hall in Shropshire and Mrs Montagu's 'Great Room' in Portman House in London – the last was widely admired at the time of completion but did not result in the London commissions which Bonomi had hoped for.[33]

Bonomi nevertheless left behind a wonderful corpus of drawing, full of the colour, ornament, and the mood and shadow associated with Piranesi and Clerisseau.[34] He exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy but never became an RA. It is possible that his Catholicism and foreignness weighed against him, and despite having eager enough supporters, including Wyatt and Cosway, Joseph Farington and others opposed his election.[35] Bonomi was, however, elected to the Architects' Club – founded in 1791, by Wyatt, Dance, and Cockerell – as were Soane, Brettingham and others.[36]

Austen did not leave detailed descriptions of any of Bonomi's grand Neo-Roman mansion, any more than she did of any of the 'modern' houses in her novels. But she knew at least three of them personally – one in Hampshire (Laverstoke Park, 1796–9), and two in Kent (Eastwell Park, 1793–1800, and the Sandling, 1795–7, both demolished in the twentieth century) – and she may have known a fourth in Warwickshire (Barrells Hall, 1792–94).

Laverstoke Park (Fig. 4) was built for Henry Portal (1752–1801), whose wealth came from the paper mills founded by his Huguenot grandfather which supplied the paper for banknotes.[37] Laverstoke lay only four miles from Steventon, the village of which Austin's father was Rector. In 1792, Austen's brother James was married to Anne, the

Fig. 4. Laverstoke Park, the south front. (*Private collection*)

daughter of General Mathew, former Governor of Grenada, who was then the tenant of the old manor house at Laverstoke.[38] So she would have had a close interest in the new house here. Bonomi's design was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1799 (Fig. 5), but the house as executed is different in appearance from the designs, and was perhaps even remodelled later. A seven bay, two-storey, yellow brick house, it has three arched windows on the ground floor in the centre of the park elevation, But instead of the first and second floor loggia shown on the design there is a tetrastyle Ionic portico and no attic floor as built and no strip pilasters.[39] Inside there is a double staircase under an oval skylight.

Jane Austen once wrote of Kent: 'It is the only place for happiness. Everybody is rich there.'[40] She certainly visited Eastwell Park,[41] one of Bonomi's most important country houses, designed for George Finch-Hatton in 1793.[42] He was a relation of both the Earl of Winchilsea for whom Bonomi worked on new interiors at Burley on the Hill in 1782–83, and of the Earl of Aylesford, for whom Bonomi created the Pompeian Gallery at Packington and a fine Neo-classical church there, in 1780–92.[43] Designs for Eastwell exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1794 and 1799, and published in George Richardson's *New Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1802 (Figs. 6 & 7), show a seven-bay mansion with thin, strip pilasters and a low attic. [44] The entrance front had a two-storey Ionic pentastyle portico which served as a porte-cochère capable of allowing two carriages to pass underneath side by side. Richardson noted that the 'portico was added after the building was started', and that the alignment of the columns 'would have occasioned a very wide intercolumniation, contrary to rule and impossible to be executed in stone', so an extra column was added in the centre. Two wings with pavilions formed a semi-circular court, one containing domestic offices and warm and cold baths, the other a large greenhouse. The enormous principal reception room is described on the plan as a huge 'Drawing Room or Library'.[45] Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra in August 1805: 'Our visit to Eastwell was very agreeable; I found Ly. Gordon's

Fig. 5. Laverstoke Park, Hampshire: perspective view by Bonomi 1799.
(*RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collections*)

manners as pleasing as they had been described, and saw nothing to dislike in Sir Janison, excepting once or twice a sort of sneer at Mrs Anne Finch. . . [The Misses Finch] were very civil to me, as they always are; fortune was also very civil to me in placing Mr E. Hatton by me at dinner.'[46]

Jane Austen also knew something of Sandling House (or The Sandling) near Hythe in Kent, built to Bonomi's designs for William Deedes and his wife Sophia, an aunt of her sister-in-law. It was another austere neo-Classical mansion, with the house and the household offices connected by a grand porte-cochère (Fig. 8). In 1800 she wrote to Cassandra: 'In talking of Mr Deedes' new house, Mrs Bramston told us one circumstance . . . one of the sitting-rooms at Sandling, an oval room with a Bow at one end, has the very remarkable and singular feature of a fireplace with a window, the centre window of the Bow, exactly over the mantelpiece.'[47] Later, in October 1808, she recorded her brother's warm opinion of the house: 'James admires the place very much'[48]

Another intriguing possible link between Bonomi and the Austens is Barrells Hall in Warwickshire (Fig. 9), designed for Robert Knight. [49] A handsome two-storey house, it had a grand two-storey portico reminiscent of Palladio's Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese in the Veneto, the lower storey serving as a porte-cochère. Knight was the illegitimate son of the first Earl of Catherlough (formerly from 1745, Viscount Luxborough), son of the chief cashier of the South Sea Company. These Knights were not directly related to the Hampshire Knights, but Lord Catherlough – whose Irish Earldom was granted in 1765 – had married in 1756, as his second wife, Lady Le Quesne, the widow of a wealthy City merchant.[50] According to James Payne's nineteenth-century *Armorial of Jersey*, Sir John Le Quesne was an Alderman of London, and 'in the Registers of S. Peter le Poor, is noted his marriage, by the Bishop of Norwich, with Miss Mary Knight, of Hampshire, a lady with a dowry of twenty thousand pounds.'[51]

It has not proved possible to identify this lady's relationship with the Knights of Chawton and

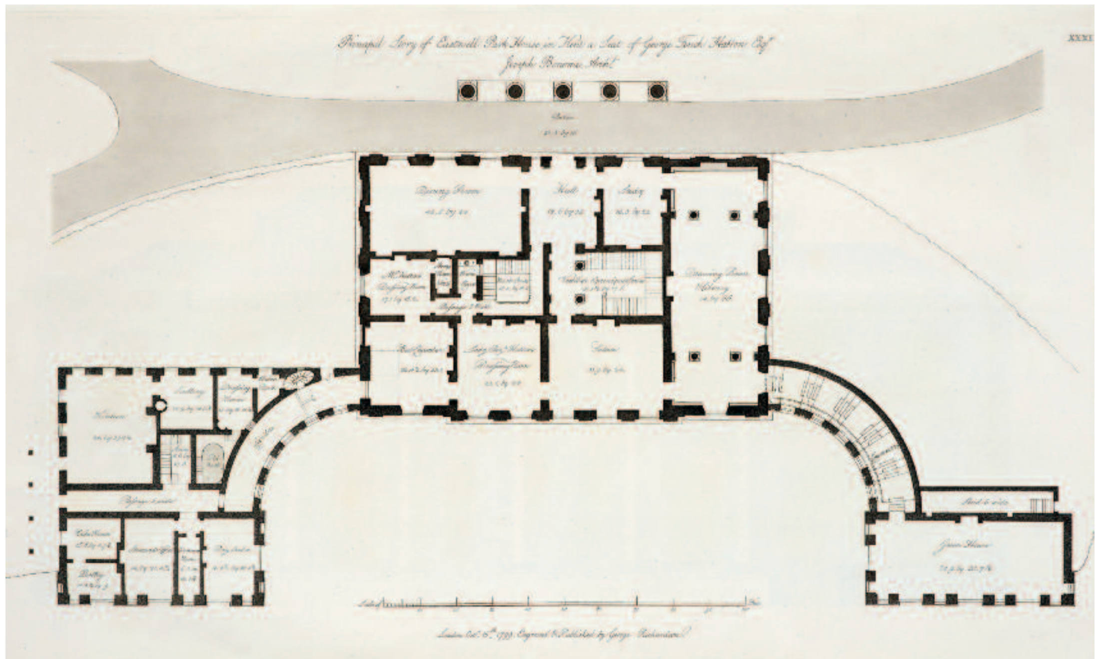

Fig. 6. Eastwell Park, Kent: plan as published in George Richardson, *New Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1802, I, Plate XXXIX. (Atlas 3.7.13/ *Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)

Fig. 7. Eastwell Park, Kent: perspective view by Bonomi 1794. (*RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collections*)

Fig. 8. The Sandling, Kent, in 1819. (*Private collection*)

Steventon, as the estates passed between cousins and there were several changes of name.[52] This second union does not seem to have been a happier marriage than that of the first Lady Luxborough, Henrietta, half sister to Viscount St John. Lord Catherlough had several children by a mistress, including Robert who inherited the estate at Barrells, and was sufficiently secure in his social position to serve later as a High Sherriff to the county.[53] This Robert was Bonomi's client and his commission was to extend substantially and modernise the house Knight had inherited from Lord Catherlough, leaving the older house as the service wing. The new house was built in 1792–93 but there was a serious falling out, over payment of fees, first with the carpenter, William Knight, and then by association with Bonomi, as architect. The carpenter who was managing the building project had threatened to arrest Mr Knight for non-payment and been ejected from Knight's house. The case went to arbitration.[54]

On December 1797 Farington's diary mentions meeting James Wyatt who was on his way to give an opinion in Bonomi's court case with a Mr Knight, in which he noted that Bonomi was successful.[55] John Soane, James Wyatt and another architect were engaged as arbitrators, and Wyatt's observations on fee structure provide a valuable insight into working practices in the emerging architectural profession.[56] The possible family connection may be slight, and it is difficult to imagine where Austen's sympathy would have fallen in that tangled web. However, the wealth, title and intrigue of the Knights of Warwickshire would surely have been of passing interest to the Austens, related as they were to one of the leading Warwickshire families, the Leighs. The court case between a carpenter Mr Knight and another Mr Knight, a 'gentleman of fortune' would surely have caught the attention of, and amused, the Austens' circle. There is however, no documentary evidence to prove any link.[57]

Fig. 9. Barrells Hall, Warwickshire: perspective view by Bonomi 1796.
(*RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collections*)

Given Austen's own obvious admiration for older, historic architecture – 'noble' or 'venerable' in the words of the collections of gentlemen's seats – it could be argued that she preferred old to 'modern' houses. It would be hard for a creation of Bonomi's to compete with a picture like that which Austen creates for Mr Knightley's country house in *Emma*: 'rambling and irregular, with many comfortable and one or two handsome rooms. It was just as it ought to be, and it looked like what it was – and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding.' The setting often seems almost more significant than the house: 'It was a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright without being oppressive.'[58] Mavis Batey has suggested that the portrait of Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice* was inspired by Ilam Hall in Staffordshire, a Gothic Revival house,[59] but the quality that really commanded Elizabeth Bennet's attention was not so much the architecture as the setting: 'a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; – and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste.'[60]

The only really grand historic mansion that Austen knew through direct family connections was Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, an ancient house built on a monastic site in the late sixteenth century, with a grand façade of 1714–26 by Francis Smith of Warwick (Fig. 10).[61] In 1806, Stoneleigh was inherited by a cousin of her mother's, the Rev Thomas Leigh, rector of Adlestrop in Gloucestershire.[62] In a scene worthy of one of Austen's own novels, Leigh invited

his cousins, including Jane and her mother, to stay with him after he moved in to the house even before the resolution of a contested will, partly no doubt to assert his ownership.[63] It must have been an enervating house party. A letter survives by Austen's mother, describing her visit, with a presumably part tongue-in-cheek observation on that the 'state bedchamber with a dark crimson Velvet bed; an alarming apartment just fit for a heroine'.[64] This echoes the girlish excitement of Catherine Morland's visit to Northanger Abbey in the novel of that name, fully in the spirit of a parody of a Gothic novel. That novel contains one of the longest fictional descriptions of a country house in Austen's writings, as Miss Morland struggles to find the ancient religious house under layers of fine modern work: 'very noble – very grand – very charming', when all she wanted to see was something of earlier date.[65]

Stoneleigh Abbey has been suggested as the model for the lengthy description of Sotherton in *Mansfield Park*, a novel composed in 1811–13 and published in 1814.[66] Sotherton is Elizabethan, 'a large, regular brick building, heavy but respectable looking – and has many good rooms'; Mrs Norris calls Sotherton the 'noblest old place in the world.[67] A tour of young people is guided round by the chatelaine herself, the widowed mother of the young squire, Mr Rushworth. Some rooms are described as fitted up in the late seventeenth century and others in the early Georgian period. Furniture and pictures all suggest one family's long occupation: 'The whole party [was] . . . shewn through a number of rooms, all lofty, and many large, and amply furnished in the taste of fifty years back, with shining floors, solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding and carving, each handsome in its way. Of pictures there were an abundance, and some few good, but the larger part were family portraits, no longer anything to any body but Mrs Rushworth, who had been at great pains to learn all that the

Fig. 10. Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire, the west range. (*Country Life Picture Library*)

housekeeper could teach, and was now almost equally qualified to shew the house.'[68]

Fanny Price is clearly delighted, as Austen must have been at Stoneleigh Abbey, with the Royalist connections – Charles I stayed at Stoneleigh and ennobled Austen's Leigh ancestor who received him there. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price is the only member of the tour party who shows any real interest in 'all that Mrs Rushworth could relate of the family in former times, its rise and grandeur, regal visits and loyal efforts, delighted to connect any thing with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past.'[69] Young Mr Rushworth, however,despairs of his own house looking like a 'dismal old prison'. The solution suggested by his friends is not architectural but one of landscape improvement. Elegant Miss Crawford suggests Humphry Repton, the leading landscaper of the day, would be his 'best friend upon such an occasion.' Mr Rushton replies he has already thought of it, and mentions his daily rates of 'five guineas a day.' [70] Repton is mentioned eight times in the novel.

Now Repton's work was also well known to Jane Austen – even better than that of Bonomi, since he was employed by her cousin Thomas Leigh at Adlestrop in Gloucestershire in 1799.[71] Reference to the completed work is made in *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Design*, 1803, where he recorded that the new landscaping had been made 'in full view of both mansion and parsonage'.[72] The rectory where Thomas lived was merged into a single parkland around the mansion, Adlestrop Park, designed by Sanderson Miller and home of his young nephew James Leigh.[73] Her cousin's experiences seem likely to have been drawn upon to create the scene in *Mansfield Park* where Henry Crawford advises Edmund Bertram to create a new garden and divert the stream in order to turn his rectory into a 'residence of a man of education, taste, modern manners, and good connections'.[74]

The established link between Austen's experience and her imagination is relevant to the reference to Bonomi in *Sense and Sensibility*. Repton is the only other living designer mentioned in Austen's novel – and just as Ferrars is depicted as an ass, Rushworth, who wants to improve his family home, is empty-headed, and Henry Crawford's enthusiastic mental redesigning of Edmund Bertram's property in the manner of Repton is impertinent. Austen knew Bonomi's work personally, and Repton had worked for her family at Stoneleigh. Repton's appearance in the novel as a named designer seems only to have been prompted as a shorthand for the landscaper 'man of the moment': a name that, in the simple act of its inclusion, plunged the contemporary reader fully into the world of landscape improvement. Perhaps it was, in essence, a private joke with her family, for Repton was active in the extravagant but admired improvements by their Leigh cousins at Adlestrop and Stoneleigh – her family were always the first audience for her stories. The presence of Bonomi in *Sense and Sensibility* surely springs from a similar incentive. He was a known quantity and a costly, but well-proven, specialist in grand Neo-Roman houses with colonnaded libraries and sweeping top-lit staircases, curved wings and service courtyards. The scene in *Sense and Sensibility* surely says more about the folly of the man who burnt Lord Courtland's plans than the esteem in which Austen held the architect. After all, when Ferrars pontificates on the social amenities of the cottage for elaborate parties, Elinor, surely representing the voice of Austen, 'agreed to it all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition'.

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NOTES

1 Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840* (New Haven and London and, 2008), pp. 141–143; Peter Meadows, *Joseph Bonomi: Architect 1739–1808* (RIBA exhibition catalogue, London 1988); Peter Meadows, 'Bonomi, Joseph' (1739–1808), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004–12. M.E.Wye, *Architectural Influences on Jane Austen's Narrative* (Lewiston, NY] 2009), considers the influence of architecture on Jane Austen's narrative, especially of Bath, but does not explore the presence of Bonomi; Karne Valihora, *Austen's Oughts* (Newark, 2010), includes a chapter on ''The Orchestration of Spectacle in Sense and Sensibility'. See also Philippa Tristram, 'Jane Austin's aversion to Villas', in Dana Arnold (ed,) *The Georgian Villa* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 25–31. Citations to Austen's novels throughout are to *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*.

2 Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower,' in *The Moment and Other Essays* (San Diego and New York, 1975), pp. 130–31.

3 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'The Architectural Setting of Jane Austen's Novels', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 31 (1968), pp. 404–422; Janice Kirkland, 'Austen and Bonomi', *Notes and Queries*, NS 34 (March 1987), pp. 24–5. For wider context in Austen's life, Deirdre Le Faye, *The World of Jane Austen* (London 2003).

4 Nigel Nicolson, *The World of Jane Austen* (London, 1991), p. 11.

5 Deirde Le Faye, (ed) *Jane Austen's Letters* (4th ed, Oxford 2011), p. 58 (afterwards, *Letters*).

6 Pevsner, *loc. cit.*, p. 406.

7 William Angus, *Seats of the Nobility and Gentry* (London, 1787); William Watts, *Seats of the Nobility and Gentry* (London, 1797).

8 Pevsner, *loc. cit.*, 1968, p. 406.

9 Watts, *op. cit.*, 1797, opposite plate xxiv. For life at Godmersham, see Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London 2000), pp. 134–9.

10 Tomalin, *op. cit.,* pp. 30, 172. The catalogue for Godmersham Park, 1818, mentions a later collection of seats edited by Neale. This catalogue is in the Chawton House Library; thanks to Sarah Parry for directly me to this and other material relating to the library at Godmersham Park.

11 *Mansfield Park*, III, Ch 8, p. 493.

12 Isaac Ware, *Four Books of Architecture* (London, 1738–1755), I, pp. 37–8.

13 For screen adaptations, see Sue Parril, *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptation* (Jefferson, NC, and London, 2002).

14 Pevsner, *loc. cit.*, p. 406.

15 Tomalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 134–5.

16 Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 56–7.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.

19 Tomalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–1.

20 Pevsner, *loc. cit.*, 406; Le Faye, *World of Jane Austen*, pp. 313–5.

21 Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

22 *Sense and Sensibility*, II, Ch.14, p. 285.

23 Nicolson, *op. cit*, pp. 48–9.

24 Maggie Lane, *Jane Austen's England* (London, 1986), p. 66.

25 Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

26 Le Faye, *World of Jane Austen*, p. 313.

27 Meadows, *Bonomi.*, p. 12.

28 Nicolson, *op. cit.,* pp. 56–57.

29 Peter Meadows, 'Drawn to Entice', *Country Life*, 28 April 1988, pp. 128–131.

30 Meadows, *Bonomi*, p. 10; Sir John Soane's Museum, private correspondence, VIII.J, includes the examined accounts for Eastwell and depositions and notes of the arbitration.

31 Meadows, *Bonomi*, pp. 4–5.

32 *Ibid*, p. 4.

33 Meadows, 'Drawn to Entice', p. 132.

34 *Ibid*, pp. 130–1.

35 Meadows, *Bonomi*, pp. 8–11.

36 John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt, Architect to George III* (London, 2012), pp. 68–9.

37 Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–8.

38 Tomalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–80.

39 RIBA Drawings Collection, SA5/2(1–4). The house was remodelled and extended in the mid nineteenth century.

40 *Letters*, p. 61.

41 *Letters*, p. 111.

42 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 51; Meadows, 'Drawn to Entice', pp. 128–9.

43 RIBA Drawings Collection, SA1/5(1–2).

44 G.Richardson, *New Vitruvius Britannicus* (London 1802), Plates XXXIX– XLIII.

45 *Ibid*, p. 21.

46 Meadows, *Bonomi*, p. 28; RIBA Drawings Collection, SA6 (1–3).

47 *Letter*s, pp. 61, 52–53.

48 *Letters*, p. 144.

49 Geoffrey Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (Chichester, 1994), pp. 30–32.
50 Vicary Gibbs (ed), *The Complete Peerage*, III (London 1913), p. 110.
51 Bertrand Payne, *Armorial of Jersey* (London 1859), p. 250.
52 The name changes in the Knight family were so frequent that one MP suggested an Act be passed to allow them to choose whatever name they liked without the need for a private Act of Parliament.
53 Tyack, *op. cit.,* p. 30; RIBA Drawings Collection, SA1/1(1–2).
54 Sir John Soane's Museum, papers relating to the arbitration between Knight and Bonomi, VIIIJ; with thanks to Sue Palmer, archivist for arranging access.
55 K. Garlick, A. Mackintyre, K. Cave, E. Newby (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, III (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 934–5.
56 Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
57 There is no material in Deirde Le Faye, *An Austen Family Record* (Cambridge, 2003). Nor has Sarah Parry, archivist of Chawton House Library, been able to identify any link, and wrote (E-mail to author, August 6, 2012): 'this is a period of change at the Chawton Estate following the death of Elizabeth Knight, who changed her name from Martin to Knight in order to inherit. It was stipulated in the will of Sir Richard Knight, who died in 1679 and the last of the direct male line, that subsequent holders of the estate must change their name to Knight in order to inherit. Elizbeth Knight died childless in 1737 and the estate passed to a cousin, Thomas Knight. Thomas was born a Brodnax but changed his name to May to inherit the Godmersham estate and then changed it again to Knight to inherit the Chawton estate. Elizabeth was the only daughter of Michael Martin of Eynsham, Oxfordshire.'
58 *Emma,* III, ch 6, p. 389.
59 Mavis Batey, *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (London, 1996), pp. 72–7.
60 *Pride and Prejudice,* III, Ch 1, p. 271.
61 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 940.
62 Batey, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–9. See also Gaye King, 'The Jane Austen Connection', in Robert Bearman (ed.), *Stoneleigh Abbey: the House, its Owners, its Lands* (Stoneleigh Abbey and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, 2003), pp. 163–177
63 Lane, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–130.
64 Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
65 *Northanger Abbey*, II, Ch 5, pp. 161–172, 187–194.
66 Batey, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–86; La Faye, *World of Jane Austen*, p. 314.
67 *Mansfield Park,* I, Ch 9, pp. 98–99.
68 *Ibid.*, I, Ch 9, p. 99.
69 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
70 *Ibid.,* I., Ch 6, p. 62.
71 Batey, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–90.
72 *Ibid.*, pp. 81–84.
73 *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.
74 *Mansfield Park*, II, ch 7, p. 28.