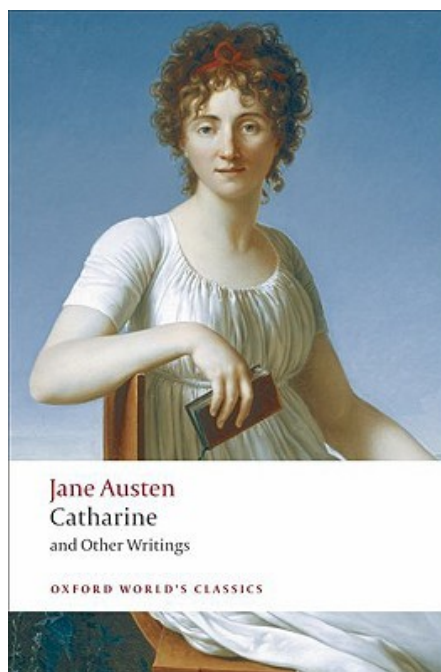




Catharine and Other Writings

Jane Austen , Margaret Anne Doody (Contributor) , Douglas Murray (Editor)

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This new collection of Austen's brilliant short fiction is the first annotated edition of her short writings. The texts have been compared with the manuscripts to give a number of new readings. In addition to prose fiction and prayers, this collection contains many of her poems written to amuse and console her friends, and are unavailable in any other single volume.

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Catharine and Other Writings Details

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From Reader Review Catharine and Other Writings for online ebook

Laurel says

Splendid nonsense! A youthful writer in the making

"Beware of swoons, Dear Laura ... A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; it is an exercise to the Body and if not too violent, is, I dare say, conducive to Health in its consequences -- Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint -" Letter 14, Laura to Marianne, *Love and Freindship*

Jane Austen grew up in the perfect fertile environment for a writer. Her family was highly educated and passionate readers, including novels which were considered by some in the late 18th-century as unworthy. Educated predominately at home, her father had an extensive library of classics and contemporary editions at her disposal. In her early teens, she began writing comical and imaginative stories for her family and close friends as entertainments and transcribing them into three volumes that would later be known as her *Juvenilia*. The plots and characters of these short stories are filled with unguarded satire, comical burlesque and "splendid nonsense"; -- shrewd parodies of contemporary novels, historical figures and even her own family engaged in unprincipled deeds: lying, cheating and occasionally murder. Described by her father as *"Effusions of Fancy by a very Young Lady Consisting of Tales in a Style entirely new"* they represent the creative beginnings of a clever and perceptive mind whose skill at keen observation of social maneuverings and the importance of wealth, so valued in her mature works, are apparent from the early beginnings.

If you have consumed all of Austen's major and minor novels, this reissue by Oxford University Press of their 1998 edition is an enticing treasure. In *Catharine and Other Writings*, we are introduced not only to a writer in the making, but a collection of prayers, poems and unfinished fragments of novels written in maturity and rarely reprinted. As with the other Oxford editions of Jane Austen's works reissued in the past year, this edition contains excellent supplemental material: a short biography of Austen, notes on the text, a select bibliography, a chronology of Austen's life, textural notes, insightful explanatory notes and a superb introduction by prominent Austen scholar Margaret Anne Doody that details the inspiration from her family and her environment that influenced and formed Austen's creative mind.

"Jane Austen was not a child as a writer when she wrote these early pieces. She possessed a sophistication rarely matched in viewing and using her own medium. She not only understood the Novel, she took the Novel apart, as one might take apart a clock, to see how it works - and put it back together, but it was no longer the same clock. Her genius at an early age is as awe-inspiring as Mozart's." pp xxxv

What I found so engaging in this collection was the lightness and comical devil-may-care freeness in Austen's youthful approach. It was like a rush of endorphin to a dour mood, taking you outside of your troubles and elevating you into a magical world of a youthful imaginings and farcical fancy. I have several favorites that I will re-read when I need a laugh, especially *Love and Freindship*, *The Beautiful Cassandra* and *The History of England*. Not all of the works are comical. *When Winchester races* is a verse written when Austen was mortally ill and dictated from her deathbed to her sister Cassandra three days before her death. It is her final work. A moralistic piece, it resurrects the ghost of St. Swinthin who curses the race goers for their sins of pleasure.

"When once we were buried you think we are gone

But behold me immortal!"

An interesting choice of subject for the last days of her life, and ironic in relation to what acclaim she has garnered since she has gone. Like St. Swinthin, Jane Austen is indeed immortal!

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

bookinglibrarian says

This is the first time I've read Austen's *Juvenilia* and the "joyous scorn" the suffuses these wickedly witty works was a revelation, though not unsurprising. What is amazing is the "exhuberance" of these various pieces penned by the adolescent Austen. Both qualities (the quotes are from G.K. Chesterton) are toned down and more subtly crafted in her later works.

Amanda says

This is very unlike all of Jane Austen's other, well-known works from later in her life. They are about the same subject matter, but with much more humor and scandal and fun. The heroes and heroines are often silly or severely flawed, the villains are often completely without merit, and many of the stories are simply a big joke. Very very fun and interesting read.

Alayna says

This collection of Austen's early writings was essentially like reading a gifted teenager's journal. Most of the plots and characters are intentionally absurd. I found the exhaustive cross-references and end notes almost as interesting as the stories, because it seemed a bit odd for academics to pick apart the silly, irreverent elements of stories written for family members and friends. Some of the abbreviated stories didn't hold my attention. I loved *Lesley Castle* the most. Overall, this was a fun read and a unique glimpse into the young mind of one of my favorite authors.

Kristen says

If you're a Jane Austen super fan, this is required reading. If you're not, it's most definitely skip-able. I'm a huge Jane Austen fan, and decided to reread all of her books, watch the movie versions, and definitively rank them. I'd never read this before, so while it wasn't a re-read, it seemed like an important thing to read as part of this project. And, from the perspective of seeing how Jane Austen's writing grew and changed, it was fascinating. But it's definitely *juvenilia*--Austen is playing, most of the stories are unfinished, and they are silly, silly, silly. Which is fun--it's great to think of Austen as a tween/teen writing these stories and getting lost in the ridiculous and nonsensical. But it also means most of them aren't super satisfying in a narrative sense.

The title story, "Catharine," written last, is the most similar to Jane Austen's later works. I found myself wishing it had been finished--there were so many interesting ideas there. I also really loved the fainting and melodrama of "Love and Friendship." Most of the other stories are very, very short, and can be laugh out

loud funny, but blend together a bit.

Essentially, this reads like what it is--a young writer playing around with ideas and themes that she will refine and build on for the rest of her writing career. The spark of Jane Austen is there, and there's a sense of joy that is infectious, but if you're not a fan, or haven't read any Jane Austen before, there are better books to start with.

(I will say that the endnotes in this edition are fascinating. I learned so much about Jane Austen's era and the literature of her time through those notes--if you read, I highly recommend taking the time to read these detailed notes.)

Nadja says

It was interesting to discover Jane Austen's mostly juvenile works - the Verses and prayers are dated on a later date. A few I've read before but I didn't have any memory of these works. I didn't LOVE LOVE any of the stories but I had some favourites and then many which were only good or slightly dull. Therefore I can only give 3 stars overall.

My favourites were:

"Frederic and Elfrida" - I honestly can't believe what I've just read. What a short „novel“ from Jane Austen. It's so over the top but so crazy or funny! Lady says yes to marriage to two men and kills herself the next day cause of bad conscience? Let them get married and get this battle of wine or I will kill you? Hilarious! 3.5 stars.

"Henry and Eliza"- Mothers forget they had children, children eat their mothers fingers, lover stealing („we are married and gone”), revenge and much more in only six pages. wow. 4 stars.

"The Visit"- A comedy in 2 acts by JA. I loved reading a play by Jane Austen and wished there would exist a longer piece by her. As usual everyone needs to be married by end. 4.5 stars.

"The Three Sisters" - Supposedly I've read this one many years ago but nothing seemed familiar. Anyhow another unfinished Novel with much potential! Mary is so mean („Oh! when there is so much love on one side there is no occasion for it on the other“, poor Mr. Watts, so old with his 32 years. 3.5 stars.

I really liked "Letter the third. From A young Lady in distress 'd Circumstances to her friend." & "A Letter from a Young Lady, whose feelings being too Strong for her Judgement led her into the commission of Errors which her Heart disapproved". 4 stars.

Jane Austen July 2018: Read something by Jane Austen that is not one of her main six novels.

Julie Bozza says

The Juvenilia is a great deal of fun, with outrageously self-centred heroines capable of anything from blithely insulting their best friends in the name of candour, to contracting illicit liaisons, to raising armies, and committing the occasional murder. Austen seems to take great delight in playing with and skewering the novelistic conventions of the day. But it is all done with a light, surprisingly confident touch (for such a

young person), and never feels malicious.

The lighter poems were nicely written, while I felt the more serious ones were less so. And I was disappointed in the three prayers. I expected far more eloquence in the latter.

All up, an interesting read, and there's certainly some little treasures in here for Austen fans.

Jossefin says

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Joey Woolfardis says

[First read: 22nd January, 2011 for University: 3 stars.]

[Re-read: 31st October, 2015. Upgraded to 4-stars.]

A collection of short stories, plays, prayers and poetry by Jane Austen from when she was very young. So very different to anything she had written and had published later on in her life, the juvenalia is full of circumstances that are not found in her novels, including murder and characters being much more outspoken. This is the Regulated Hatred of Austen, but more profound and outspoken, perhaps not as regulated as her novels. A really good collection which shows a diversity in Austen that is not usually seen in her novels, and shows that her "regulated hatred" was conceivable. Funnier, more outlandish, better than her novels if only because they are obviously flights of fancy.

'Fredric and Elfrida': a delightful little tale of two young people destined to marry each other from birth, with more marriage proposals than you can shake a stick at AND a lovely death message thrown in.

'Jack and Alice': so humorous and a little naughty, again with wonderful language despite the spelling mistakes. Death and drunkenness abound.

'Edgar and Emma': particularly bad, since Emma is a whinging little arsehole. Still with humour, though, through the sheer amount of children and the tongue-in-cheek mention of them.

'Henry and Eliza': Wonderfully silly. Better in terms of how the women conduct themselves, and Eliza is a very good example of an early heroine.

'The Adventures of Mr Harley': Very short and very sweet and surprisingly funny in a funny-peculiar kind of way.

'Sir William Mountague': An exceptional take on the "love" that rich people feel for anyone that breathes.

'Memoirs of Mr Clifford': Very short and unfinished, the amusement she must have gained from listing off all the items seems unending. The fact that he was very rich but only ate one egg is not lost upon me, nor indeed was it on Jane.

'The Beautifull Cassandra': The ideas that rich girls have with a pretty bonnet on their heads is quite something.

'Amelia Webster': Letters to and fro, rather upended. "I saw you thro' a telescope, and was so struck by your Charms that from that time to this I have not tasted human food." Sums it up nicely, I feel.

'The Visit': An attempt at a play. Most amusing in one place, less interesting in all others.

'The Mystery': Another short and unfinished comedic play, with an obvious holding back of any useful information at all, though I found myself wondering what on earth it could be. We'll never know. One for us to finish ourselves, I wouldn't wonder.

'The Three Sisters': Written in letter form, this was actually very interesting and I'm so sad she didn't complete it as I'd love to find out how Mary either gets out of her marriage, or how she goes about making it better.

'Detached pieces': Slight pieces of non-fiction and poetry. Rather boring though a nice insight to her life and thoughts.

'Love and Freindship': Will I ever get over her poor spelling? It is so endearing. Unexpected, a small amount of boring, but a lot of twists and turns. These characters are all so self-obsessed and demanding but in the most polite ways.

'Lesley Castle': She is fond of stories written as letters, though I must confess I find it difficult to keep up or understand truly what is happening. This one also had very little plot, except amusing remarks of women on other women.

'The History of England': A well-read Austen shares her views on the English Monarchy, with an odd distaste for Queen Elizabeth I. Well-written, if a little too opinionated.

'A Collection of Letters': Much the same, nothing particular here.

'Scraps': These scraps are more humorous then the others and contain my favourite thing Austen had ever written, namely 'A Letter from a Young Lady, whose feelings being too Strong for her Judgement led her into the commission of Errors which her Heart disproved.'

'Evelyn': These stories are insane. I truly wish there were more of this one. Evelyn sounds like the most ghostly, haunted, weird place in England. Definitely one for the paranormal. Accidental ghost story, though.

'Catharine': The closest to her novels as these stories get. Very lacking in paragraphs which made it drag slightly, but her amazing social commentary and humour is present in large quantities.

'Plan of a Novel, according to hints from various quarters': Take note if you wish to write a novel.

'Verses' and 'Prayers': Both of these are not great and I'll admit I only skimmed the prayers. Austen is not brilliant at poetry, though they still hold her humour. Fairly what I'd imagine anyone who wants to write to be able to write.

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Maria Tortuga says

Just thinking about this book makes me smile with glee. Jane Austen was just a girl when she wrote most of these stories for her friends and family. While it showcases her incredible budding talent as a writer and someone who truly understands people, the real treasure here is that these stories are comedic. The writing here is funny and fantastic. Austen fans will definitely enjoy it.

Alex says

Aubrey says: "namely 'Love and Friendship', 'The Female Philosopher', and 'The History of England' (might be slightly wrong on the title of that one). From those, I gathered 15 year old Austen was a caustic rebel who likes dick jokes. "

sign me the hell up

Poe Bird says

All I can say is WOW. I didn't know Jane had it in her!

She's got a scorching sense of humor like nothing I've ever read from her before. I disagree with the editors on half of everything they say though; my biggest argument is their insistence that Jane subdued her novels from this style of writing to please the audiences of the 19th century. I think if anything Jane just plain grew up, and her writing was bound to mature along with her. She also intended her work to be published and therefor took it more seriously, unlike these notebooks which give a wonderful insight into her working heart and mind.

It's incredibly touching to read the dedications, and feel the real warmth she had for her family, especially her sister Cassandra. There is so much effort put into these notebooks that I feel completely inadequate to describe them; a must read for anyone who loves Jane.

Trelesa says

A collection of most/all of the lesser known works of Jane Austen. Some seem to be no more than an synopsis or start for a story idea (like "Scraps and "Detached Pieces"). I've only commented on the stories that stood out to me, which I had not read & reviewed before - not each selection. The 4 star rating reflects mostly "Three Sisters", "Catharine" & "Prayers".

Three Sisters - Loved the storyline. I really wanted to find out where their lives would lead - if only it was finished.

Catharine - Interesting characters. Was Edward a real scoundrel? Great start!

Prayers - Very eloquent; beautifully phrased. "...to address thee with our hearts, as with our lips.", "...nor be Christians only in name."

Evelyn, Plan of a Novel and Fredric & Elfrida - Meh.

Miss Clark says

A very long introduction, but the material covering all three of Jane Austen's notebooks filled with her earlier works is a chance to see how she first wrote and how she evolved and changed over the years, though how much was by choice and how much was forced in order to sell books can never be known.

My favorite was her The History of England (available on its own), and her three prayers were also quite interesting.

Michael says

It was pretty interesting to read Jane's writing notebooks from before any of her published works. Almost all of these stories and poems come from her teenage years. (think Jo in Little Women) That being said some are really good, some are reeeaaalllly bad, and most are so-so. You could tell she was playing with structure and characters types. There are literally section that I'm sure show up verbatim in Northanger Abbey. My favorite little story was "Frank and Alice" because there is just some funny inner dialogue with it. I was also quite surprised about her poetry.

Jennifer says

This was an interesting look at JA's early writing and other random written pieces. Seeing the development of characters and plots that show up in later novels was very insightful. Her wit and humor were very apparent as well.

Terra says

I knew I loved Jane Austen, but I had NO idea she was this completely hysterical as a teenager! This is a collection of short stories and farces that she wrote from a young age, mostly to amuse various family members (to whom they are dedicated). Extremely enjoyable.

Ashleigh says

A fascinating look at Austen's otherwise unpublished work - very different from what you'd expect! Reading some of the blatant sarcastic humor in these early stories helps provide a lense in which the subtle satire of Austen's main works comes to the surface.

Lorraine says

I was quite bored with this initially . Austen began writing when she was VERY young, by all accounts, and many of these pieces are just that -- juvenilia -- without much nuance, as you might expect from a child. Nevertheless it is evident already that at a young age Austen had a keen sense of irony and what is more, a very acute sense of the forms that narratives can take. One sees her writing mature; volume the third is of course the most interesting, in particular Catherine, which I think is a pity as it is unfinished. Like Sandition and The Watsons, it has the potential for a most interesting work. Her narration matures in Catherine, I do think, most of her other works are epistolary. I am not of the opinion that the epistolary mode is the best.... I think it lacked the nuance Austen was looking for. In any case I think it is indispensable for any Austen critic, if only because one realises just how *tight* her completed novels are, how they never lag in interest and description, how -- at times -- especially when she was younger -- a less disciplined pen would have done her subjects (and she shows a marked preference for the everyday) ill.

Donna says

This collection was such a fun and enjoyable read. Presenting Austen's Juvinilia we get a glimpse into the development of her writing across her adolescent years. Not as polished as her later novels, some critics have dismissed these stories and sketches as the trifling playthings of a young writer- and Austen certainly is playful with these stories- however, they were well worth the read. In fact an interesting argument put forth in the introduction suggests that in these sketches we get more of the 'true' Austen, before she had to bow to the pressures of the publishing industry. Clearly her writing developed across time, but I think there certainly is something to that argument. You also get a very performative and theatrical Austen in these stories- particularly those in the first volume that were intended to be read aloud to her family- and for those who agree with Charlotte Bronte that there is passion missing in Jane Austen's fiction, you need not look no further than these stories to dismiss that idea.

Overall then I'm really glad I went ahead and read these; Austen plays around with generic conventions and the literature of her day, in an absurd, ridiculous, but always witty way and I laughed my way through much of this collection.
