“ ‘Un Auteur’, Or, ‘Une Héroïne ?’ Jane Austen in France in the Early 21st Century ”,

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ANNE ROUHETTE

Although not quite a household name in France, Jane Austen can fairly be said to be familiar to the French public. All six of her novels having been translated into French very early on, between 1815 and 1824, and since then retranslated many times, Austen is more accessible in French than in any other language than English. Yet her place in French popular culture seems difficult to ascertain. For instance, the first website in French dedicated to Austen, "Jane Austen is my Wonderland" by "Alice," was only set up in 2010, like two blogs, "Les Romans de Jane Austen" and "I Love Jane Austen", followed by "Jane Austen and her World," created in 2013, and by a few others, as well as several Facebook pages. Most, if not all of these websites, are maintained by young female readers. While all of these resources offer summaries of Austen's novels and a biography of the author, they also devote plenty of space to the rewritings of her works and to the films and TV series inspired by her novels or loosely based on them or on her life, all of them of British or American origin. Austen has thus not really been appropriated by French popular culture, as shown by the English titles of many of these pages. More generally, the perception of Austen in France, caught between that of "an author for the *cognoscenti*," as Isabelle Bour puts it in "Jane Austen Victorienne" (73), and the image of a writer specializing in sentimental romances for teenagers set in a more or less idealized version of the English countryside,[1] has given rise in the last decade or so to studies by Lucile Trunel, Isabelle Bour, and Valérie Cossy, which all underline to varying

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degrees the difficulty the French seem to have in reading and relating to Austen. As for Austen's place in French academia, it proves very ambiguous, as she is studied in English Studies curricula both as a classical author and as a cultural phenomenon in English-speaking countries, often seen from the perspective of intermedial studies.[2]

Austen's problematic position in French culture is apparent in the recent publication of two translations of *Sense and Sensibility*, which both Lucile Trunel (*Éditions françaises* 434) and Valérie Cossy ("Austen Cannot") comment upon. If Pierre Goubert's translation for the prestigious Pléiade collection in 2000, republished in 2009 in a paperback edition, is a scrupulous rendering that aims at ranking Austen among first-class authors—with what success will be one of the questions addressed below—another paperback version came out in 2006 in the cheap Archipoche collection, reproducing with very few changes a highly faulty early nineteenth-century translation by Isabelle de Montolieu, which, among other things, alters the ending of Austen's novel. The blurred perception of Austen in France may partly be linked to the debates regarding Austen's historicity, which are not specific to France[3] but take on a new dimension in that country given the French readers' relative lack of familiarity with the chronology of British literary history—the general reader often locates Austen in the Victorian age (Bour, "Jane Austen Victorienne?"), with little concern for the actual time period and historical context in which Austen lived and wrote. It is of course possible to read and enjoy *Pride and Prejudice* without knowing that the militia to which Wickham belongs was set up to resist a potential invasion by Napoleonic troops, but the obliviousness with which Austen's life and historical context are treated arguably results, at least partly, in a dehistoricization that erases the individual author and substitutes an ideologically constructed "Austen" for the actual woman. More importantly, this affects the interpretation of her novels and the perception of her as an author. This difficulty is compounded by the surprising similarities between high-brow and more popular editions in terms of translational choices and of the ideological biases underlying them and informing the paratexts of the various works, overall conveying an image of Austen as a passive creature instead of an active creator.

The Pléiade Edition of Austen's Novels

Created in 1931, La Pléiade is a very prestigious collection belonging to the Gallimard publishing company, producing expensive leather-bound volumes printed on bible paper with gold lettering on the spine, intended to become reference books—the definitive, annotated editions of dead authors or anonymous works like *The Arabian Nights* crafted by highly regarded specialists. Its catalogue includes the complete works of Balzac, Flaubert, Molière, and Voltaire, but also of Georges Pérec, alongside the Bible, several encyclopedias, and a few chosen non-French authors. Available in a dedicated area of select bookstores, these handsome books are aimed at a general, educated audience able to afford the rather high prices they fetch, although there exists a thriving market for second-hand "Pléiade" editions. The two volumes devoted to Austen cost €58.5 and €59 (between $66 and $67). They came out in 2000 (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*) and 2013 (*Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*), which may seem rather late, especially in comparison with the publications of other famous English-speaking authors. These started with Poe, published in 1932, followed by, among others, Shakespeare (in several versions, the first dating from 1938, the latest in seven volumes from 2002 to 2016), Dickens (eight volumes from 1956 to 1986), Defoe (three volumes, 1959, 1970, and 2018), Fielding (1964), Swift (1965), Hemingway (two volumes, 1966 and 1969), Faulkner (six volumes from 1977 to 2017), Kipling (four volumes from 1988 to 2001), Conrad (six volumes from 1982 to 2017), Carroll (1990), Wilde (1996), Melville (four volumes, 1997 to 2010), Nabokov (1999 and 2010), the Brontës (2002 and 2008), James (ongoing from 2003, five volumes), Woolf (two volumes, 2012), London (two volumes, 2016), Roth (2017), etc. Austen, however, is the first among the very few female English-speaking authors to be published in La Pléiade, and she appeared there before the Brontës and Woolf. This raises the more general issues of the criteria for publication in La Pléiade and of the reception of British female novelists in France, often regarded as either queens of crime à la Agatha Christie or as authors of romances like Barbara Cartland. Austen has arguably suffered from the latter stereotype since the beginning of the twentieth century. Although these questions lie beyond the scope of this

article,[4] it is worth mentioning them here because they may explain some of the problems underlined below.

The general editor of the Pléiade edition of Austen, Pierre Goubert (b. 1930), wrote one of the first French doctorate theses on Austen, published in 1975, but surrounded himself with a team composed exclusively of male writers, none of whom is a specialist of the author. He opens his introduction by stating that Austen is mistakenly considered a minor author in France: "Jane Austen est en France un auteur méconnu" ("Jane Austen is an unrecognized/misunderstood author in France"; 1: xlvi), and he sets out to present and reveal her as a major writer to the French public. The very first sentence of this introduction, which uses not just the noun "auteur" but also its dependent adjectives in the masculine form, reveals what is probably the major flaw of this edition: "the absence of gender as a critical category," as Valérie Cossy puts it in her article "Why Austen Cannot be a 'Classique' in French," which in a critical edition published in the 2000s is highly problematic. The editors' indifference to gender issues extends to Austen herself as Goubert and the other editors recurrently insist on Austen's lack of feminist concerns. Their Austen comes across as a dutiful daughter, sister, and aunt who never objects to the patriarchal system, consistently conveys a moral and conservative message, and abstains from expressing any kind of reformist opinion in her fiction. *Mansfield Park* in particular—but not exclusively—is enlisted in the conservative cause, turning Austen into a political writer with an explicitly anti-Jacobin agenda, animated by a "desire to put forward a certain number of conservative ideas for the sake of her country" ("désir de mettre en évidence un certain nombre d'idées conservatrices pour le salut du pays"; 2:1266). This reading of Austen is ideologically marked by a certain conception of the role of women and feminine writing in the early nineteenth century and beyond and takes no account of recent criticism, which qualifies this view of Austen as a staunch conservative; although the first volume of the Austen Pléiade was published in 2000, most of the critical references date back to the 1950s, and if a contemporary critic is alluded to, his or her analysis is usually rejected, as happens with Claudia Johnson and also with Tony Tanner, whose interpretation of Marianne's stifled scream in *Sense and Sensibility* as a "symptom" of a "sickness intimately connected with the prevailing secrecy" imposed by a society dominated by forms (75) "goes against the author's [Austen's]

intentions" ("va à l'encontre des intentions de l'auteur"; 1:1039), in Goubert's opinion. On the other hand, Marilyn Butler's take on Austen's militant moral conservatism in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) is quoted with approval (2:15).

The editors repeatedly emphasize Austen's debt to more or less Augustan male writers, such as Richardson and Johnson, whom she certainly admired, instead of the line of female authors like Burney and Edgeworth to which she belonged and which she defends in a famous passage from *Northanger Abbey*, a line that has received close critical attention since the 1980s. Critical studies like Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Female Novelist* (1986) are thus either ignored or dismissed in the Pléiade paratext, which tellingly also uses the diminutive form of Burney's first name "Fanny" instead of "Frances." In other words, the image of Austen provided by Goubert and his team of translators and coeditors is clearly an "Augustan" one, as they carefully discredit any claim Austen might have to rank among the Romantics: She is "une fille du XVIII^{e} siècle" (1:30), a rather unfortunate choice of words which translates either as "a child of the eighteenth century," the probable meaning, or as the very condescending "an eighteenth century girl," the two connotations being perceptible in the original. This explains why Austen finds herself published as an eighteenth-century author in La Pléiade, whose bindings vary slightly in color according to period: blue for the eighteenth and emerald green for the nineteenth century. The critical apparatus focuses on the historical, societal, and literary contexts in which Austen's novels were written, which, according to Goubert, and with good reason, need to be considered in order to understand Austen's writing. But this approach relies on a paradox: these contexts are firmly set in the years following the French Revolution, and particularly those of the Napoleonic period in the early nineteenth century. So, to understand Austen, one must have a knowledge of Britain, and beyond of Europe, not only at the time of Richardson or Johnson to whom the introduction refers readers but also in the Romantic period.

The editors' and translators' view of an Augustan Austen led them to give an eighteenth-century flavor to their translations by using old-fashioned words and by systematically Frenchifying the forms of address: "Miss Bennet" and "Mrs. Dashwood" thus become respectively "Mlle Bennet" and "Mme Dashwood," for example. This choice

testifies to a domesticating conception of translation, which was in fact the norm in eighteenth-century France but is now largely rejected; as a result, the translations sound decidedly quaint and firmly anchor Austen in the past.[5] Furthermore, the use of French titles borders on acculturation, raising ethical problems that might have been solved by stating explicitly the translators' decision to give their texts an immediately recognizable eighteenth-century color. No such explanation, however, appears in the paratext, perhaps because it would conflict with other translation choices. Most striking among these is the decision to retain the English first names, such as Elizabeth, Jane, and Henry, which usually would have become "Élisabeth," "Jeanne," and "Henri" in a translation actually carried out in the eighteenth century.[6] The translation of some toponyms would have been in keeping with a conscious decision to convey an eighteenth-century flavor to the texts, had it been coherent: "Northanger Abbey" and "Netherfield Park" are rendered respectively as "l'Abbaye de Northanger" and "le château [castle] de Netherfield," but *Sense and Sensibility*'s "Barton Park," which refers to an estate comprising both house and park, is translated as "le Parc de Barton," which in French would designate a wide space of greenery and misleads readers as to the nature of the place mentioned. Besides, "Mansfield Park" remains "Mansfield Park" in French, providing readers with a third different translation for the same type of phrase.[7] Other inconsistencies impact the overall quality of the Pléiade Austen, notably in the translation of the pronoun "you" as either the more intimate but less respectful "tu" or the more formal "vous": Elinor and Marianne Dashwood use the "vous" form in Goubert's translation of *Sense and Sensibility*, while in the same volume, Elizabeth and Jane Bennet call each other "tu" in Jean-Paul Pichardie's *Pride and Prejudice*. On the other hand, the translators sometimes play skillfully on a shift between the "tu" and the "vous" pronouns, particularly in Goubert's *Mansfield Park*, where Lady Bertram uses "tu" for Fanny and "vous" for her daughter Maria; Fanny and Edmund address each other with "vous," while Tom calls Fanny "tu." The varying pronouns subtly underline Fanny's difficult and unstable position in the Bertram household. Yet, on the whole, these inconsistencies heighten the sense that Austen is not taken really seriously as the author of an *oeuvre* but rather that she happened to write somewhat haphazardly a series of novels with no overall vision or purpose.[8]

This impression is reinforced by a paratext that barely discusses her writing, rarely mentioning her irony and humor, for instance,[9] and almost completely ignoring her style, especially her use of free indirect speech. Particular attention is paid to the social context and to what the editors see as Austen's almost sole interest in financial matters. A combination of these two factors leads, among other things, to a serious misunderstanding of a passage situated near the end of *Persuasion*. According to Pierre Goubert,

> On the eve of his wedding, the author highlights how wealthy the hero of *Persuasion* is before any other consideration: "Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody." That is because Wentworth's social rank matters more to Jane Austen than his professional merits.[10]
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> (2: xiii)

This affirmation either grossly misconstrues or ignores the context in which Austen's sentence is placed, since it is in free indirect discourse and conveys the thoughts of Sir Walter and Elizabeth, to whom wealth and social rank matter above all else—not to their author. In this particular instance, the ideological biases and resulting misinterpretations of the Pléiade's translators do not impact the French version. Such is not the case with other passages, as Valérie Cossy explains, quoting two examples where the translators' decision to ignore Austen's questioning of patriarchal values leads to serious misunderstandings:

> Goubert's translation of the first chapter of *Sense and Sensibility* is perfectly in tune with his observation about Austen not being politically aware of patriarchy. He chooses to suppress the repetition of the word "son" in the third paragraph . . ., thus mitigating Austen's emphasis on the injustice of patrilineal transmission by treating the repetition as a stylistic error ([1:]224). In the sentence that follows ("it was secured, in such a way, as to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him"), he chooses to translate "those" in the masculine, "ceux," though the pronoun obviously refers to Mrs. Dashwood and her three daughters. Another example of the consequences of overlooking gender occurs in Pierre Arnaud's translation of *Northanger Abbey*. The translation of the end of chapter five, in which Austen vindicates

> women readers and women novelists, is entirely translated in the masculine ([1:]26–27). It is true that French grammar may impose its own constraints here and that, theoretically, the French "masculin universel" is supposed to include the feminine. Yet an important dimension of Austen's critique disappears without being even compensated by an explanation in a footnote. While this passage is often quoted in English criticism, it is here sidelined by an approximate translation and an absence of commentary. It is, of course, a passage in which Austen challenges, as a woman, the very process of "distinction" embodied by La Pléiade and male reviewers generally.
>
> ("Austen Cannot")

Interestingly, Cossy links the editors' ideological distortion of Austen to a properly linguistic issue, that of the "masculin universel," much debated nowadays: In a language where all nouns are gendered masculine or feminine, whether they refer to a person or to an object,[11] a group mixing masculine and feminine nouns has to be described in the masculine, which is supposed to take on a universal or neutral dimension. A similar principle has applied since the seventeenth century to a certain number of nouns designating persons: If most of them have a masculine and a feminine form, the latter generally achieved by adding a feminine suffix including the letter -e,[12] others, usually designating the most prestigious jobs or functions, have only existed in the masculine since the nineteenth century. Whether they refer to a man or a woman, these nouns are accompanied by masculine adjectives and pronouns, although a linguistic change is underway because of feminist pressure: "une ambassadrice" is now no longer the wife of "un ambassadeur" but an ambassador in her own right, while a woman minister may now be called "Madame *la* Ministre."

The French equivalent for "author" has received a lot of attention in recent years. As of 2019, most dictionaries usually register only the masculine, although "auteur" used to have a perfectly legitimate and well-documented feminine form, "autrice," in use until the late eighteenth century (Viennot; Évain). The rise in feminist concerns has rendered this exclusive attribution of authority to the masculine problematic; the underlying idea, explicitly stated in previous centuries (Cerquiglini 118–23), being that a woman cannot be an author. The "Académie Française," supposed to be the authority on the French language (as used in France), finally acknowledged the legitimacy of

feminine forms like "autrice" on February 28, 2019, following long protests and debates, but after being banned for so long, the term is still far from being widely used. Prior to that date, those sensitive to gender issues coined a new word, adding an -e to "auteur" in order to create "auteure," which has very recently made an entrance into some French dictionaries. Widely in use in Quebec and other French-speaking countries and regions, this form is gaining ground in the French press and elsewhere, notably in popular culture, for instance on the website "Jane Austen is my Wonderland." Other writers find it difficult to toy with the French grammar norms they grew up with and resort to the masculine noun and to feminine pronouns and adjectives: "l'auteur" will be resumed by "elle" instead of "il." Others still try to find a way around the issue by avoiding the word altogether and using "écrivaine" instead, a more or less accepted feminine form of "écrivain" (writer), or, more frequently, "romancière" for a female novelist, "a term usually impl[ying] some kind of critical disparagement," as Valérie Cossy observes ("Austen Cannot"). Finally, a small but growing number of critics choose the feminine "autrice," which appears, for instance, in the titles of studies published by respected publishing firms Honoré Champion (*Entre la reconnaissance et l'exclusion: la position de l'autrice dans le champ littéraire en France et en Italie à l'époque 1900* by Rotraud von Kulessa, 2011) and Classiques Garnier (*Privilèges d'auteurs et d'autrices en France {XVIe-XVIIe siècles}: Anthologie critique*, edited by Michèle Clément and Edwige Keller-Rahbé, 2017). These alternatives to the masculine "auteur" have sometimes encountered fierce hostility or sarcasm in some quarters,[13] where ideological stances are usually hidden behind a linguistic veil, as was the case with the "Académie Française" until February 2019. A conservative viewpoint in social and political matters thus logically results in strict adherence to the "masculin universel" or to the "neutral masculine."

In keeping with their vision of Austen, Goubert and his team abide by the traditional, pre-2019 rules of French grammar by using the masculine form of "auteur" and of the adjectives and pronouns dependent on it, as in the first sentence of Goubert's introduction ("Jane Austen est en France *un auteur méconnu*," emphasis added), although they sometimes eschew the word "auteur," preferring "romancière." The many remaining occurrences of "auteur" are accompanied by masculine markers, as for instance in Goubert's presentation of *Sense and Sensibility*: "Lorsque le jeune auteur … commença à

rédiger *Elinor et Marianne* . . . *il* avait peut-être déjà mis en chantier *Susan*" ("When the young author began to write *Elinor & Marianne* . . . [he/she] was perhaps already at work on *Susan*"; 1:1041, emphasis added).[14] The following passage, which uses the masculine over almost a dozen lines in the original, is particularly striking:

> Certes, probablement guidé par la conversation de son père et de ses frères aînés, *le jeune auteur* est parfaitement *conscient* non seulement de l'existence mais aussi de la nature des faiblesses qu'*il* dénonce. *Il* sait l'importance qu'en art a la vérité. De même, *il* saisit toute l'hypocrisie que comporte le recours aux beaux sentiments . . . Pour autant, *le jeune auteur* ne se donne jamais des airs de moraliste, moins encore de critique littéraire. *Il* ne fait que se conformer à des idées simples et saines qu'*il* sait partager avec son auditoire.
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> (1:1096, emphasis added)[15]

Incidentally, if the phrase *le jeune auteur* recurs in these two passages, it is repeated many times in the critical apparatus of the first volume. This insistence on Austen's youth, reminiscent of the belittling strategies used by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reviewers to refer to female authors as "young ladies," is reinforced by the numerous references made to Austen by her first name (e.g., "le titre finalement choisi par Jane," "the title Jane finally chose"; 1:1057) and by the editors' insistence on the influence exerted on Austen by male family members or male writers. These details enhance once again the lack of seriousness granted Austen as a creative writer and more widely the problematic relationship some critics may have to her femininity, perhaps to femininity in general: The empirical author is belittled and patronized while the linguistic markers of her femininity are carefully and systematically erased, a process repeated many times. To conclude, what was supposed to be the definitive edition of Austen in France, purporting to establish her reputation as a major author, paradoxically confirms her status as an inferior one—the very status Goubert claimed he wanted to revise—and provides French readers with an image of her that is largely outdated in the English-speaking critical field. Their linguistic and ideological construction of "Austen" in the paratext and the translational choices it entails play down her creative genius and confine her novels to an incorrect time period, making her hardly relevant to present-day readers.

Du fond de mon cœur, Lettres à ses nièces *and* Mes Souvenirs de Jane Austen, Portrait d'une héroïne

A brief analysis of two publications aimed at a larger audience yields similar results in certain respects. These books are both first-time translations into French of primary sources of a personal nature, which were featured on French blogs and websites. The first, *Du Fond de mon cœur, Lettres à ses nièces* ("From the Bottom of my Heart, Letters to her Nieces," published by Finitude in 2015), consists of a selection of letters written by Austen to her nieces, followed by a few letters by those nieces. It sold very well and was reprinted in a paperback edition (Le Livre de Poche, 2016). The other one is the translation of James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869), rendered as *Mes Souvenirs de Jane Austen* ("My Memories of Jane Austen") and subtitled "Portrait d'une héroïne" ("The Portrait of a Heroine"), published by Bartillat in 2016, which was slightly less successful commercially.[16]

In both instances, the use of the first-person possessive adjective in the title ("*mon* cœur," "*mes* souvenirs") emphasizes the personal nature of the books, which claim to depict an intimate Austen, a claim made explicit on each back cover: "[The reader] discovers the intimacy of the novelist at work" ("On y découvre à l'œuvre la romancière dans son intimité"; *Mes Souvenirs*), "These exchanges reveal a touching intimacy" ("Ces échanges révèlent une touchante intimité"; *Du fond*). *Du fond de mon cœur* also claims to offer a "moving" ("émouvant") portrait of Austen; its title borders on sentimentalism with a mawkish formula in keeping with the big pink flowers on the cover of the paperback edition, a formula not representative of the tone of Austen's letters, as anyone at all familiar with them will recognize. The two translations follow a long tradition in France that foregrounds the personal and sentimental when it comes to Austen, and more generally to women authors: Claire Tomalin's 1999 biography, soberly entitled *Jane Austen, A Life* in English, became *Jane Austen, passions discrètes* ("discreet passions") in French when it was translated in 2008. As for Austen's novels, they too were given a more personal turn at various time periods, from the earliest renderings with *Persuasion* translated as *La Famille Elliot* in 1821 by Mme de Montolieu, in which a concept becomes a family, and *Mansfield Park* translated as *Le Parc de Mansfield ou les Trois Cousines* in 1816, the three cousins on a par with the estate. *Northanger Abbey* became *Catherine Morland* in French by the end of the nineteenth

century (1898) while *Pride and Prejudice* is rendered as *Les Cinq filles de Mrs. Bennet* ("Mrs. Bennet's Five Daughters") as late as 1932, in an allusion to the highly popular French translation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* as *Les Quatre filles du docteur March*, a choice "presumably intended to appeal to the same readers," as Gillian Dow comments (165)—which shows how poorly understood Austen was in France in the mid-twentieth century. A certain image of the woman author thus emerges according to gender stereotypes still valid today; the heart and the personal are given pride of place over the more masculine values of abstraction and generalization.

In both cases, the text is preceded by a few pages of introduction and accompanied by a few footnotes written by the translators, neither of whom is a specialist of Austen, British literature, or the period. There are, however, several differences in the presentation of the author and of the text, which a brief study of the paratext will make clear. At first sight, the translation of Austen-Leigh's memoir by Guillaume Villeneuve, whose name appears on the book's front cover, seems to take Austen more seriously as an author, stressing her place as a canonical writer by insisting on her work as much as on her life; the back cover refers twice to her as a "novelist" ("romancière"), even "one of the greatest English novelists," and mentions her "glory," while the life is avowedly the focus of *Du Fond de mon cœur*, even though the work is mentioned. Villeneuve gives a scholarly veneer to his introduction by including a few critical references, though not particularly recent ones (David Cecil, Nabokov, Woolf), while Dupin does no such thing. However, the contents of the two books tell a different story. Nowhere in his introduction or in his notes does Guillaume Villeneuve question the vision of Austen offered by James Edward Austen-Leigh, presenting her as an ideal aunt ("tante idéale"; 9), a quiet woman whose writing came after her concern for her family. In an echo to the Pléiade edition, the introduction states that "Jane has no interest in politics" ("Jane ne fait pas de politique"; 11), with a condescending use of the first name which is almost systematic in those pages for Austen as well as for Woolf, called "Virginia," whereas Marie Dupin in her introduction to *Du Fond* uses the full name or the first name when she finds it necessary to distinguish Austen from her family members.[17] Villeneuve's introduction depicts Austen as a model of true femininity, capable of preserving her

dignity in any circumstances, which ought to be a source of inspiration for today:

> That lesson in decorum and style, derived from the 18th century . . ., is it impossible to see it as a source of inspiration, even today in 2016 . . .? It remains within our reach if we consider that our duty is to make life, society and our souls more beautiful.[18]

Quite clearly, Villeneuve's Austen, like the Pléiade's, is the Augustan one and belongs in the eighteenth century. Villeneuve also follows Goubert by systematically using French forms of address (*M.* and *Mme* Austen, emphasis added), with the same result, that of making Austen quaint, a writer of the past; her novels are valuable today primarily on account of their didactic contents. Marie Dupin on the contrary, albeit very fleetingly, highlights Austen's "modernity and freedom of tone, full of humor" ("cette modernité et cette liberté pleine d'humour"; 14) and follows the modern norms of translation (e.g. "*Mr.* William Digweed," 22; "*Mrs.* Fisher," 28, emphasis added)—Dupin is the only one of the translators alluded to here who insists on Austen's humor and whose depiction of Austen comes across as relevant to modern-day readers as a literary creator, not as a morality teacher.

Austen becomes the center of an ideologically constructed, gendered reading that is also obvious on a linguistic level, again in the line of the Pléiade edition. Like Goubert, Villeneuve strictly follows the rules of French grammar and uses "auteur" and its markers in the masculine. Where Austen-Leigh wrote "when four novels of steadily increasing success had given the writer some confidence in *herself*, *she* wished to recover the copyright of this early work" (130, emphasis added), Villeneuve translates this as "une fois que quatre romans de mieux en mieux accueillis eurent donné à *l'auteur* plus de confiance en *lui*, *il* souhaita reprendre les droits sur ce premier ouvrage" (199, emphasis added), in a systematic gendering of authority and authorship in the masculine which makes for some rather awkward formulations here and elsewhere.[19] The choice of the masculine form is not questionable in itself, but surrounding it by masculine adjectives and pronouns is a much more debatable practice today, suggesting that an author, a literary creator, could not possibly be a woman. Perhaps because she is ill at ease with the problematic "auteur," Dupin systematically avoids it and resorts

to "romancière" instead (7, 12, 13), which does not quite convey the same impression as "auteur"; this might also be due to the avowedly personal nature of the documents translated in *Du Fond de mon cœur* and the desire to suggest a form of intimacy with Austen rather than celebrate her work or authorship.

There is one point on which *Du Fond de mon cœur* and *Mes Souvenirs* agree: the fictionalization of their subject, which appears in the paratext of both books, particularly on the front and back covers. The translation of Austen-Leigh's memoir foregrounds this by adding the subtitle "The Portrait of a Heroine," whereas nowhere does Austen-Leigh call his aunt a heroine—in an interview over the phone, Bartillat's editor-in-chief, Charles Ficat, confirmed that this choice partook of a deliberate marketing strategy. This idea is resumed on the back cover of this book: "she might have been the heroine of one of her own novels" ("elle aurait pu être l'héroïne d'une de ses propres œuvres"). A very similar sentence concludes the blurb on the back cover of *Du Fond de mon cœur*: "Jane Austen was just as interesting as her unforgettable heroines" ("Jane Austen n'avait rien à envier à ses inoubliables héroïnes"), which is echoed in the first page of the book's introduction: "There is one question which all readers of Jane Austen's work must have asked themselves at least once: was Jane Austen like her heroines?" ("Il est une question que tous les lecteurs de Jane Austen n'ont pu manquer de se poser un jour ou l'autre: Jane Austen ressemblait-elle à ses héroïnes?"; 7).

Even though the Pléiade editors do not explicitly turn Austen into a character in one of her novels, their "Austen" is implicitly and to a large extent fictional, the product of their vision of what a woman writer ought to be, a vision which led them to sometimes seriously misunderstand her work. Linguistics, ideology, and cultural appropriation thus combine to various degrees in those three publications to offer an image of Austen not so much as an author, a creative writer, but as a creation, perhaps even a creature, which is easier to control and manipulate. It is perhaps the best proof of Austen's greatness that her novels have been able to withstand such an attempt and continue to arouse as much debate today as ever, although perhaps not so much, or less directly, in France than in the rest of the world.

Notes

1. According to Valérie Cossy, Austen is "mainly known as a sentimentalist and, consequently, as a minor popular author, one of those 'romancières anglaises' usually regarded as outlandish curiosities by French reviewers" ("Austen Cannot"). Lucile Trunel makes a similar point: "Austen is considered not a 'serious' literary author, but rather someone who writes 'light' classics designed mostly for young people (a genre quite despised by the French)." One reason for such a perception in her view is the male-centered cultural context prevailing in France ("Jane Austen's French Publications" 22). The remarks below regarding the list of authors published in La Pléiade confirm her analysis.
2. See Anne Rouhette, "Entre constance et inconstance: Jane Austen, l'université et la recherche en France au début du XXI^{e} siècle."
3. See for instance Tuite, particularly the introduction, and Lynch.
4. On the Pléiade's criteria, see Cossy, "Austen Cannot"; on the stereotype of the female British novelist and how it impacts the reception of Austen, see, for instance, Trunel, *Les Éditions françaises* (265, 395, 416).
5. Michel Ballard likens titles like "Mr." or "Mlle" to anthroponyms in the sense that they belong to what he calls the "code" of the source language; they contribute to create an effect of local color or to convey the foreignness of a character (23).
6. In the translation of Burney's *Evelina* by Henri Renfner for instance (1779), the name of the heroine's friend, Maria, nicknamed Molly, is rendered as "Marie" ("Marion").
7. It was announced as "Le Parc de Mansfield" in the introductory note to the first volume in 2000, but this formula was abandoned for the publication of the novel in the second volume in 2013.
8. Opinions differ as to the quality of the translations included in La Pléiade. Pierre Goubert's rendering of *Sense and Sensibility*, in particular, later reproduced in a paperback edition, was the subject of much attention both positive and negative; Isabelle Bour praising its "very good command of eighteenth-century French, which enables him to give his style a period flavor, without attempting pastiche" ("Reception of Jane Austen" 56), while Valérie Cossy condemns the "antiquated character" of Goubert's text and several translational choices due to an erroneous perception of Elinor's character ("Austen Cannot"). Lucile Trunel recognizes the Pléiade's general "attempt at being faithful to the original text while the somewhat archaic language occasionally borders on mannerism" ("un effort de fidélité au texte original, avec une sorte d'archaïsme de langage qui confine parfois au maniérisme"; 471, my trans., here and elsewhere).
9. With exceptions, as in Pierre Arnaud's presentation of *Northanger Abbey*.
10. "A la veille de son mariage, c'est la fortune du héros de *Persuasion* que l'auteur met en relief avant toute autre considération: 'Le capitaine Wentworth, qui avait vingt-cinq mille livres et était parvenu aussi haut dans sa profession que son mérite et ses actions le pouvaient porter, n'était plus n'importe qui.' C'est que Jane Austen se soucie davantage de l'importance sociale de Wentworth que de ses mérites au plan professionnel." Here is the context from which the quotation from *Persuasion* is excerpted: "Sir Walter made no objection, and Elizabeth did nothing worse than look cold and unconcerned. Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, what had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him." (165).
11. Nouns are accompanied by gendered markers: Articles, pronouns, and adjectives all bear the mark either of the masculine or the feminine gender of the noun they refer to.

Traditionalists argue that the French language divides its nouns into genders arbitrarily and regardless of biology, which is true of nouns designating objects or concepts—the sun, a pen, and a scandal are masculine, while the moon, a chair, and a decision are gendered feminine—but false when it comes to those referring to human beings.

12. "Un héros" (a hero) thus becomes "une héroine" (a heroine), "un romancier" (a novelist), "une romancière," etc.
13. See, for instance, Jean Szlamowicz, *Le Sexe et la langue*.
14. Other examples, taken from the two volumes: "l'auteur, tout en demeurant bien conscient" ("While the author remains well aware"; 1:xxiv); "l'auteur lui-même" ("The author [himself?]"; 1:1093); "Il serait vain de reprocher à l'auteur une permanence excessive: dans son Hampshire natal, il n'avait pas été le témoin de variations plus spectaculaires" ("It would be pointless to blame the author for being too constant: in [his/her] native Hampshire, [he/she] had not witnessed any spectacular variations"; 2:xii).
15. "Granted, guided by the conversation of [his/her] father and elder brothers, the young author is perfectly aware [masculine] not only of the existence but also of the nature of the weaknesses [he/she] denounces. [He/she] knows how much truth matters in art. Similarly, [he/she] perceives the hypocrisy which characterizes a resort to finer feelings. Yet the young author never poses as a moralist, still less as a literary critic. [He/she] merely conforms to simple and sound ideas which [he/she] knows his audience will share." That such a position is difficult to maintain and confuses grammatical and biological genders is exemplified by a rare slip in the second volume, which resorts to the feminine: "l'auteur parle ici [*Persuasion*] de gens qu'*elle* connaît et apprécie" ("The author speaks here of people *she* knows and likes"; 2:xix, emphasis added).
16. On the French Amazon website, on April 14, 2019, the hardback edition of *Du Fond de mon cœur* ranked 269.125th and the paperback version 103.135th in terms of sales. They cost respectively €16,5 and €6,6 (approximately $18 and $7.50), far below the Pléiade prices. Customer reviews (10 each) were very positive, with a total of 4.4 stars out of 5 for each. *Mes Souvenirs de Jane Austen* ranked 111.605th, with only one review (4 stars). It costs €20 (around $22).
17. This practice is not necessarily a proof of condescension and may stem from more complicated reasons; Hélène Cixous calls Clarice Lispector "Clarice" and several feminist authors refer to Woolf as "Virginia" for instance. This lies beyond the scope of this article.
18. "Cette leçon de tenue et de style, issue du XVIII^{e} siècle, faut-il désespérer de pouvoir s'en inspirer, fût-ce en 2016? Elle reste à notre portée si nous songeons qu'il nous incombe d'embellir la vie, la société et nos âmes" (14).
19. To give just one more example: "leur auteur nous avait été *enlevé*" ("their author had been taken away [masculine] from us"; 225, emphasis added).

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