JANE AUSTEN

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Tony Tanner

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For G. H. W. Rylands

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This book is offered as a reading of Jane Austen's novels, not as a contribution to Jane Austen scholarship. In particular, it attempts to see the novels in their relation to problems concerned with society, education and language. Hence the introductory chapter, which offers a brief discussion of the relevance of these topics before the consideration of the individual novels. The earliest chapter in the book was, substantially, written in 1966, while the most recent chapters were written this year, so the book in effect represents my thoughts about Jane Austen's work ranging, intermittently, over some twenty years. I wish to express my gratitude to Penguin Books for granting me permission to reprint – in somewhat altered form – my introductions to *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*. A much earlier – and very different – version of the chapter on *Persuasion* was given as a talk to the Jane Austen Society. I am much indebted to my editor, Beverley Tarquini, for her patience, help and encouragement. The dedication is a small acknowledgement of the inestimable debt I owe to a man who has been an exemplary and incomparable friend – and 'educator' – for over twenty-five years to me and to countless others.

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