

# MAPPING *NORTHANGER ABBEY*: OR, WHY AUSTEN'S BATH OF 1803 RESEMBLES JOYCE'S DUBLIN OF 1904<sup>1</sup>

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Twin cases of mistaken identity activate the plot of *Northanger Abbey*. Escorted to Bath by a kindly Mr and Mrs Allen, the heroine promptly gets mistaken for the Allen heir. In turn, the Allens, a modestly-well-to-do country couple, are thought vastly rich. These catalysts for Austen's plot have never been investigated with an eye to an historical explanation, because being mistaken for an heiress neatly fits the Gothic model that *Northanger Abbey* decidedly spoofs. But Austen's fiction has an unacknowledged basis in historical fact, characteristically offering her peculiar brand of hyperrealism as a retort to the Gothic novel. In reality, Bath's largest private fortune, belonging to a genuine Mr and Mrs Allen, was in transition during precisely the years that Austen drafted her novel (Cassandra dated it to 1798 and 1799). The wealth amassed by Bath entrepreneur Ralph Allen (1693–1764), and held by a niece for over three decades, was just then reverting to obscure Allens living in the country. These historical circumstances warrant a fresh look at *Northanger Abbey*, where the many encoded references to Ralph Allen's architectural legacy reveal a historical specificity to Austen's method that rivals the cartographic exactitude of James Joyce.

James Joyce famously boasted that turn-of-the century Dublin might forever be reconstructed from the details in his *Ulysses* (1922). As a result, scholars take Joyce's spatial descriptions seriously—more so than anyone has hitherto taken Jane Austen's descriptions of Bath in *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Yet Austen, too, engineers a reading of her text that rewards, perhaps even demands, an intimate knowledge of a city's architectural environs and local history.<sup>2</sup> Clocking her characters with precision through the streets of Bath, Austen at several points in *Northanger Abbey* even provides the rates of speed at which her carriages travel. Armed with speeds, duration, and cartographic particulars, an Austen reader can reconstruct the passing scenery of a carriage ride through Bath's landscape—a landscape in which, it turns out, the historical associations of certain structures

1 This essay owes a great deal to the generosity and smarts of Lance Bertlesen, Stephen Clarke, Jocelyn Harris, Peter Sabor and William Scheick—each of whom improved it with corrections and suggestions.

2 A peculiar publication delay allows *Northanger Abbey* to mirror *Ulysses* in another way. Starting in serial form in 1918, Joyce published a fiction that depicts Dublin as it was in 1904. Initially serialized in *The Little Review* from March 1918 to December 1920, *Ulysses* was published in book form by Sylvia Beach on 2 February 1922. A century earlier, through a set of circumstances that were, admittedly, largely out of the author's control, Austen's similar exactitude about Bath's appearance in 1803 would reach readers only in 1818.

elicit specific interpretations of conversation and character. Some Joyce scholars have timed the flow of the Liffey to prove that, after a so-called throwaway ends up in the river, the exact rate of the current has been taken into account by the author when the paper drifts past in a later scene. Joyce, of course, bragged that the puzzles of *Ulysses* would keep scholars scrambling for centuries. It seems that, in view of Austen's similar penchant for wordplay, historical accuracy and cartographic precision, we may be further behind schedule on solving her puzzles than on his. Using plans and guidebooks of Bath from the years in which Austen composed her novel, this essay maps several scenes in *Northanger Abbey* in an effort to decipher the historical puzzle behind the story's Mr and Mrs Allen and their presumed fortune.

Befitting a book filled with fakes and follies, *Northanger Abbey* starts with a counterfeit. Almost instantaneously upon her arrival in Bath, the unpretentious Catherine Morland gets mistaken for an heiress. It is not just the buffoonish young John Thorpe who makes this error but also, largely due to Thorpe's influence, the more experienced General Tilney—all because of something suggested by a name. The surname these men seize upon is not Catherine's own but that of her guardians in Bath, a Mr and Mrs Allen. The reader knows Mr Allen to be a well-to-do landowner 'who owned the chief of the property about Fullerton', the small fictional Wiltshire village where the Morlands live.<sup>3</sup> His wealth, in other words, is relative and confined to that locale. The childless Allens, the narrator reveals in the opening chapter, head for Bath to treat Mr Allen's 'gouty constitution' (p. 9). They kindly take young Catherine, the daughter of their local clergyman, in tow. Yet when these rather ordinary Allens arrive in Bath with their young charge, men such as Thorpe assume 'old Allen is as rich as a Jew' and that Catherine is his goddaughter and the likely heir to his vast fortune (p. 59).

This assumption, if made during the years Austen drafted her novel (Cassandra dated it to 1798 and 1799), has legs. It is possibly significant that Austen never provides her Allens with first names, keeping them at a deliberate remove. For the Allen name, common enough in Britain as a whole, was in the context of turn-of-the-century Bath particularly potent. Ralph Allen (1693–1764), postal entrepreneur, philanthropist, former mayor, stone mogul and builder of Prior Park and its renowned landscape garden, had arguably been Bath's most famous historical personage. His was not a narrow sort of celebrity. Ralph Allen was a nationally recognized figure and often referred to simply as 'the Man of Bath'.<sup>4</sup>

3 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, eds Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge, 2006), 9. All further quotations from the novel refer to this edition and are cited parenthetically.

4 The epithet was widely known outside of Bath and apparently stems from a poem by Nathaniel Cotton. Cotton's praise of Ralph Allen ('Rise muse, and sing the Man of Bath!') appeared during Austen's youth in a number of poetry collections, especially those intended for children and ladies.

Without question this Mr Allen was Bath's richest inhabitant to date. Significantly, the real-world fortune that Allen had amassed was in transition during the novel's composition. The immense wealth that had been held by a distant niece, Gertrude Tucker, for over three decades, reverted to the Allen family name upon her death in 1796.

Catherine's case of mistaken identity by association, as it were, is the understood catalyst for the novel's plot, since the notion that she is the Allens' heir explicitly motivates both Thorpe's initial pursuit as well as General Tilney's subsequent invitation to *Northanger*. Such a conjecture about a young woman's sudden wealth from distant relations is, of course, a recurrent feature in the Gothic tales that Austen satirises. Because being mistaken for an heiress seems a typically melodramatic scenario for a Gothic heroine, Thorpe's and the General's motivations have never been investigated with an eye to an historical explanation. But *Northanger Abbey* mocks rather than imitates the Gothic novel. And Austen's own story has a basis in fact, characteristically offering the author's peculiar brand of realism as the antidote to all things Gothic. The real-world Mr and Mrs Ralph Allen of Bath had passed the bulk of their vast fortune to a favorite niece, Gertrude Tucker.<sup>5</sup> Under her two married names Gertrude lived at Prior Park until 1796. That year she, too, died childless, causing the estate to transfer to another branch of the Allen family (to the heirs of the sons of Ralph Allen's brother, Philip Allen) in line with the rules of inheritance law. There appears to have been some minor mystery about this transfer, partly because the Allens who inherited the remaining fortune did not move into the family mansion at Prior Park. Relatively unknown in Bath, these distant Allens apparently preferred country life. During the years that Austen resided in Bath, Prior Park's future also remained uncertain; it was eventually sold out of the family in 1807, after Austen moved away.

Thorpe's tawdry solicitousness towards Catherine is transparently motivated by the assumption that she will inherit the vast riches of *an* Allen fortune. I think that Austen suggests that Thorpe believes it to be *the* Allen fortune, just then in transition. Like Wickham and Willoughby, Thorpe is a rakish member of the predatory species of *homo economicus*. General Tilney, 'misled by Thorpe's first boast of the family wealth', plays to this same type when he invites Catherine to *Northanger* in a transparent attempt to hijack her presumed fortune for his son (p. 261). The joke is on them, since Austen insists that her Allens from Fullerton have no connection whatsoever to the Allens of Bath. Thorpe's predation upon Catherine in the hurly-burly of the Bath marriage market is decidedly generic and his actions, so typical of the rake-as-obstacle in any romance, do not cry out for immediate explanation through an Allen–Allen connection. Yet the rapidity and inanity of his targeting the daughter of a mere country clergyman, one who—while not strictly poor—harbours no wealthy prospects, are explained by specific

5 In actuality there were two women by the name of Mrs Ralph Allen. Allen's first wife was Elizabeth Buckridge (d. 1736) after whose death he married Elizabeth Holder (d. 1766). Ralph Allen had no issue, an only child from his first marriage, named George, having died as a toddler.

historical events of the 1790s. These events are slyly reinforced by Austen's gestures to the name and memory of Ralph Allen throughout the story of *Northanger Abbey*.

The ubiquity in Georgian Bath of the lingering memory of the late Ralph Allen cannot be exaggerated. Along with Beau Nash and the two architects named John Wood (the Elder and the Younger), Ralph Allen was (and remains) among Bath's most famous and foundational inhabitants. He figures in Bath's history as the prime mover of the eighteenth-century wealth, vision, and city planning that raised it from a slovenly seventeenth-century village with waters for the sick to a metropolitan spa for the well-to-do. His name is associated with the pinnacle of Bath's prosperity—a heyday of trade and glamour which was drawing to a close when Austen composed *Northanger Abbey*.<sup>6</sup> A better understanding of the Bath-centered reputation of Ralph Allen recovers the comedic force and social satire embedded in Tilney's and Thorpe's mistaken assessment of the heroine. More specifically still, a knowledge of the high-profile architectural elements in the Bath landscape most directly associated with Allen, particularly Prior Park and his so-called Sham Castle, exerts an influence upon a reading of specific scenes in the text—scenes that deftly take us past these famous places. For with a cartographer's precision, Austen navigates her characters through Bath's turn-of-the-century landscape, emphasising Catherine's ignorance of the mistakes made by Thorpe and General Tilney with implied views of the real-world Allen's visible legacy.

### Bath and *Northanger Abbey*'s Composition and Sale

The connection my argument makes between *Northanger Abbey*'s plot and its astonishing precision about Bath's history and urban landscape touches upon the work's composition and publication. Relative to the complex debates about Austen's other novels and their multiple bouts of revision, the history of *Northanger Abbey*'s composition is fairly uncontroversial. Cassandra records in her memorandums of 1817 that 'North-anger Abby was written about the years 98 & 99' and Deirdre Le Faye refines this period to, tentatively, August 1798 to June 1799.<sup>7</sup> These dates roughly coincide with Austen's recorded visits to Bath in 1797 and, again in 1799 (other short visits may, some suggest, have occurred as early as 1794, or even 1790).<sup>8</sup> The Austen family had some relatives in Bath and eventually

6 For a thorough discussion of Bath's economic rise and fall, see R. S. Neale, *Bath 1680–1850, A Social History: Or, A Valley of Pleasure, Yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London, 1981).

7 D. Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (1989; 2nd edn, Cambridge, 2004), xxii–xxiii.

8 See Benedict and Le Faye, 'Introduction' to *Northanger Abbey*, xxiii–xxiv, and Emma Austen Leigh, *Jane Austen and Bath* (London, 1939, republ. Folcroft Library Editions, 1976), 1. These early visits are presumed to be short stays with relatives in Bath. For the minority argument that Austen began her novel in 1794, see C. S. Emden, 'The Composition of *Northanger Abbey*', *Review of English Studies*, 19:75 (1968), 279–87. For discussions of Austen's experiences in Bath, see Maggie Lane, *A Charming Place: Bath in the Life and Novels of Jane Austen* (Bath, 1988) and Jean Freeman, *Jane Austen in Bath* (Jane Austen Society, 2002).

moved there as part of Mr Austen's retirement in 1801, taking up residence at No. 4 Sydney Place.<sup>9</sup> This is where, scholars agree, Jane Austen probably put the finishing touches to her manuscript—which was initially called *Susan*. With regard to family, the young Jane Austen enjoyed a distant as well as immediate connection to Bath. Her mother's great uncle was James Brydges, Duke of Chandos (1674–1744), a near-contemporary of Ralph Allen's and co-sponsor of John Wood's Bath. Knowledge of her own family history already secures Austen's awareness of Ralph Allen, since the history of these two men overlaps a great deal.<sup>10</sup>

All scholars accept that the bulk of *Northanger Abbey* was written prior to 1803, when Austen first offered the manuscript for sale under the title of *Susan*. Then a full-time resident of Bath, the 27-year-old Austen received £10 for the copyright, saw the novel advertised as 'In Press', but never, to her dismay, saw it actually published.<sup>11</sup> Her brother Henry bought back the original manuscript from Crosby and Co. in London sometime in 1816 with an evident intention to help his sister publish it. She then altered her heroine's name to *Catherine* and penned a brief advertisement. This advertisement accompanied the novel when it was posthumously published under the still-different title of *Northanger Abbey* (scholars presume it to be Henry's and Cassandra's choice) in December 1817 (the cited date is 1818), six months after the author's death on 18 July 1817. The consensus of scholarly opinion is that Austen, who was growing increasingly ill from the autumn of 1816 onwards, did not extensively revise her 1803 manuscript—both because she lacked the time and because all the historical references in the final novel predate that year. The mapping of Austen's cartographic details reinforces this standard view, suggesting that Austen writes in the company of Bath as it looked to her in 1797 and 1799 and possibly slightly beyond—through her first years of residence at Sydney Place from 1801 to 1803. To the extent that the novel's own physical and historical setting likely reflects the time of its composition, I agree with Marilyn Butler that '*Northanger Abbey* is essentially a work of the late 1790s'.<sup>12</sup>

My emphasis on the novel's deliberate mapping of Bath may gloss a minor sticking point in its publication history, namely her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh's assertion in his *Memoir* that the original sale of the manuscript

9 Mrs Austen's brother James Leigh Perrot, for example, lived part-time in Bath.

10 See Neale, *Bath 1680–1850*, 116–50, and Benjamin Boyce, *The Benevolent Man: A Life of Ralph Allen of Bath* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), esp. 30, where he identifies a powerful quartet—Humphrey Thayer, Robert Gay, Chandos and Allen—as the driving force behind Wood's Italianate vision for Bath.

11 For a detailed discussion of these circumstances, see A. A. Mandal, 'Making Austen Mad: Benjamin Crosby and the Non-Publication of *Susan*', *Review of English Studies*, New Series, 57:231 (2006), 507–25.

12 Marilyn Butler, 'Introduction', *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen (London, 1995, repr. 2003), xiv.

in 1803 had been 'to a publisher in Bath'.<sup>13</sup> Gilson suggests a 'Mr. Cruttwell' as the likely Bath conduit to Crosby & Son in London and points to an advertisement for a pamphlet about the trial of Mrs. Leigh Perrot (Austen's aunt, who was accused of shoplifting) that names both firms.<sup>14</sup> In light of this connection, Gilson grants, quoting the *Memoir* again, that 'it is possible that the first overtures for *Susan* were in fact made in Bath'.<sup>15</sup> Anthony Mandal similarly allows that 'the Bath connection is quite likely a valid one', suggesting that Crosby's 'provincial links' to publishers in the West Country might have enabled Cruttwell to serve as 'the channel through which Austen approached Crosby and Co'.<sup>16</sup> In 1803, the year of *Susan*'s sale, the Austen family resided at Sydney Place; an approach to a prominent nearby publisher about a story set in Bath appears logical enough. The Cruttwell family also had strong ties to Sherborne, a country parish contiguous with the one from which Mr Austen had just retired. This further strengthens the possibility that the Austens knew (or knew of) the Cruttwells and so began enquiries with them.<sup>17</sup> If sending an unsolicited manuscript to a London publisher seemed daunting to the young Jane Austen (and certainly her father's cold-call on Thomas Cadell in London via letter had not yielded any results in 1797), calling on a Bath-based firm with family connections to their previous community would have been an appealing alternative—especially when such a visit might be made in person. If, as Gilson suggests, Austen approached the Cruttwell establishment in 1803, she dealt with Richard Shuttleworth Cruttwell, who took over his father's business in 1799. Yet, as Gilson must be aware, all the Cruttwells were printers and not, strictly speaking, publishers—though they owned several local newspapers, including *The Bath Chronicle*, and put out guidebooks such as *The New Bath Guide* annually.

If the nature of Cruttwell's output and business dealings are carefully considered, perhaps James Edward Austen Leigh does not confuse a *printer* with a *publisher*. The Cruttwells of Bath did, occasionally, print book-length works 'for the author' or 'for the editor', suggesting that the firm was willing to dabble in book

13 Quoted in David Gilson, *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* (2nd edn, Winchester and Delaware, 1997), 83. In 1897, Austin Dobson had also insisted upon a Bath sale, testifying to the long-standing nature of the assumption that *Susan* was first sold there. Dobson's introduction to the 1897 edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* steadfastly assumes that Jane Austen sold her manuscript to 'a Boeotian bookseller of Bath'. He proclaims that 'Mr. Bull of the Circulating Library at Bath (if Mr. Bull it were) was constitutionally insensible to the charms of' Austen's style (*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, illus. Hugh Thomson, intro. Austin Dobson [London, 1897], vii).

14 Gilson quotes an advertisement for a pamphlet account by William Legge in *The Bath Chronicle* (Vol. 43, No. 2001) for Thursday, 24 April 1800: 'this day published, price Eighteen-pence, with marginal notes, sold by Crosby, Stationer's Court, Pater-noster-Row, London; and Mr. Cruttwell, Bath' (*Bibliography*, 454).

15 Gilson, *Bibliography*, 83.

16 Mandal, 'Making Austen Mad', 511.

17 See George Tatham, 'Cruttwell, William (bap. 1741, d. 1804)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, September 2004); online edn, January 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/article/70548>, accessed 8 September 2008].

publishing—as long as the author bore the printing costs. The Cruttwells were also worth approaching for their London network alone, as evidenced by the many respectable London booksellers mentioned in their imprints. But perhaps, the most salient feature of their *publishing* interests concerns the fact that Cruttwell owned the local newspaper and put out an annual guidebook of Bath. This might have made him particularly receptive to the manner in which the manuscript of *Susan* made use of current events and local geography. While Cruttwell's was in the business of *printing* novels for others, it *published* local news and indigenous fare. Perhaps Austen thought of *Susan* in this light—as slightly journalistic, a fictionalized guidebook of sorts. Perhaps Cruttwell, as both Gilson and Mandal imply, declined but pointed the way to Crosby's in London. And to preserve the author's anonymity, her brother Henry's banking agent, William Seymour, it has been suggested, transacted the actual sale to Crosby.<sup>18</sup> The significance of these speculations about Cruttwell's initial involvement for my own place-centered argument of *Northanger Abbey* is transparent. If Austen initially consulted a Bath-based firm about her debut novel—and it is Gilson, with Mandal's approval, who points to Cruttwell's as the most likely establishment—it greatly increases the chance that she targeted a reader familiar with Bath's landscape and local lore.

A presumed Bath-savvy audience explains why *Northanger Abbey* devotes little or no space to any direct description of sights in Bath. Instead, Austen drops the names of Bath's streets and locales into her story in what one historian calls 'an amiable taking-it-for-granted manner'.<sup>19</sup> Austen, who knows Bath well, does indeed assume a similar familiarity in her reader. Banking on Bath's popularity as a tourist destination, she might have assumed a great deal even from a London audience. Yet, her smallish mentions of streets differ from the wide-angled descriptions in, for example, Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778)—a known favorite of Austen's. Partly set in Bath, *Evelina* describes the features of interest to a London reader, including the dominant view of Ralph Allen's estate as seen from the city's centre:

The Crescent, the prospect from it, and the elegant symmetry of the Circus, delighted me. The Parades, I own, rather disappointed me; one of them is scarce preferable so some of the best paved streets in London, and the other, though it affords a beautiful prospect, a charming view of Prior Park and of the Avon, yet wanted something in *itself* of more striking elegance than a mere broad pavement, to satisfy the ideas I had formed of it.<sup>20</sup>

Burney's fault-finding descriptions, voiced by her young heroine, are those of the tourist. Although Austen's heroine is similarly new to Bath, *Northanger Abbey*, by contrast, offers scenery from a local's 'taking-it-for-granted' point of view. It never

18 Benedict and Le Faye, 'Introduction' to *Northanger Abbey*, xxvi.

19 J. C. Trewin, *The Story of Bath* (London and New York, 1951), 78.

20 Frances Burney, *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 3 vols, vol. 3, 2nd edn. (London, 1779), 237–8.



has to mention, we shall see, Prior Park by name. Austen can coyly practice a synecdoche of description and let a mere part stand for the whole. The reader's assumed topographical knowledge of Bath includes the structures along the city's skyline that were so strongly associated with the real-world Mr Allen, particularly his estate of Prior Park and his so-called Sham Castle. These well-known Allen landmarks, highly visible along the edges of 'Bath's amphitheatrical setting' from almost every street mentioned in the novel, watch over Austen's characters.<sup>21</sup> Austen assumes that a reader's knowledge of Bath, helped along by the telltale name of Allen, will conjure his buildings and gardens in the landscape of her scenes. To overlook these famous features in Bath's landscape, the visible evidence of the Allen fortune in Austen's day, is to miss much of Austen's artistic subtlety in *Northanger Abbey*.

### 'The Man of Bath' and Squire Allworthy

Ralph Allen's wealth was remarkable both because it was utterly self-made and because it was rarely begrudged. In Pope's terms, 'low-born' Allen came to remote Bath to obtain the position of salaried deputy postmaster in 1712.<sup>22</sup> He soon secured the right 'to farm the cross-post, and the bye-way post' in such a manner that the regional mail did not need to go, as was customary, via London.<sup>23</sup> His entrepreneurial postal scheme involved great risk (an outlay of £6,000 annually for the rights) but paid huge dividends. Determined to prevent fraud in his subcontractors, Allen proved a meticulous and fair-dealing businessman and 'in time realized profits in the order of £12,000 per year'.<sup>24</sup> Allen primarily invested these profits in large swathes of land in and around Bath, included its stone quarries. Eventually Allen secured a near-monopoly on Bath's local stone, putting him in a position to encourage the city's growth. Allen did not stimulate urban development to line his own pockets. He was known, in fact, for the reverse. He bought out his competitors so as to keep the price of stone low and encourage further urban beautification and expansion. In this same vein, Allen was widely hailed as a generous philanthropist, giving freely to the poor (over £1,000 annually) and funding a number of benevolent projects (such as Bath General Hospital) with donations of stone and labor.

21 Jocelyn Harris, *A Revolution Almost Beyond Description: Jane Austen's Persuasion* (Newark, 2007), 161. A 1799 guidebook further confirms the omnipresence of Prior Park: 'Prior Park, and its embellishments, form a pleasing scene for the rambling eye, while you are walking over the parades, or passing along Great Pulteney-street' (George Saville Carey, *The Balnea; Or, an Impartial Description of all the Popular Watering Places in England* [London, 1799], 123).

22 'Let low-born ALLEN, with an awkward Shame, / Do good by stealth, and blush to find it Fame' (*Epilogue to the Satires*, 1738); Pope subsequently changed 'low-born' to 'humble'.

23 Brenda J. Buchanan, 'Allen, Ralph (bap. 1693, d. 1764)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, September 2004), online edn, January 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/article/386, accessed 8 September 2008].

24 See Neale, *Bath 1680–1850*, 56 and DNB entry for Ralph Allen.





FIG. 1. Famous 1750 print of Prior Park ('Anthony Walker Sculpt'). Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

The jewel of the Allen empire was the Palladian mansion at Prior Park (Fig. 1). The house was built by John Wood, the Elder, starting in the 1730s. It had a grand imposing façade and enjoyed breathtaking vistas of Bath from its vantage point at the top of a hillside just southeast of the city. But Prior Park was built on a hilltop 'not only to see all Bath but for all Bath to see'.<sup>25</sup> The house on the hill's crest and its sloping gardens that rolled towards town were intended as visible markers of Bath's prosperity. To achieve maximum visual impact, Allen employed major talent in the design of his gardens. He initially sought the advice of Alexander Pope, and soon William Kent weighed in on further improvements. Over the years Allen added structures and satellite buildings. Most widely known, perhaps, is the copy of a much-admired Palladian bridge (the original was designed by Pembroke in the late 1730s), constructed in the 1750s to stretch over a sculpted pond at the bottom of the landscape garden. But there were also some lesser-known touches. For example, Mrs Allen apparently began construction on a grotto in the 1740s, possibly under the influence of Pope's passion for such garden features.<sup>26</sup> Over the Ralph Allen years a pinery, a cascade, an octagonal stone hut, an outdoor room called the Grass Cabinet, a 'sham bridge', a Gothic Temple, serpentine walks and a serpentine lake, a pair of gatehouses, and various other embellishments sprouted up on the lawns facing Bath.<sup>27</sup>

25 V. C. Chamberlain, *The City of Bath* (Bristol, 1951), 51.

26 Boyce, *The Benevolent Man*, 115.

27 General Tilney's remarks to Catherine about his garden and pinery, which lead him to inquire into Mr Allen's 'succession-houses' and gardening efforts, may also nod to Prior Park's extensive reputation for gardening experiments (see vol. II, ch vii).

In addition to building notable architectural monuments at Prior Park, Allen also turned his home into 'a centre of hospitality and culture'.<sup>28</sup> Many of England's literati, politicians and artists came to stay with the Allens at Prior Park. Thomas Gainsborough (who lived in town) visited the Allens, along with celebrity-painter William Hoare and James Quin, who apparently brought David Garrick. Alexander Pope, in particular, relied heavily upon the friendship and hospitality of Ralph Allen. Pope wrote much of the expanded *Dunciad* at Prior Park and on one memorable visit even brought Martha Blount. The Allens frequently hosted such literary figures as Sarah and Henry Fielding, and also had Samuel Richardson to stay. Members of the clergy and Whig party stopped by, including William Warburton, William Pitt the elder and Sir John Ligonier. Royalty, too, came to visit, including the young Princess Amelia. Prior Park was part of the eighteenth-century literary scene, even when the authors did not come in person. Richardson wrote Ralph Allen for advice on the manuscript of his continuation of *Pamela*, while Sterne sent two copies of *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* to Prior Park.<sup>29</sup> In brief, Allen's literary and political network at Prior Park had given the place a national profile—one which Austen's novel, with its many explicit references to Fielding, Pope, Richardson and other eighteenth-century greats, deftly invokes.

By Austen's time, Ralph Allen had not only served as host to literary giants, he had personally played a role in the history of the early novel—namely as a partial model for Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones* (1749). Fielding, a frequent guest at Prior Park, evidently wrote part of the story there. Fielding's picture of a benevolent squire who lives on a vast estate in Somerset without an heir (Ralph Allen's only son George had died in infancy) was widely hailed as an homage to the generous and kind-hearted Allen. Later, Fielding also dedicated *Amelia* (1751) to his friend and benefactor.<sup>30</sup> From the start of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen refers to *Tom Jones* obliquely, quipping, for example, that the Morlands in Fullerton knew not one family 'who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door—not one young man whose origin was unknown' (p. 9).<sup>31</sup> She even mentions *Tom Jones* by name, although not wholly favorably since she allows her rake to condemn it with faint praise. Thorpe so much approves of *Tom Jones* that he measures all other novels against it: 'Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff; there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since *Tom Jones*, except the *Monk*' (p. 43).

28 DNB entry for Ralph Allen.

29 Boyce, *The Benevolent Man*, 120 and 257. Richardson's editions of Defoe's *Tour Through the Island of Great Britain*, as least as early as the fourth edition of 1748, also mention Mr Allen and his estate at Prior Park prominently.

30 The friendship between Fielding and Allen was of long duration. Named executor in Fielding's will, Allen (as was doubtless Fielding's hope) provided for the impoverished author's widow and children. Allen even extended financial assistance to Henry's sister, Sarah.

31 In *Tom Jones*, the hero is, admittedly, found in Allworthy's bed and not on the doorstep.



FIG. 2. Nineteenth-century print of the 'Mausoleum of Ralph Allen, the Squire Allworthy of Tom Jones'. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

Thorpe, who soon rails against Burney's *Camilla* (1796)—a novel for which Austen was an original subscriber—by saying 'I took up the first volume once and looked it over, but I soon found it would not do', may be in the habit of reading only the beginnings of books (p. 43). His literary opinion likely does not matter much. Yet it was precisely the opening chapters of *Tom Jones* that were scrutinised most closely for Fielding's fictionalized portrait of Allen.

In light of this association, local Bath lore regularly conflated Allen and Allworthy. One nineteenth-century print depicts the ivy-bedecked mausoleum at nearby Claverton where Allen lies interned: it is inscribed 'Mausoleum of Ralph Allen, the Squire Allworthy of Tom Jones' (Fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> If a reading of *Tom Jones* activates an awareness of the rich and benevolent Ralph Allen in Bath, talk of it may account for (or at least clue the reader into) Thorpe's sudden change of itinerary for the next day's outing. For, just before their talk of *Tom Jones*, Thorpe proposes to take Catherine for a ride in his open carriage, declaring 'I will drive you up Lansdown Hill to-morrow', a popular destination that promises a scenic drive along the high ground leading to Bristol (p. 42). The subsequent small-talk about the excellences of *Tom Jones*, however, seems to influence his proposed itinerary.

When he and his sister arrive, rather suddenly, to take Catherine for a ride on the following day, their declared destination is, instead, Claverton Down. Despite

32 The imprint reads 'W. Williams Del. Pub. By R. E. Peach 8 Bridge St. Bath. J. Shury Sc[ulpsit]', Bath Central Library (Box A S16).

Thorpe's implication and Catherine's half-hearted agreement that such was his intention all along, Claverton Down is in precisely the opposite direction from the promised Lansdown Hill:

'What do you mean?' said Catherine, 'where are you all going to?'

'Going to? why, you have not forgot our engagement! Did not we agree together to take a drive this morning? What a head you have! We are going up Claverton Down.'

'Something was said about it, I remember,' said Catherine, looking at Mrs. Allen for her opinion; 'but really I did not expect you.' (p. 57)

Catherine does not protest the change in direction and, in fact, seems too flummoxed by the brazenness of the party and the novelty of a carriage outing with a young man to assert herself. Possibly Thorpe's radical change of direction, from Lansdown Hill in the north-west to Claverton Down in the south-east, is intended as a geographical clue to the influence of the Allen estate on Thorpe's motivations. For Thorpe's revised route will now lead them straight to the gates of Prior Park.

### Prior Park, the Sham Castle and Map-Maker Mr Thorpe

It is in direct sight of the Prior Park gates that Thorpe first speaks about 'Old Allen' and his money. Poor Catherine, unlike Austen's Bath-savvy reader, seems utterly oblivious to Thorpe's geographical innuendo. Contemporary maps of Bath tended to extend their shelf-life by anticipating planned developments, thus forecasting Bath slightly. This makes multiple charts essential in a mapping of *Northanger Abbey*. Using plans of Bath from 1794 and 1808 to roughly bookend the novel's composition, it is possible to trace Thorpe's route and topographically gloss the encoded conversation that occurs during this drive (Figs. 3 and 4).

Austen has the awkward pair start off in 'silence' from Pulteney Street, where the Allens and Catherine reside. From that address the most direct route to the Claverton Down Road would take her characters from the corner of Pulteney Street and Sydney Place onto the quiet rural track that throughout the 1790s still lay across the open meadows connecting the Bathwick development to the parish of Widcombe. This road ran roughly parallel to the Avon and would eventually be straightened out to become Darlington Street (the 1794 map names it Sackville Street, a provisional name that was never actually used for the finished project). After the completion of the Kennet and Avon Canal portion that dissects Sydney Gardens (shown in the 1808 map), the extension of Darlington Street would direct traffic smoothly between the river and canal. The first boat trip along the Sydney Gardens portion of the canal took place in June of 1810, so the 1808 map anticipates the canal's completion.<sup>33</sup> Just after passing through the Turnpike Gate (around the time of the canal's completion it was moved about 30 yards or so

<sup>33</sup> I am grateful to Anne Buchanan, Local Studies Librarian at Bath Central Library, for her help in dating the features shown in these maps.





FIG. 3. Detail of the Bathwick area in one of the most detailed maps of the time, 'The City of Bath' by Charles Harcourt Masters (1794). It was reprinted with minor revisions in 1808 (see next figure). This 1794 imprint reads: 'Published by C. Harcourt Masters, Rivers Street and engraved by S. I. Neele, No 352 Strand, London. Sold also in Bath by all the Booksellers.' Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.



FIG. 4. Detail of the Bathwick area in the 1808 version of 'The City of Bath' map by Charles Harcourt Masters. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

south, as already shown in the 1808 map), any carriage traveling along this road would be forced to come to a stop right in front of the Prior Park Gate, where a sharp left turn would have the party immediately on Claverton Down Road. Not only does this road offer the most direct route to their declared destination, but both maps show that through to at least 1808, straightened or no, it still offered the relative privacy of rural scenery craved by both John Thorpe and James Morland, who accompanies Thorpe's sister Isabella in a second carriage.

With confident precision Austen allows that 'a silence of several minutes succeeded their first short dialogue' (p. 59). Although Thorpe has already boasted in a prior scene that his horse travels, come rain or shine, at a nippy 10 miles per hour, the text again calculates their exact rate of progress in the thoughts of an ironic narrator, focalized by Catherine, who observes of the calm horse that 'its inevitable pace was ten miles an hour' (p. 59). Thorpe's boast and Catherine's acceptance, of course, defy a reader's belief, since this rate of speed was barely sustained by seasoned professionals (such as the coach that will take Catherine home at the novel's end), and only on clear days and good roads. Indeed the Allen fortune, made from a postal route's optimized efficiency, nicely belies Thorpe's ambitious calculations for his mere gig. Austen puts the lie to Thorpe in the earlier scene where James contradicts his 10 miles per hour estimate for their trip from Tetbury to Bath: Thorpe insists they covered 25 miles in 2.5 hours, while James says it was 23 miles in 3.5 hours (this would give their true speed as 6.57 miles per hour). The map confirms that the distance from the top of Pulteney Street to Prior Park is no more than three-quarters of a mile, which—even at the slower rate given by James—would take a carriage under 7 minutes to traverse. Austen's unusual redundancy about likely rates of speed insures that any reader familiar with Bath can mentally calculate how 'several minutes' of silent progress may be all that is necessary to have Catherine brought from the fictional Allens in Pulteney Street, literally, to the gates of the real-world Allen home at Prior Park.

It is likely, then, in full view of the old Allen estate that Thorpe, perhaps at the sharp turn onto Claverton Down Road, 'abruptly' breaks the silence with his crude inquiry into Catherine's relationship to the Allens.

A silence of several minutes succeeded their first short dialogue;—it was broken by Thorpe's saying very abruptly, 'Old Allen is as rich as a Jew—is not he?' Catherine did not understand him—and he repeated his question, adding in explanation, 'Old Allen, the man you are with.' (p. 59)

Since the scenic road 'up Claverton Down' then travels steeply uphill with Prior Park on the right, the entire exchange about the Allens takes place in a carriage that is slowly edging Ralph Allen's grounds at Prior Park:

'Oh! Mr. Allen, you mean. Yes, I believe, he is very rich.'

'And no children at all?'

'No—not any.'

'A famous thing for his next heirs. He is *your* godfather, is not he?'

'My godfather!—no.'

'But you are always very much with them.'

'Yes, very much.'

'Aye, that is what I meant. He seems a good kind of old fellow enough, and has lived very well in his time, I dare say; he is not gouty for nothing.' (pp. 59–60)

Although Catherine, newly arrived in Bath, remains troublingly unaware of the significance of their locale during this odd interrogation, any reader who knows the landscape cannot remain innocent of the Allen–Allen link—and neither, surely, does Thorpe. Cruttwell's *New Bath Guide* recommends a scenic airing up Claverton Down for all who would enjoy 'a delightful prospect of the city of Bath'. It adds that 'To the right as you ascend this Down, is a seat that belonged to the late Ralph Allen, esq.'<sup>34</sup> While Catherine's naïve gaze is surely turned toward the delightful urban prospect on their left, Thorpe presumably oges his financial prospects on the right. This is not to say that Austen implies Thorpe must believe Mr Allen to be Ralph Allen, dead for over three decades in even the first draft of *Susan* (although that level of stupidity would nicely lard his buffoonery), but merely that his timing and line of enquiry suggest that he mistakes Catherine for the heir to an Allen fortune with Bath connections. Perhaps he hopes that the day's proximity to Prior Park will set loose some acknowledgement of a family association on Catherine's part. Claverton Down road, of course, also aims at nearby Claverton, where stands the mausoleum of 'Ralph Allen, the Squire Allworthy of Tom Jones' (Fig. 2). Austen enhances Thorpe's conversation with a choice of setting that winks at and rewards those in the know about Bath. Her street names are not casual throwaways to mark the urban setting generally, but compact clues that highlight what the characters may be looking at—or, in Thorpe's case, even thinking.

If Jane Austen maps her fictional characters with uncanny precision, she may have gleaned the impulse from another cartographer in her family. A map of the island of St Helena published in 1816 by the Hydrographic Office, bears this note: 'The N.W. Bank of Soundings by Captain F. W. Austin R. N. in 1808.' In spite of the spelling variation, this map of the island is indeed based upon the painstaking coastal measurements, or 'soundings', taken by Jane Austen's seafaring brother, Frank (Francis William Austen), a ship captain at that time.<sup>35</sup> Although the date of this particular map takes us beyond the completion of *Susan*, the mere existence of Frank's chart of St Helena (he also made others) suggests the cartographic sensibility that surrounded Jane Austen. Jane herself, we know, had the necessary knowledge of Bath to be precise. Starting in 1801, she lived at No. 4 Sydney Place, on that very corner with Pulteney Street from which Thorpe's carriage departs. She must have traveled the same route to the Claverton Down Road on numerous occasions and need not have owned a stopwatch to measure, with naval precision,

34 *The New Bath Guide* (1795), 49.

35 See J. H. Hubback and Edith C. Hubback, *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers* (London, 1906). The Hubbacks reported that two of Francis Austen's charts remained functional: 'While on these last voyages Captain Austen made two charts, one of Simon's Bay, and one of the north-west side of the island of St. Helena, which are still in use at the Admiralty' (194).



that a mere 'several minutes' would suffice to take a swift carriage from her own home directly to the gates of Prior Park. The fact that a contemporary map can unearth the witty precision behind her timed route again suggests similarities between her method and that of the persnickety modernist James Joyce.

Before returning to the concrete mapped movement of Austen's characters, I would like to insert one minor speculative observation about a particular brand of map. In Austen's time, Bath's population, which swelled to about 33,000 during the season, constituted a clientele keen on works about the place itself. Due to its heavy tourist constituency, Bath's print market in local products enjoyed a lively trade in maps of all sorts. Some ladies' fans even came equipped with maps of the city centre and pictures of local buildings. Cruttwell's guides, too, could be purchased for one price without a map and a slightly higher price with a 'plan' of the city. For example, the title page of Cruttwell's *The Strangers' Assistant and Guide to Bath* (1773), another of their early guidebooks, lists two prices: 'One Shilling' for the book alone and 'One shilling and Sixpence' if purchased 'with a Plan of Bath'. *The Strangers' Assistant* appends a list of advertisement for related works. This list includes several maps that sold separately—one cheap and compact of the city center and the other so detailed and far-ranging that it cost the same as Cruttwell's guidebook-with-plan. This meticulous map of Bath and its environs is the work of a man named Thorpe:

A MAP of Five Miles round the City of BATH, on a Scale of One Inch and a Half to a Mile, reduced from an actual Survey made by THOMAS THORPE, with Alterations & Improvements to the present Time. Pr. 1s. 6d.<sup>36</sup>

One 1773 map that fits this advertisement's description is shown here (Fig. 5). Updated and shrunken versions of this same circular map, with or without mention of Thorpe, appeared in editions of *The Original Bath Guide* through the 1820s.<sup>37</sup>

In 1742, Thomas Thorpe had drawn up a map of Bath and its environs so comprehensive, that it remained the gold standard for all maps with a radius of multiple miles for, at least, the next half century. The original map's sheer size as well as its list of subscribers implies that Thorpe's creation was not aimed at the mere tourist. Mowbray Green describes Thorpe's survey as a watershed moment in the history of Bath topography: 'the map, 39 inches in diameter, is perhaps one of the most valuable contributions which we possess, not only to the topography, but also to the history of the time. The names of many of the owners of the country houses are noted, and the two spandrel corners on the left of the map

36 *The Strangers' Assistant and Guide to Bath* (Bath, 1773), 100. The same advertisement (with no change in price) may be found in the back matter to Cruttwell's *New Bath Guide* for the years 1775, 1777 and 1780.

37 *The Original Bath Guide* (Printed by and for M. Meyler, [1828?]), betw. 122 and 123. Although guidebook maps were often torn out for use, the Huntington Library owns two copies (bound together) that survive with their Thorpe-based plans intact (DA690 B3 O7 1828).

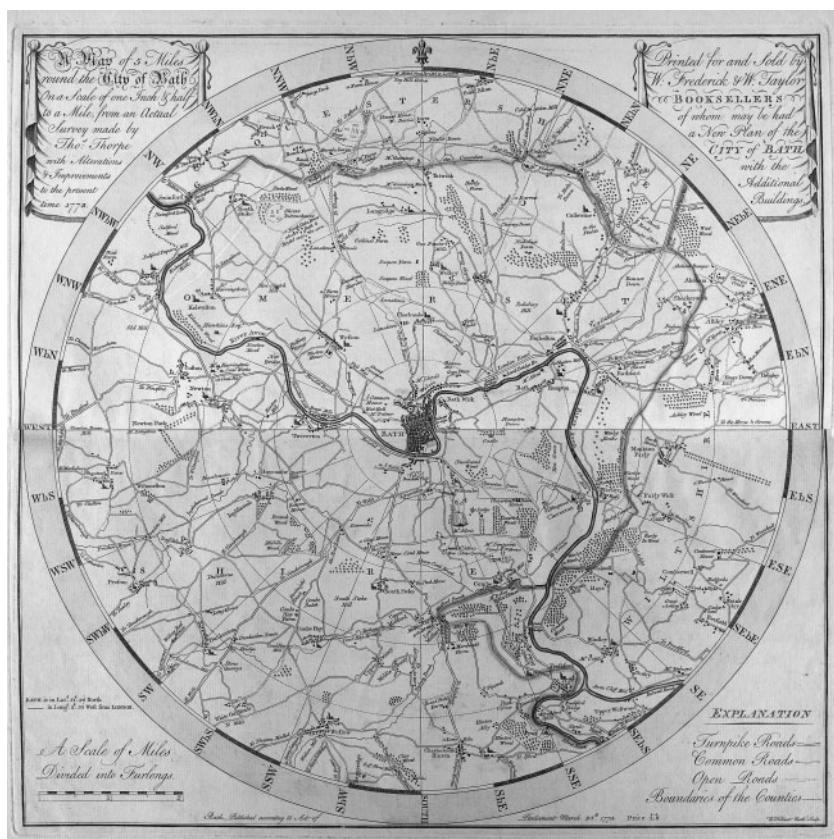


FIG. 5. 'A Plan of 5 Miles Round the City of Bath On a Scale of one Inch & half to a Mile from an Actual Survey made by Tho:s Thorpe with Alterations & Improvements to the present time 1773'. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

are occupied by an alphabetical list of the subscribers.<sup>38</sup> Thorpe's map was originally published in multiple sheets:

Mr. Thorpe published an actual survey of the city and five miles round; wherein are laid down all the villages, gentlemens seats, farm houses, roads, highways, rivers, watercourses, and all things worthy of observation, in ten sheets, circular.<sup>39</sup>

The advertisement in Cruttwell's guidebook of 1773 (Taylor's advert for his updated Thorpe map also ran in Cruttwell's *New Bath Guide* for 1775, 1777 and 1780) already confirms that for many decades Bath's best maps for tourist consumption continued to be based upon Mr Thorpe's well-known original, and

38 Mowbray A. Green, *The Eighteenth Century Architecture of Bath* (Bath, 1904), 128. Copies of Thorpe's original map remain available for viewing at Bath Reference Library (LS/OS B912.423 THO and LS B912.423 THO).

39 [Richard Gough] *Anecdotes of British Topography* (London, 1768), 471. In actuality, the Thorpe map was printed on nine sheets.



updated copy of Mr Thorpe's map of 'five miles round' and follow his namesake around Bath's landscape. In this context, the suggestion that Austen initially consulted Cruttwell's, an establishment familiar with the Thorpe maps and incentivised to approve of any gimmick that reminded readers of related products, has luster.

Whether or not she gestures to an actual map of Bath by a Mr Thorpe, Austen repeats her map trick the next time John Thorpe takes Catherine out in his carriage. On this occasion the fictional Thorpe's lure is the promise of Blaise Castle beyond Clifton (they never reach it), which he describes in false terms:

'Blaise Castle!' cried Catherine; 'what is that?'  
 'The finest place in England—worth going fifty miles at any time to see.'  
 'What, is it really a castle, an old castle?'  
 'The oldest in the kingdom.'  
 'But is it like what one reads of?'  
 'Exactly—the very same.'  
 'But now really—are there towers and long galleries?'  
 'By dozens.'  
 'Then I should like to see it' (p. 83)

As Austen's modern editors routinely point out, in reality Blaise Castle was neither 'old' nor 'real' and encompassed but one small garden room. Built in 1766 by Thomas Farr, a sugar merchant from Bristol, Blaise Castle was a typical folly—a faux Gothic castle built to enhance the view from Farr's house. This eye-catcher was also located at Henbury and not, as Thorpe has it, at Kingsweston. It had three round towers triangulated around one circular room that was used to entertain the occasional visitor on outdoor excursions. The whole effect of Farr's summer house was not unlike a fanciful picnic area in Disneyland and nothing like the genuine castle Catherine imagines and Thorpe promises. As Marilyn Butler notes, the discussion of Blaise Castle 'seems a clear case where Austen advantages those of her readers who have topographical and architectural knowledge'.<sup>41</sup> The cartographic cleverness of Austen's ensuing scene extends, however, beyond knowledge of Blaise Castle alone.

Thomas Farr's Blaise Castle was, in fact, erected in imitation of a prominent folly in Bath built a decade earlier by Ralph Allen. Like Austen's heroine, Ralph Allen was fond of the Gothic and added in 1755 to his Palladian achievements at Prior Park a fake Gothic castle on the crest of Bathwick Hill facing the city centre.<sup>42</sup> Colloquially dubbed 'Ralph Allen's Sham Castle' the structure was a classic garden folly—an architectural *trompe l'oeil* to fool the likes of a visitor just like Catherine. From a distance the whimsical façade deftly impersonated a medieval castle, complete with a Gothically pointed central archway, a pair of round towers with cross cutouts, and a castellated silhouette (Fig. 7). According to biographer Benjamin Boyce, the sham castle was Allen's response to the emerging

41 Butler, endnotes to her edition of *Northanger Abbey*, 249.

42 See Boyce, *Benevolent Man*, 225–6.





FIG. 7. Ralph Allen's Sham Castle, as depicted in an 1844 plate. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

interest in the Gothic. Boyce points to a fake Gothic 'ruin' at Stowe, built some years previous, as a project 'Allen must have known' (*Benevolent Man*, p. 225). Quick to recognize this trend as an 'opportunity' to make the city of Bath more picturesque and enhance tourism with a 'Gothick Object', Allen asked William Pitt, 'another enthusiast for Gothic supplements to Palladian triumphs', to enlist for him the help of that 'Great Master of Gothick', Sanderson Miller (*Benevolent Man*, p. 225 and 226). As Boyce notes, Wood senior was no longer alive to protest the placing of a bogus Gothic behemoth prominently along his delicately planned Palladian skyline. Allen's motivation was, however, characteristically public-minded. The sham castle, Boyce explains, 'was not built, one must understand, to ornament the vista from Prior Park', from which the structure would barely be visible. 'This was one of Mr. Allen's benefactions (and Mr. Pitt's) to Bath and the world's travelers' (*Benevolent Man*, p. 226). Boyce documents the prominence of the sham castle on the top of the hill, from where it 'looked down upon the Terrace Walk and the Parades to charm all visitors to Bath' (*Benevolent Man*, p. 226). Maps and views of Bath well beyond 1803 confirm the lack of surrounding structures that might impede the prominent view of its blazing white façade against the green hill from almost anywhere along the eastern sweep of Bath, which up to that date remained, with the notable exception of the Bathwick development where the Austens (and the fictional Allens) resided, bounded by the curvature of the Avon (Fig. 8). In Austen's day, the Sham Castle, in fact, peered over this suburban development. Although a restoration project in



FIG. 8. 'Sham Castle from the North Parade Bridge', a print circa 1850. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

1921 possibly tidied and repaired Allen's 'strange building' to excess, making a faux medieval castle look disturbingly new, it remains a noteworthy architectural oddity.<sup>43</sup> Today, Allen's folly ornaments a private golf course.

Allen's garden folly illuminates Catherine's enthusiasm for gothic piles, and especially her desire to see Blaise Castle. Allen's sham castle not only figures in the novel's exchanges about Blaise because it may have served as its impetus and model, but because its location atop Bathwick Hill made it visible from the very street where the heroine starts her quest for a Gothic 'edifice like Udolpho' (p. 85). Catherine's eagerness to see Blaise Castle blinds her to the castle on the hill near her own doorstep on Pulteney Street. Her address is, of course, around the corner from the one that was Austen's own between 1801 and 1804. From No. 4 Sydney Place, the Austens could probably see the sham castle from the upstairs windows. In 1876, James Tunstall records that the Sham Castle still 'stands conspicuously on the slope of the hill' and includes a picture of it in his book that could indeed serve as an illustration for Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).<sup>44</sup> For a reader knowledgeable about Bath, the fact that Thorpe would take Catherine 'fifty miles' to see something that can virtually be seen from where they start

43 Edith Sitwell, *Bath* (London, 1932), 190.

44 James Tunstall, *Rambles About Bath and Its Neighbourhood* (sixth edn, London and Bath, 1876), 77; the illustration is on p. 78.

reconfirms his misleading influence. A view of the sham castle closer to the novel's 1803 date of sale is shown in 'The Sydney Hotel' (1806) by Jean Claude Nattes. This image confirms the visual proximity of Allen's folly to the fictional Allens's residence at the top of Pulteney Street. Nattes's view of 1806 shows the castle on the hill behind the hotel's garden wall (construction on the Sydney Hotel—now the Holburne Museum—began in 1796), as seen from the Sutton Street intersection at the forking of Sydney Place with Pulteney Street. Austen charts the progress of Thorpe's carriage down Pulteney Street with notable precision, naming each relevant intersection towards Pulteney Bridge on their way into town (to take, eventually, the road north towards Clifton). Thus Austen marks her characters' slow and steady retreat from one sham castle as they aim toward another.

Through the symbolic intervention of the Tilneys, Catherine momentarily turns 'round' to face the correct way. Catherine, of course, is preoccupied by thoughts of the Tilneys, who she believes have forgotten all about their promise to take her on a country walk:

To feel herself slighted by them was very painful. On the other hand, the delight of exploring an edifice like Udolpho, as her fancy represented Blaize Castle to be, was such a counterpoise of good, as might console her for almost any thing.

They passed briskly down Pulteney-street, and through Laura-place, without the exchange of many words. Thorpe talked to his horse, and she meditated, by turns, on broken promises and broken arches, phaetons and false hangings, Tilneys and trap-doors. As they entered Argyle-buildings, however, she was roused by this address from her companion, 'Who is that girl who looked at you so hard as she went by?'

'Who?—where?'

'On the right-hand pavement—she must be almost out of sight now.' Catherine looked round and saw Miss Tilney leaning on her brother's arm, walking slowly down the street. (p. 85)

The street names in this passage allow us to track their straight line of progress down the length of Pulteney Street, through the off-set square of Laura Place, and onto Argyle Street, where they pass by the Tilneys, who are walking in the opposite direction along the 'Argyle-buildings' that line both sides of the bridge. Any map of the area will confirm that none of the characters have yet moved out of the corridor that extends behind them and aims toward Bathwick Hill (see Figs. 3 and 4). Miss Tilney, who has not forgotten her, is thus proceeding toward the very destination that Catherine's hopes are set upon, namely a sham castle. Yet even when she turns round to look at Miss Tilney, Catherine fails to see (or recall<sup>45</sup>) the castle so near to hand, a fact that enhances her blindness to the double sham of Thorpe's ruse and Allen's fake castle. Even today, Allen's sham castle atop Bathwick Hill remains visible from the corner of Pulteney Bridge and the Grand Parade, the very spot where Catherine turns round but loses sight of the Tilneys because, when Thorpe turns sharply to the left, 'she was herself

45 Catherine has driven by the sham castle before. Previously, when Thorpe and Catherine turned right from Pulteney Street onto the rural road that leads directly to Prior Park, they traveled for 'several minutes' with a view of Bathwick Hill and the sham castle on their left.



whisked into the Market-place' (p. 85). A few paragraphs onward, Catherine, still smoldering with outrage at Thorpe's trickery, consoles herself: 'Blaise Castle remained her only comfort; towards *that*, she still looked at intervals with pleasure' (p. 86). In actual fact, Austen's string of street names tracts Catherine moving directly away from Blaise's close twin. Although comically blind to her surroundings in Bath, Catherine does gain insight into Thorpe's true character during this final carriage ride. Symptomatic of his lessening efficacy is that they never even reach the fakery of Blaise.

### What Happened to the Real Allen Fortune?

Throughout it all, Thorpe and his sister remain convinced that Catherine is the Allen heir. Their hints to this effect are many, but one major instance makes the case. After Isabella hastily secures her engagement to Catherine's brother, James Morland, she disingenuously laments her own unworthiness due to her lack of fortune. Catherine mistakes her meaning for something romantic:

'Indeed, Isabella, you are too humble.—The difference of fortune can be nothing to signify?

'Oh! my sweet Catherine, in *your* generous heart I know it would signify nothing; but we must not expect such disinterestedness in many. As for myself, I am sure I only wish our situations were reversed. Had I the command of millions, were I mistress of the whole world, your brother would be my only choice.' (pp. 121–22)

Isabella does not suffer under the apprehension that the Morlands enjoy 'the command of millions,' although she will be disappointed by Mr. Morland's financial proposals to his son James. As the slanted wink of the italics stresses, Isabella compares her own situation to Catherine's—and suggests that, one day, her friend will be 'mistress of the whole world.' This assumption is far from silly.

Cruttwell's *The New Bath Guide* helps uncover the reasons for the Thorpes' suspicions. In Austen's day, Cruttwell's guidebook was as much a local directory to the homes of the rich and famous as a standard travel guide for tourists. It records in 1795, for example, that Prior Park once 'belonged to the late Ralph Allen esq; but now to the Rev. Stafford Smith' (p. 49) at the same time that it points out how it lies 'to the right as you ascend' (p. 49) Claverton Down. Updated yearly, the *New Bath Guide* tracks changes of ownership and residents at Prior Park through the time of *Northanger Abbey*'s composition. Augmented by modern biographies, the *New Bath Guide* explains why, in the late 1790s in particular, the identity of the heir to the Allen fortune became suddenly complicated and increasingly vague—allowing for the type of confusion about the heirs of 'old Allen' that Austen's plot manipulates.<sup>46</sup> The 'Rev. Stafford Smith,' is Martin Stafford Smith, the second husband of Gertrude Tucker, the real-world 'favorite niece' of Ralph Allen's who had, after the death of his widow in 1766, inherited all his properties. At the age of 19 (this was in 1745, the year in which the central action of *Tom Jones* take place)

46 Much of the information that follows is corroborated in Boyce, *Benevolent Man*, 296–8.

Gertrude had married her uncle's friend, William Warburton, a man thirty years older than herself. They lived at Prior Park with the Allens and had a son named Ralph—'the child of Warburton's old age' and 'a sort of grandson' to his namesake.<sup>47</sup> After inheriting the property in 1769, the Warburtons moved out of Prior Park for a time, letting the house to an Irish peer, and selling the furniture and contents to meet the £60,000 of total liquid legacies that Allen had so generously bequeathed to others. With the annual rental value of the Allen real estate alone amounting to at least £4,000 per annum, the Warburtons probably calculated that time would restore their ability to refurnish and decided not to diminish the landed holdings that would eventually pass to their son Ralph. Unfortunately the young heir presumptive died unexpectedly of consumption in his twenties. The age difference in her marriage soon also left Gertrude a widow. In the 1780s, Gertrude returns to live again at Prior Park (the *New Bath Guide* lists it occupied by Mrs Warburton in the 1780s), a widow with an estate slowly restored to splendour but no heir. When she reached her early fifties, however, she must have set all the tongues in Bath wagging by marrying the Rev. Stafford Smith—a clergyman twenty years her junior.<sup>48</sup> This Mrs Smith was thus not 'an every day Mrs. Smith,' or a 'poor widow' in Bath 'barely able to live,' but a veritable Wife of Bath who married her choice of Jenkins.<sup>49</sup> Prints of the time identify Prior Park as 'The Seat of Mrs. Smith' (Fig. 9).

Since the true Allen heir, born Gertrude Tucker, had already changed names twice, by the start of the 1790s, the Allen-Tucker-Warburton-Smith legacy had become fairly complicated. In 1796, Mrs Smith of Prior Park dies, aged 68, having outlived her son and heir as well as a disagreeable brother and all her cousins of that same generation. Starting in 1797, the year of Austen's first recorded visit to Bath, Prior Park is re-listed in the *New Bath Guide* as the home of Lord Hawarden, a distant relation of the original Ralph Allen.<sup>50</sup> But although Hawarden (who had married Mary Allen, daughter of Ralph Allen's brother, Philip) would live there for some years, his wife did not inherit the estate. For, in the end, the fortune fell to her elder brother's children, reverting to the Allen name. The descendants of Ralph Allen's nephew, also called Ralph Allen (the eldest son of Philip Allen), were the ones who sold Prior Park in 1807 and maintained part of the estate well into the twentieth century. In other words, while Lord Hawarden occupies Prior Park when Austen's Thorpe drives by with Catherine, everyone in the neighbourhood knows him to be bound to a new set of Allens (his brother-in-law's son) who will, backed by all the forces of

47 Boyce, *Benevolent Man*, 297 and 231.

48 Richard Warner, in his *Bath Characters* (1807) lampoons Stafford Smith as 'Gaffer Smut'.

49 Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, eds Janet Todd and Antje Blank (Cambridge, 2006), 171.

50 Ralph Allen's brother, Philip Allen married a Jane Bennet, with whom he had three children Ralph, Philip and Mary (these are, in 1796, Mrs Smith's deceased cousins). On 10 June 1766, Mary Allen had married a widower named Conwallis Maude, who was subsequently awarded the title of Viscount Hawarden.

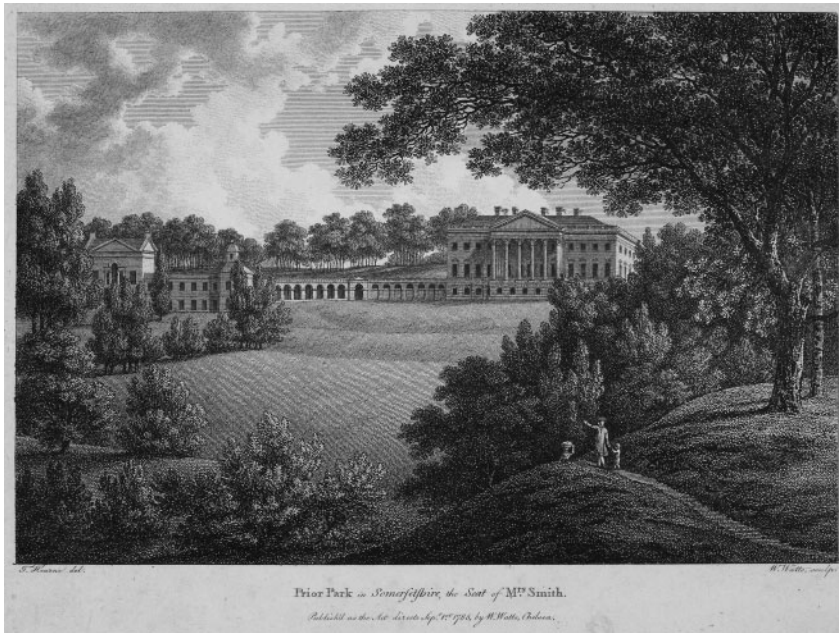


FIG. 9. 'Prior Park in Somersetshire, the Seat of Mrs. Smith'. This plate is dated 1 September 1785. Bath in Time—Bath Central Library.

primogeniture, inherit the property. From 1797 through 1807 (and *Northanger Abbey* was begun at the front end of this window, the start of the presumed hype) Prior Park's fate lies in the hands of Allens who live in the nearby countryside but who, because all eyes for decades had been trained on Gertrude living up on the hill, were decidedly lesser known than their ancestors. All of Bath must have been Allen-spotting every time they went to the assembly rooms. Thorpe's mistake is not as buffoonish as it seems.

We must assume then that Thorpe feels emboldened by these particular circumstances when he swaggers round Bath and brags to General Tilney, who, in his turn, sees an opportunity for his son Henry to snatch the soon-to-be-wealthy Catherine instead. Only these circumstances explain why the ever-cynical General acts on the mere 'rhodomontade' of a nobody such as Thorpe (p. 256). The General knows this same context. His response to the name of Allen is just as Pavlovian as Thorpe's. As a result, the General's invitation to Catherine to join them at Northanger Abbey is as transparent a machination as Thorpe's carriage rides. This is where Austen deftly turns the tables on her situation comedy, switching back and forth between the gothic and realistic. For just as General Tilney proves mistakenly under the spell of the name of her chaperones—the Allens—Catherine seizes upon the name of his home with a similarly absurd set of assumptions:

With all the chances against her of house, hall, place, park, court, and cottage, Northanger turned up an abbey, and she was to be its inhabitant. Its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely

subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun. (pp. 143–44)

In the lingering context of Bath, which boasts at its center a prominent Gothic Abbey of its own, Catherine's wide-eyed impatience 'for a sight of the abbey' is as absurd as was her desire to travel to Blaise to see a castle (p. 164). Identical edifices surround her in her current location of Bath. Indeed Ralph Allen's estate at Prior Park is, of course, named for the priory that was the offshoot of Bath's Abbey. The name of Allen, again, insists upon the General's mistake and Catherine's folly.

Not only does Northanger Abbey not live up to Catherine's immature hopes but General Tilney eventually discovers his error and abruptly sends her home. She is forced to travel the 'seventy miles' by post to Fullerton alone, pained by an ignorance of how she has offended (p. 233).<sup>51</sup> At the novel's close the narrator explains, somewhat unnecessarily for a reader who has read the clues in Bath's landscape, the chain of events that led to the General's mistake. This is when we are told that 'John Thorpe had first misled him' about Catherine and her family (p. 254). Thorpe's pride in commandeering Catherine's attentions had led him to inflate accounts of her father's estate: 'as his intimacy with any acquaintance grew, so regularly grew their fortune' (p. 254). In addition, he told the General of Catherine's expectations from the Allens:

... the ten or fifteen thousand pounds which her father could give her, would be a pretty addition to Mr. Allen's estate. Her intimacy there had made him seriously determine on her being handsomely legacied hereafter; and to speak of her therefore as the almost acknowledged future heiress of Fullerton naturally followed. Upon such intelligence the General had proceeded; for never had it occurred to him to doubt its authority. (p. 254–55)

In the context of Bath in Austen's time, 'the absolute facts of the Allens being wealthy and childless' were, indeed, not to be doubted (p. 255). False calculations, we are told, 'had hurried him on. That they were false, the General had learnt from the very person who had suggested them, from Thorpe himself, whom he had chanced to meet again in town' (p. 255). Thorpe's corrective retelling of events to the General leaves the reader with one final clue that the Allens of Bath, the descendants of Ralph Allen, were the family that both Thorpe and the General had in mind:

The terrified General pronounced the name of Allen with an inquiring look; and here too Thorpe had learnt his error. The Allens, he believed, had lived near them too long, and he knew the young man on whom the Fullerton estate must devolve. The General needed no more. (p. 256)

Thorpe's logic about their length of residence in Fullerton reveals, once and for all, the fatal error behind his calculations. If these Allens have indeed resided 'too long' in Fullerton, they cannot be related to Ralph Allen's family from Bath.

51 Again Austen clocks the heroine's progress: Catherine leaves the abbey at 'seven o'clock' and, 'stopping only to change horses', travels 'for about eleven hours without accident or alarm, and between six and seven o'clock in the evening found herself entering Fullerton' (232 and 240).

## Reconsidering the Place of *Northanger Abbey*

Precise knowledge of Bath matters, of course, in *Persuasion*, too. In that novel, as Jocelyn Harris and Keiko Parker have pointed out, 'location matters, because the level of habitation in Bath calibrates neatly to rank'.<sup>52</sup> 'Upwards', Parker and Harris both demonstrate, indicates social as well as topographical elevation in *Persuasion*. In that novel too, then, knowledge of the cartography of Bath is amply rewarded:

Sir Walter looks down on Bath from almost the highest point in the city . . . The Crofts lodge in Gay Street, not so far enough down as to discourage Sir Walter and Elizabeth from visiting them, but not so high as to make their address a challenge. Sir Walter disdains Mrs. Smith for living in Westgate Buildings at the actual and symbolic low end of Bath.<sup>53</sup>

*Persuasion*, as we know from the dating of the first draft, was begun on 8 August 1815, more than a decade after Austen left Bath to settle, eventually, at Chawton. There is no record of Austen ever having returned for a subsequent visit. Her memory and residual knowledge of Bath's topographical ups and downs in *Persuasion* are extraordinary—a match, surely, for the spatial precision of *Northanger Abbey*.

Even with prior knowledge of *Persuasion*'s particulars, however, the cartographic precision of *Northanger Abbey*'s setting as well as its time-specific context will likely take some by surprise. Its playful use of the transfer of the Allen inheritance in the 1790s makes the novel seem unexpectedly rooted in Bath's social events, as well as its spaces, at the turn of the century. If Austen wrote her text between 1798 and 1803 with these bits of Allen family history in mind, what did she think upon rereading it in 1816, after Henry bought it back for her? Did she fear that nearly a decade-and-a-half had erased from memory much of this historical context for even a reader from Bath? She hints at this in the disclaimer she penned in 1816, which was to accompany the published text (in 1818 it appeared at the front as the author's 'Advertisement'):

. . . some observation is necessary upon those parts of the work which thirteen years have made comparatively obsolete. The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes. (p. 1)

Apparently this caveat alone was insufficient. She appears to have thought substantial revision essential, for after years of delay she did not forward it straight to her publisher (with this disclaimer attached) but in March of 1817 shelved the text once more:

Miss Catherine is put upon the Shelve for the present, and I do not know that she will ever come out;—but I have a something ready for publication, which may perhaps appear about a twelvemonth hence. It is short, about the length of Catherine.<sup>54</sup>

52 Harris, *Revolution*, 165. See also Keiko Parker, "What part of Bath do you think they will settle in?" Jane Austen's Use of Bath in *Persuasion*, *Persuasions*, 23 (2001), 166–76.

53 Harris, *Revolution*, 165–6.

54 Jane Austen to Fanny Knight, 13 March 1817 (*Letters*, 333).

'A something' else of similar length and similar precision about Bath, namely *Persuasion*, was deemed ready, while *Catherine* was, after all that time, still judged unripe. Thirteen years had made some 'parts' seem 'obsolete'. What parts? What did she want to change?

I cannot shake off the notion that Austen may have failed to recognize how a lapse of so many years had actually expanded rather than narrowed the appeal of her 1803 manuscript. When she implies a need for substantial revision in 1816 and reshelves the manuscript in 1817, she may have acted on a fear that her youthful fidelity to events in the late 1790s needed updating. She was wrong. The fact that for 200 years her story has been read and enjoyed outside of the context of the Ralph Allen legacy proves as much. The loss of certain original historical events from cultural memory forced readers to generalise their interpretations and see how Austen addressed larger questions about genre and the Gothic. Like the story's heroine, readers—just as Austen feared—have been habitually blind to the interpretive significance of Bath's local landscape and the name of Allen in *Northanger Abbey*.

Such blindness is of long-standing, since in 1897 an editor already lamented the novel's sparse mode of describing Bath:

Personally, we could have willingly surrendered a good deal of the clever raillery about Mrs. Radcliffe for a little more of Beau Nash's old city, which Miss Austen knew so thoroughly. But her nice sense of artistic restraint does not admit of this. Her characters turn out of the right streets into the right crescents and cross the right crossings, as they would have done in real life, but of the topography of Bath itself, where the author lived so long, there is not as much in the whole of *Northanger Abbey* as there is in one chapter of *Humphry Clinker*.<sup>55</sup>

While this same editor rails against 'that Boeotian Bookseller of Bath' whose pathetic 'phrenological conditions' must have left him so 'infatuated with Mrs. Radcliffe' that it left him 'insensible' to the value of the manuscript he had purchased but failed to publish, he too judges Austen by standards not her own—reading her through the lens of Smollett.<sup>56</sup> Of course, *Northanger Abbey* had received scant reviews in 1818, and by the time fuller treatments appeared in the mid-nineteenth-century, Ralph Allen was still less of a force in people's minds. Bath had come to be associated with Beau Nash instead, or even William Beckford. Our own continued blindness to Austen's unique use of local context and space is even more excusable, since centuries of expansion in Bath have crowded out the locales indicated by Austen's text (it is a remarkable boon to Austen readers that Prior Park and the Sham Castle still survive). Now, perhaps, we can address the novel's physical setting differently and enhance our reading of *Northanger Abbey* by appreciating, among its many other artistic features, its precious time capsule of a moment in Bath's history.

55 Dobson, intro. to 1897 edn of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, x–xi.

56 *Ibid.*, vii, viii.

What began as a hyper-realistic approach to local scenery and events had, over the decade-and-a-half that it lay neglected in the basement of Crosby & Son's, unexpectedly evolved. In 1803 Austen's picture of Bath's geographical and social scene may indeed have been provincial, the work of a youngish author. An 1803 publication date would have made the novel regional in scope. But in 1818, through a lucky series of accidents, *Northanger Abbey*'s publication marked, perhaps, a new type of historical realism. Lest I be misunderstood and my own reader fear, like Jane Austen herself, that minute attention to the novel's hyper-specificity about place and its time-specific events threaten to take away from the universality of Austen's literary achievement in *Northanger Abbey*, I point again to James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Joyce's picture of 1904 Dublin testifies to the fact that adhering closely to the ephemera of a specific place and former time does not make a work parochial or old-fashioned. Nor, of course, does a text's place of publication (*Ulysses* was first printed in Paris) mark it as courting merely a local audience. The twist is that Joyce's project, written from self-imposed exile, was self-consciously retrospective, while Austen's was written on location and in the present. *Northanger Abbey*'s minuteness—its attention to maps, distances and rates of speed—surely anticipates Joyce's much-admired technique. But its picture of 1803 Bath resembles his 1904 Dublin in method only due to circumstances outside of the author's control. I could not, in other words, make the same claim about resemblance if Austen's novel had been published in 1803—as the author originally desired. Surely the wry-witted twenty-something who sold *Susan* but never saw it in print would have relished the paradoxical benefits that an unwanted delay brought to her novel.

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