Acknowledgments

Many of the ideas for this book originated while I was teaching the novels of Jane Austen in the late 1970s at the University of Illinois, when her comic subversity suddenly quickened in the minds of the students and prompted considerable rereading to find some answers. Northrop Frye's brilliant ordering of comic fiction in *Anatomy of Criticism* immeasurably eased my task in the classroom and also emboldened me to undertake this study.

For the early stages of research and contemplation, I owe special thanks to James Sambrook for making possible my teaching exchange at the University of Southampton in early 1979, where I enjoyed spending the precious time retracing Jane Austen's footsteps in southern England as well as meeting astute British readers of her novels, who were always generous in imparting insights to an American visitor.

I am especially grateful to the Department of English and the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Illinois for a sabbatical research fellowship during 1980–81. My colleague Jack Stillinger was encouraging from the start and gave helpful advice on the rough draft. Frederick Keener and Charles Knight wrote painstaking and constructive criticisms of the whole argument in its earliest stages. An enormous debt goes to Alistair Duckworth, who devoted many hours of his time trying to make sense out of confusion. Besides the anonymous readers of the later drafts of this book, I should thank Ronald Rosbottom and James Thompson for comments invaluable for the final revision, and Barbara Folsom for the meticulous copyediting. If darkness still lingers in the corners of this phenomenological reading of Austen's novels, the responsibility is entirely mine.

Finally, without the conversations at home with a wife and two daughters, all keen and perennial readers of Jane Austen, writing this book would have been a much more lonely endeavor.

Champaign, Illinois
February 1989

J.A.D.
Abbreviations

All references to Jane Austen's novels and fragments are taken from the edition of R. W. Chapman, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933–34, 1954); page numbers are included in parentheses within the text. All references to her correspondence are from Chapman's edition, Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952 [reprint 1979]), cited hereafter as Letters. Wherever necessary, the following abbreviations are also used:

NA Northanger Abbey
SS Sense and Sensibility
PP Pride and Prejudice
MP Mansfield Park
E Emma
P Persuasion
MW Minor Works