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Jane Austen's Will – and Those of the Two Cassandras

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ABSTRACT

As a follow-up to my (linguistic) close-reading of Jane Austen's Will, this paper analyses the Wills of her mother and sister, Cassandra Austen-Leigh and Cassandra Elizabeth Austen. The dates of these Wills as well as their contents demonstrate the particular concerns of these two testators, both in drawing up legally valid documents and to make sure that their – eventually – not inconsiderable possessions would go to the right legatees. In doing so, the (invalid but nevertheless officially proved) Will of their famous family member set an important example. At the same time, the contents of the Wills, and especially the one by Cassandra, show consideration with the needs of unmarried – or otherwise husbandless – women that were part of their social network, friends as well as dependants. This consideration reveals awareness of the existence of a parallel social world to that described by Jane Austen in her novels, where women who would not or could not marry gained some financial security through their relatives' Wills. Following up references to people mentioned in the Will, such as the daughter of Henry Austen's housekeeper, Mary Perigord, moreover, demonstrates the importance of Late Modern English Wills as an insufficiently explored text type.

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1. Introduction

Just outside Chawton House, formerly the property of Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight (1767–1852), stands St Nicholas Church. Next to it, there is a small churchyard, where Jane's mother Cassandra (1739–1827) and Jane's sister Cassandra Elizabeth (1773–1845) are buried. Cassandra Elizabeth's grave is looked after better than her mother's: the gravestone is kept clean so that the text is legible, and someone occasionally puts flowers on the grave. Jane Austen (1775–1817) herself was buried inside Winchester Cathedral. She had been taken to Winchester in the idle hope of finding a cure for the disease that afflicted her, possibly Hodgkin's disease,¹ and she died there shortly afterwards. A few months earlier, she had drawn up a Will, in which she left all her possessions to her

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¹Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 289–90.

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sister – “every thing of which I may die possessed, or which may be hereafter due to me” – and in which she appointed Cassandra as executor.² Administering the Will, however, proved complicated, as the Probate copy published on the website of the National Archives (NA) shows:³ no witnesses are mentioned, which technically made the Will invalid, or, at least, complicated to administer.⁴ Eventually, witnesses were found who were willing to testify to the authenticity of the document, and the Probate copy records that they “knew and w[ere] well acquainted with the said deceased for several years before and down to the time of her death and with her manner and Character of Handwriting and Subscription having seen her write and also write and subscribe her Name”,⁵ upon which Cassandra was able to step into her sister’s inheritance.

What was left after “the payment of my Funeral Expences, & [...] a Legacy of £50. to my Brother Henry, & £50. to M^{de} – Bigeon”, as specified in the Will, was not very much. Cassandra inherited a little over £1000 altogether, comprising the residue of £561.2s.0d. (minus 3% Legacy Duty) and “a total profit of £515.17s.7d” from the posthumous publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, according to Deirdre Le Faye in *Jane Austen, A Family Record*.⁶ The total amount is only a little more than Cassandra’s legacy from the Will of her late fiancé, Tom Fowle (1765–97), who died in the West Indies shortly after they had become engaged. Le Faye argues that this legacy, if invested at 3.5% interest, would have brought Cassandra an annual income of £35, or some £2000 a year in today’s money, as calculated with the help of the National Archives Currency Converter.⁷ Her sister’s inheritance twenty years later thus doubled that amount, and allowed Cassandra to gain a slight increase in financial independence from her brothers or their mother.⁸

As the beneficiary of “every thing [...] which may be hereafter due to me”, Cassandra would be expected to have benefitted from the rising fame of her sister as a novelist. And

²Though not a letter, the text of the Will is included in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, edited by Deirdre Le Faye, 2011, 355. For a detailed analysis as well as a transcription of the Will, see Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, “To My Dearest Sister Cassandra”. A summary of the Will, as well as a detailed calculation of the death duties payable on the various legacies may be found in Jones, “Death Duties on Jane Austen’s Estate”, published in the Jane Austen Society’s annual report for 2019; the article, however, fails to acknowledge the existence of my publication on the Will from five years previously.

³See <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/> (manuscript version: NA PROB 1/78).

⁴For a Will in the writer’s own hand, like Jane Austen’s, to be valid, it had to be signed by “at least two credible witnesses” (Grannum and Taylor, *Wills and Probate Records*, 59). Though Jones notes that the “[w]itnessing of wills only became compulsory in 1837” (“Death Duties”, 44), all earlier Late Modern English Wills in my possession, including those of Lord Byron, Thomas Gray, Thomas Hardy, Samuel Johnson, Queeney Thrale (Vicountess Keith), Robert Lowth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mrs Thrale, Sir Horace Walpole, and William Wordsworth, contain the signatures of two or more witnesses. Having a Will witnessed precluded the need to find witnesses afterwards, as when it had to be validated by having it entered into the Probate Records. Just how complicated this could be is seen in the case of Jane Austen’s Will (Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, “To My Dearest Sister Cassandra”, 333–4).

⁵A similar case is described by Wheddon, *Jane Austen’s Best Friend*, 96. When Martha Lloyd’s mother died, her housekeeper, a Mrs Stent, had to “verif[y] in the eyes of the law that [Mrs Lloyd’s Will was] written in her mistress’s handwriting and that she could testify, having known her ‘character and manner’, that [it represented] indeed Mrs Lloyd’s views and desires”.

⁶2nd ed., 2004, 259–61. Jones calculates the latter amount at £518.6sh.5d (“Death Duties”, 49).

⁷At <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>, set at 1820. Le Faye, *A Family Record*, 101.

⁸During the Late Modern English period (1700–1900), single women, according to Bennett and Froide, “A Singular Past”, the introduction to their edited collection *Singlegirls in the European Past 1250–1800*, regularly fell to the care of their male relatives, if they had any (13). When their father died in 1805, this meant that both Jane and Cassandra, neither of whom ever married, and their mother had to be supported financially by the four Austen sons, James, Edward, Henry and Charles. There was also a fifth son, George (1766–1838), who was severely handicapped and was cared for away from the family; he is rarely mentioned in Jane Austen’s letters; see Le Faye, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 486; Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 7–8.

because “details of [her] late life are sparse”,⁹ I wondered what evidence of her financial situation at the time of her death could be found in her Will, which she drew up in 1843, two years before her death.¹⁰ Searching for the Will of “Cassandra Austen” on the website of the National Archives in fact produced two documents, not only the one of Jane Austen’s sister (Cassandra Elizabeth) but also that of their mother (Cassandra), which was dated 22 July 1817, so only four days after Jane’s death.¹¹ Cassandra Elizabeth’s Will is of a much later date, 9 May 1843, and it includes a Codicil dated 17 March 1845, five days before her own death and written just after she had suffered a stroke while staying with her brother Frank (1774–1865).¹²

The very existence of these two Wills raises a number of questions: why, to begin with, did Jane Austen’s mother draw up a Will so soon after her younger daughter’s death, and why did she do so at all, since she had been left virtually penniless upon her husband’s death in 1805?¹³ Thus far, apart from being listed in Deirdre Le Faye’s *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family 1600–2000*,¹⁴ her Will has not received any scholarly attention, in contrast to the recently published analysis of Cassandra Elizabeth’s Will by Jones et al. Viewing the three Wills together, as I will do in this paper, is of great interest because it throws light not only on the timing of Cassandra Austen-Leigh’s Will, who would not herself die until ten years later in 1827, but also on the specific aims of the three testators, which involved more than merely wishing to dispose of their property after death. Both Jane and her mother appointed Cassandra as their executor, while Cassandra in turn made her brother Charles (1779–1852) “her residuary legatee and executor”, as Le Faye notes.¹⁵ This statement in itself, however, is not quite accurate, for in the Will, it is her “Brother Edw^d. Knight of Godmersham Park in the County of Kent” who is named as Cassandra’s executor. Le Faye doesn’t mention the Codicil, but it is only there that Charles is mentioned along with Edward’s eldest son, also called Edward, as additional “joint *Executors* of my said Will with my said Brother Edward Knight”.¹⁶ Le Faye notes on the same page that Cassandra with her Will “divided her monies equally between each branch of the family”. My analysis of the two Wills will show that there was more on Cassandra’s mind when drawing up her Will than causing it to benefit all members of her family in an equal manner, and also that she may have had a good reason to appoint Charles as an additional executor of her Will.

⁹Jones, Looser and Sabor, “Cassandra Austen’s Last Years and Wishes, with New Documents and Transcriptions”, 33.

¹⁰Jones, Looser and Sabor, “Cassandra Austen’s Last Years”, 35, note that Cassandra had drawn up an earlier Will that would benefit Martha Lloyd (1765–1843), the friend the three Austen women shared their house in Chawton with (Le Faye, *A Family Record*, 149) and who would later become Cassandra’s sister-in-law when she married Frank in 1828. Evidence of this earlier Will derives from a letter she wrote to her brother Charles on 9 May 1843, a transcription of which is provided in Jones et al., 40–41. Because Martha had died in 1843, Cassandra had to draw up a new Will, but she did so without formally revoking the earlier one. Earlier Wills, however, “could be revoked by simply making a new will”, according to Ulrich Bach, “Wills and Will-Making in 16th and 17th Century England: Some Pragmatic Aspects”, 129. There is no reference to this earlier Will in Le Faye’s *Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family 1600–2000*, so the document may have been among the papers Cassandra mentions as having destroyed in this same letter to Charles; in the letter, she makes further “personal testamentary dispositions” (*Chronology*, 663); see below.

¹¹See footnote 3. Copies of Wills can be acquired for a small fee. Cassandra Austen: NA PROB 11/722. Cassandra Elizabeth Austen: NA PROB 11/2015. All subsequent references will be to my transcriptions of these documents.

¹²For a detailed analysis of the contents of this Will, see Jones, Looser and Sabor, “Cassandra Austen’s Last Years”.

¹³Le Faye, *A Family Record*, 146.

¹⁴Le Faye, *Chronology*, 580.

¹⁵Le Faye, *A Family Record*, 271.

¹⁶For an image of the Codicil in Cassandra’s own hand, followed by a transcription, see Jones, Looser and Sabor, “Cassandra Austen’s Last Years”, 37–38.

In this paper I will therefore present a close-reading of the Wills of the two Cassandras against the background of the one of their famous relative Jane in order to try and find answers to these questions as well as to others that arose while studying these two Wills, such as why Cassandra Elizabeth specified particular legatees. In doing so, I will take account of the findings presented by Jones et al., but I will also provide my own transcriptions of the two Wills: historians tend to apply different editorial principles than linguists, and in any case, there is (to my knowledge) no earlier transcription of Mrs Austen's Will (see Appendix). Among other things, my analysis will show that in drawing up her Will, Cassandra Austen-Leigh was directly inspired by the one of her daughter Jane. Furthermore, by focusing on the language of the three Wills, whose structure is both remarkably and unremarkably similar, I will be able to confirm my original finding that Jane Austen's Will was a privately composed document for which she did not invoke the help of anyone who would have been an expert in legal matters, in contrast to her mother and sister. Moreover, while I originally concluded that the words *Will* and *Testament* in Jane's Will must already have been synonymous at the time¹⁷ – as indeed they are today – reading Cassandra's Will showed that this may not yet quite have been the case: Jane's phrase "every thing of which I may die possessed" appears to have included not actually any land as such, but the interest on money invested in a piece of land. I will, finally, also demonstrate how Jane's decision to make her unmarried sister the main beneficiary of her Will would eventually have far-reaching consequences: in time, it made their brother Charles come into such a substantial inheritance – Cassandra's – that it impelled him to draw up his own Will, by which he would be able to dispose of his newly acquired wealth in a similarly socially responsible manner as that which characterised the contents of the three Wills analysed here.

2. Cassandra Austen-Leigh's Will

Finding Jane Austen's Will upon her death on 18 July 1817, most likely among the letters in her writing-desk, appears to have been quite unexpected. One reason for not having had her Will witnessed, as I argue elsewhere,¹⁸ may have been that she did not want to burden her relatives with the knowledge, or her own acceptance of the fact, that her death was imminent. The date of the Will is 27 April 1817, and she would die less than three months later. The absence of witnesses, however, was not the only reason why the Will was incomplete: it did not include a reference to her marital status either. Only widows and spinsters, a legal term which neutrally designated women who had never been married,¹⁹ were allowed to draw up a Will at the time.²⁰ Her mother's Will does mention her marital status – "I Cassandra Austen **Widow** of Chawton in the County of Southampton make this my last Will and Testament in manner following"²¹ – and the Will was witnessed by her sons Henry (1771–1850) and Frank as well as by Martha Lloyd (see footnote 11). The Will is phrased in terms that are much more characteristic of official legal documents than Jane's Will, so it

¹⁷Tieken-Boon van Ostade, "To My Dearest Cassandra", 329.

¹⁸Ibid., 336–7.

¹⁹See the *Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED)*, *spinster*, n. 2a.

²⁰Grannum and Taylor, *Wills and Probate Records*, 68.

²¹Bold type is used for emphasis throughout this paper.

looks as if the bereaved Austen family, shocked by the realisation that Jane's Will was invalid and taking immediate action upon finding it, took proper legal advice to make sure that her mother's Will *would* be valid.

What made Mrs Austen draw up a Will was, I believe, the realisation that she, too, could make her remaining unmarried daughter benefit from whatever possessions, money or otherwise, she might have at the moment of death. Like her other daughter before her, she thus specified: "I give and bequeath all my property of every kind to my sole surviving Daughter Cassandra Elizabeth and I make her my said daughter my sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament". After all, her sons had incomes of their own, and leaving whatever she possessed to Cassandra would not only benefit her daughter, but would also offer some financial relief to her sons from having to support their unmarried sister as well as their mother (assuming that they felt obliged to do so).²² In the end, it turned out that Mrs Austen did have something to leave to her daughter when she died, for her estate was valued "up to £600"²³ – nearly £30,000 in modern money. There is a summary of a letter by her in Deirdre Le Faye's *Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family* addressed to her wealthy sister-in-law, Jane Leigh-Perrot (1744–1836), which itemises her income – mainly deriving from her sons – as amounting to £250 a year in 1820.²⁴ The letter "gratefully" acknowledges Mrs Leigh-Perrot's gift of an annuity of £100, which was made over to Mrs Austen in two annual instalments until her death on 18 January 1827. The annuity amounted to £800 altogether, as recorded in Le Faye's *Chronology*, and it was supplemented by a separate gift of £1000 in 1823 in addition to the regular half-yearly £50 made the week before.²⁵ Jane Leigh-Perrot was a very wealthy woman indeed, and Le Faye's invaluable account records regular annual acquisitions of stock which she used to make to the amount of £1000 each. It seems she could easily afford helping out her deprived sister-in-law financially (at one time, she also gave Frank well over £10,000, an amount of money which enabled him to buy Portsdown Lodge, the house where Cassandra died – see below).²⁶ Mrs Austen herself, too, invested in stock, and her bank records listed in Le Faye's *Chronology* specify regularly received dividends from her investments in Navy stock and South Sea Annuities. In addition, she appears to have possessed some land as well, for on 20 May 1820, she paid nine shillings Land Tax.²⁷ All in all, she did well enough after her husband's death, thanks to her sons' financial support and that of her sister-in-law, leaving her sole surviving daughter a considerable amount of money when she died in 1827, alongside her other possessions – "property of every kind", as the Will specified.

Probate of Mrs Austen's Will was granted on 12 March 1827 (see Appendix). The Will's phrase "property of every kind" would also have included her marriage

²²See Bennett and Froide, who note that when older, single women could have households of their own, or shared households with others in the same position (10). Though the authors don't refer to Jane Austen in this context, this neatly describes the arrangements made by Jane, Cassandra and their mother when setting up a joint household with Jane's friend Martha Lloyd in 1809 (see also Wheddon, *Jane Austen's Best Friend*, 89, 112).

²³Le Faye, *Chronology*, 632.

²⁴Le Faye, *Chronology*, 604. The letter is dated 4 January 1820. Her son James had died the previous year, and Henry had been declared bankrupt after his bank collapsed in 1816 (see e.g., Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 257). Charles appears to have been unable to contribute to their mother's upkeep, so the only ones of her sons able to do so at the time of the letter were Edward and Frank.

²⁵Le Faye, *Chronology*, 620.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 641.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 607.

settlement of £2185 and 14 shillings,²⁸ of which her brother James was “the last surviving Trustee”.²⁹ As Deirdre Le Faye notes, the money was equally divided between her children Edward, Cassandra, Henry, Frank and Charles, while Edward relinquished his share to their handicapped brother George (see footnote 9).

3. Cassandra Elizabeth’s Will

Cassandra Elizabeth’s Will is much longer than those of her sister and her mother, and it is more complicated simply because she had more to bequeath to more people, and, as we will see, not just to different branches of her family, as Le Faye suggested. The Will is dated 9 May 1843, and again the date is significant, for a little over three months earlier, on 24 January, her former housemate-turned-sister-in-law, Martha Lloyd, had died. This sad event called for a new version of Cassandra’s earlier Will, the main beneficiary of which had been Martha (see footnote 11). Cassandra, moreover, had just turned seventy, and she must have realised that she might have little time to lose. Like her sister and mother before her, she had possessions that would have to be disposed of, and she preferred to pass them on herself rather than dying intestate and leaving the question of how her money would have to be divided to whoever was appointed executor. In addition to the Will, Cassandra had compiled a list of recipients of her private possessions after her death, the disposition of which had to be taken care of by her niece, Cassandra Esten, her brother Charles’s daughter.³⁰ The list is part of a letter to Charles dated 9 May 1843,³¹ so it bears the same date as Cassandra’s proper Will. A close-reading of the Will itself shows that Cassandra had several other private commitments to take care of, unfulfilled during her lifetime or otherwise.

The Will was witnessed by two of her brother Edward’s sons, Edward Knight Jr. (1794–1879) and Charles-Bridges Knight (1803–67), with their father being appointed executor. Two years later, when she was staying at Frank’s house, Portsdown Lodge in Hampshire, Cassandra had a stroke, and she died a few days later. A few days earlier, she had written a Codicil to the Will, whose purpose was to “appoint my Brother Captⁿ. Charles J. Austen R.N. and my Nephew Edward Knight of Chawton House Esq. to be joint *Executors* of my said Will with my said Brother Edward Knight”, but it also served to confirm “in all other respects [...] my said Will”. Witnesses were two of Frank’s children, Henry Edgar (1811–54) and Cassandra Eliza (1814–49). Cassandra may have added Charles as one of the executors because he was the main beneficiary of her Will, just as she herself had been in the case of her sister’s and their mother’s Wills. Possibly also, as Jones et al. suggest, she did so “as a precaution” because her brother Edward, the original executor, “was then aged seventy-seven, and in poor health”.³² Tomalin, however, notes that Edward “was never ill, but lived out his days calmly and comfortably at Godmersham [...] and died in his sleep” at the age of 85. Perhaps Cassandra’s real reason for adding further executors, was to spare Edward

²⁸Marriage settlements, according to Lawrence Stone in *The Family Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*, ensured that all children would benefit equally from the family’s accrued wealth, and also that “care was taken to protect the property rights of the wife” (166–7).

²⁹Le Faye, *Chronology*, 633.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 663–4.

³¹See also Jones, Looser and Sabor, who call the document “Cassandra’s Letter of Wishes”.

³²Jones, Looser and Sabor, “Cassandra Austen’s Last Years”, 35. Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 282.

from having to travel to London to have the Will administered in the Probate records. In the event, he never did so, even though the Probate record specifically stated that he and his son had been granted the same power to administrate the Will as Charles (see Appendix).

The Will includes the following legacies:³³

- £1000 in stock each for her brothers Edward, Henry and Frank
- £1000 in stock for her niece Anna Lefroy (1793–1872), her deceased brother James's eldest daughter
- £1000 pounds in cash for Caroline Elizabeth Fowle (1798–1860)
- Income from a piece of land the right to which Cassandra and Jane had jointly inherited from Cassandra's godmother Elizabeth Leigh (1735–1816) for her own goddaughter, her niece Cassandra Esten (1808–97), her brother Charles's eldest daughter
- An annual allowance of £20 for a Mrs Mary Perigord, "now residing in Edward Street Portman Square during the term of her natural life".

The remainder, after payment of "my just debts & funeral expenses", was to go to Charles. What the Will shows first and foremost is that Cassandra possessed a large amount of stock – £4000 altogether – which, along with the "annual interest of six pounds eight shillings" from "money secured on lands [...] which was given to me and my late Sister by the late M^{rs}. Elizabeth Leigh",³⁴ would have produced an annual income of £126.8s.0d around the time of her death. As Mrs Leigh had died on 18 April 1816,³⁵ this meant that when Jane died fifteen months later, she actually possessed not any land as such, but the rights to interest on money invested on a piece of land, no matter how small its annual revenue. In contrast, therefore, to my earlier assumption based on a close-reading of Jane's Will,³⁶ the words *will* and *testament* as in the phrase "this my last Will & Testament" were not quite synonymous, unlike today, but still had their original meanings: "real" or immovable property like houses or land (*will*), including the income from money invested in land, and personal property like jewellery or household items (*testament*).³⁷ Strictly speaking then, Cassandra's Letter of Wishes was a testament in the original sense of the word. But there are several more remarkable features in the Will proper. To start with, there are the £1000 pounds in cash which Cassandra bequeathed to "Caroline Elizabeth Fowle". With this legacy she in effect returned to the Fowle family the legacy of £1000 with which her late fiancé Tom had granted her some financial security upon his death in the West

³³For the text itself, see my transcription in the Appendix. Jones, Looser and Sabor, "Cassandra Austen's Last Years", 42–46, provide a detailed analysis of the Will, calculating the different legacy duties payable on the sums mentioned. From a linguistic perspective, however, their transcription of the Will, to which they added punctuation, contains numerous misreadings, primarily relating to capitals, the omission of abbreviation stops, and missing italics. See my forthcoming article, "Visual pragmatics and Late Modern English letters", for the pragmatics of this.

³⁴Single women, according to Bennett and Froide, could "hold land in their own right" (8), as indeed in the case of Elizabeth Leigh (but also Mrs Austen, as noted above). Having never married, Elizabeth Leigh was entitled not only to draw up a Will, but also to dispose of land, or rather, as here, her rights to income from the amount of money invested in it (its "annual interest"), to other unmarried women, Jane and Cassandra in this case, and Cassandra did similarly, as the above legacy shows: her niece Cassandra Esten never married (nor did her sister Harriet-Jane – see below).

³⁵Le Faye, *Chronology*, 535.

³⁶Tieken-Boon van Ostade, "'To My Dearest Sister Casandra'", 329.

³⁷See *OED*, s.v. *will*, n1, III.10.a.

Indies in 1797. All her life, Cassandra had continued to feel part of the Fowle family, and she regularly went to stay with them, as we learn from the directions of several of Jane Austen's letters to her. Caroline Elizabeth Fowle, or Elizabeth Caroline as she was actually called,³⁸ was a niece born posthumously to Tom, and so soon after Tom's death Cassandra must have felt particularly attached to her. Jane, for instance, informed her sister on 19 January 1799 that their brother James had baptised the new baby a few days earlier (Letter 18 in Le Faye's edition); Cassandra, moreover, left her "a large Indian shawl, which once belonged to old Mrs Fowle of Kintbury".³⁹ Elizabeth Caroline was unmarried when Cassandra died, as was Cassandra Esten, who received as legacy the annual interest drawn from "the money secured on lands" which Jane and Cassandra had inherited from Cassandra's own similarly unmarried godmother, and as Jane and Cassandra themselves had been.

Then there is Mary Perigord, who received a £20 annuity for the remainder of her life. Mary Perigord was the daughter of Madame Bignon, Henry's French housekeeper, who had been employed as a carer for Eliza de Feuillide's backward son Hastings.⁴⁰ When Henry married the widowed Eliza in 1797, Madame Bignon and her daughter (who was by then twenty-two and not yet married) continued to work for them, and both Henry and his housekeeper received a legacy of £50 each in Jane Austen's Will,⁴¹ presumably a very welcome sum in relief to the penurious circumstances they found themselves in upon Henry's bankruptcy. Mary, who was of the same age as Jane, got married in 1805 to a soldier from Périgord in France, five years older than herself, called Pierre Frayté or Fraytet according to Tomalin, but who "disappear[ed] from the story again after the wedding",⁴² while Mary "remained with her mother, childless, and attached to Henry's and Eliza's household".⁴³ The Austen family continued to support Mary Perigord, and Tomalin mentions regular payments to her, by Cassandra in 1822, for instance, and Henry in 1824, while even their mother contributed £10 to Mary's upkeep in 1821, as Le Faye's *Chronology* records for that year. From 1829 onwards, Cassandra made over £5 to her twice annually for the rest of her life.⁴⁴ Tomalin calls this "French connection" an "odd story", and wonders if Mrs Perigord should be regarded as "a relentless petitioner or simply a pitiful figure". In the context of Cassandra's Will, however, she appears to have been neither, because she fits into the picture of the unmarried, or in her case husbandless, women who were made the recipients of significant legacies. This, too, explains why Anna's legacy was as high as those of Cassandra's brothers: apart from representing her late brother James's branch of the family, Anna's husband Benjamin Lefroy had died in 1829 at the age of only thirty-eight, so she was husbandless as well and could do with some financial support, it seems. As for Mrs Perigord, her address according to the Will was "now [...] Edward Street Portman Square", in London. There is a record of the type of

³⁸The name as written in the Will's Probate copy thus seems to be a mistake. There had been a girl called Caroline-Elizabeth born to the Fowle family in 1794 but the baby died soon afterwards (Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 525).

³⁹Le Faye, *Chronology*, 664.

⁴⁰Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 130. See also Jones, Looser and Sabor, "Cassandra Austen's Last Years", 48.

⁴¹Eliza had died in 1813, after which Madame Bignon continued to work for Henry.

⁴²Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 191. According to Jones et al., her husband's surname was Fraylet (49), as we do indeed see in the Probate record of Mary Perigord's Will, on which see below. Jones et al. do not confirm Tomalin's account of his desertion of his newly married wife.

⁴³Tomalin, *Jane Austen*, 191.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 284–5.

residents in the area just prior to when she would appear to have moved there: in 1842, the record shows, "Edward's Street", Portman Square was inhabited by tradesmen, such as jewellers, milliners and shoemakers, upholsterers, bakers and cheesemongers.⁴⁵ Her name, either as Mrs Perigord, Fraylet, Frayté or Fraytet, doesn't occur on the list, but on an insurance document in Mary Perigord's name held by the London Metropolitan Archives, we see her address specified as 4, Edward Street, and that she had already been living there since at least December 1840.⁴⁶ Another resident for the address mentioned in the document was a certain tobacconist, called Tim Painter, whose name does occur on the Edward Street list. The insurance document, moreover, already describes Mary as a widow at that time. Moving to live there after having previously been connected with Henry's rather more respectable residence, Hans Place in Covent Garden, would very likely have meant a considerable step down the social ladder at the time.

Mary Perigord was sixty-eight at the time Cassandra's Will was drawn up, and "the term of her natural life" for her annual allowance, as the Will specified, would not last indefinitely, to put it crudely. And indeed, Jones et al. note that she died soon afterwards, some time in October 1845, leaving a Will dated 20 October of that year and drawn up less than a week before her burial.⁴⁷ The Probate record of the Will describes her as "Mary ffraylet de Peregord late of Carburton Street Portland Place in the said County of Middlesex Widow",⁴⁸ which suggests that she no longer lived in Edward Street when she died. As a widow, Mary would have been entitled to draw up a Will of her own, and it specified that she left all her possessions to a plumber and his wife. Her situation since leaving Henry's service thus explains the need for financial support by members of the Austen family, though she does appear to have managed to accumulate enough possessions to warrant drawing a Will. The Will, however, did not go uncontested: as the Probate record shows, one of the witnesses, a Mary Bishop, was called upon to testify to its veracity. Suspicion was possibly aroused by the fact that the Will had been drawn up so close to Mrs Perigord's death.

The remainder of Cassandra's possessions, "after my just debts & funeral expenses have been paid", were to go to her brother Charles, whose name had been added as executor of the Will in the Codicil. Jones et al. calculate the value of Cassandra's estate at the time of her death as amounting to £14,708,⁴⁹ or between nearly £890,000 and £1,200,000 in modern money depending on the date set in the National Archives Currency Calculator (1840 or 1850). Cassandra, in other words, died a very wealthy woman, and in a very different financial situation from her sister or her mother. Where would all this money have come from? Jones et al. list a number of "known sources of her assets",⁵⁰ comprising several financial gifts and legacies received during her adult life, including her sister Jane's inheritance, her share in her mother's marriage settlement and her mother's Will, altogether amounting to £9,382, or roughly two-thirds of her final estate. Bequeathing £1000 to her brothers Edward, Henry and Frank, her reason for singling out Charles as the main beneficiary

⁴⁵See <https://londonwiki.co.uk/streets1832/EdwardstreetPortman.shtml>.

⁴⁶MS 11936/571/1344021, referenced through the National Archives website.

⁴⁷Jones, Looser and Sabor, "Cassandra Austen's Last Years", 49.

⁴⁸NA PROB 11/2032/203.

⁴⁹Jones, Looser and Sabor, "Cassandra Austen's Last Years", 45.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 44–45.

of her Will must have been that he was the most impecunious of the Austen brothers. While all her sons contributed to their mother's financial support, Charles "ha[d] never been able to give her anything", Mrs Austen explained to her wealthy sister-in-law, Mrs Leigh-Perrot (see above). Cassandra's Will consequently made Charles's financial situation more secure, and appointing him joint-executor in the Codicil would have served to recognise this in the eyes of her other brothers.⁵¹ Just how secure his situation had become appears from the fact that he saw occasion to draw up his own Will a year later, in 1846. The terms of the Will are summarised by Le Faye in her *Chronology* of the Austen family documents,⁵² and of particular relevance here are the amounts he bequeathed to his children: £2000 each to his eldest daughters, Cassandra Esten and Harriet-Jane (both of whom were unmarried), and £1000 each to his sons, Charles John and Henry, and in addition £1000 to each of his two executors, his sons Henry Edgar and George – "in trust", to invest for the support of his wife "during her lifetime". (This was Harriet Palmer, Charles's second wife, who would die twenty years later, in 1867.) The residuary estate, it appears, was to be divided amongst his children. In his Will, in other words, Charles bequeathed as much as £8000, nearly two-thirds of the residue of Cassandra's Will after administering the various legacies. With Mary Perigord's death the previous year Charles was, moreover, soon relieved of the obligation to pay her the £20 annuity as specified by Cassandra.

Despite having inherited the copyrights of her sister's novels, Cassandra never made a great fortune from them, since she already sold them to the publisher Richard Bentley in 1832.⁵³ The agreed sum was £250, but Cassandra received only £210 because £40 went to Thomas Egerton's heirs as the owners of the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice*.⁵⁴ Prior to the decision to sell the copyrights, John Murray, the publisher of all the novels except for *Pride and Prejudice*, paid Cassandra nearly £600 in "author's profits" for the posthumously published *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.⁵⁵ The additional one-third of her final assets, as calculated by Jones et al., may have come from shrewd investments made by Cassandra, for just like her mother and her wealthy aunt Mrs Leigh-Perrot before her, Cassandra also invested her money in stock, as the Will confirms: it mentions £4000 invested at "Three per cent Reduced", amounting to £120 annually, added to which there was the "annual interest of six pounds eight shillings" from the money invested in land which she and her sister had inherited from her godmother. Perhaps this was enough to live on, but even if it was, she must have led an extremely frugal life to have left so much in her Will. Edward, in any case, allowed her to continue to live in the Chawton cottage after their mother's death, and perhaps this also included the free firewood and £200 her

⁵¹Why Edward Jr.'s name was added as executor is unclear to me. As the Probate record shows, administration of the Will was granted to Charles, with the additional comment that "[p]ower [was] reserved of making the like grant to Edward Knight Esq^r. the Brother the Executor named in the Will and Edward Knight Esquire the Nephew the other Executor named in the said Codicil when they shall apply for the same".

⁵²Le Faye, *Chronology*, 667–8.

⁵³The novels' copyright expired by the 1860s, so that Jane Austen's published works are now in the public domain (see e.g., Sullivan, *Jane Austen Cover to Cover*, 22.)

⁵⁴Le Faye, *Chronology*, 645–6.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 598, 604.

mother referred to in her letter to Mrs Leigh-Perrot of 4 January 1820.⁵⁶ But exactly how Cassandra fared financially, we may never know.

4. Structure and Language of the Three Wills

Like her mother's, Cassandra's Will has all the characteristics of a professionally drawn up document, unlike the one Jane produced. This, as we will see, is evident from its language use but also from the fact that Probate was granted to Cassandra's Will almost immediately, i.e., on 1 April 1845, so within a fortnight of her death. The structure of the three Wills, however, is very similar. This is both remarkable, given the fact that Jane appears not to have called upon a lawyer when drawing up her Will, and unremarkable at the same time, since Wills tend to have the same structure throughout the history of the text type. Ulrich Bach, in a study of a corpus of sixteenth and seventeenth-century registered Wills drawn up by members of the University of Cambridge, shows that conventional Wills comprise four parts, a so-called pre-ambule, followed by a religious part, after which the secular bequests are listed; in a conclusion the testator asserts and confirms his or her identity.⁵⁷ Each of these parts consists of various conventional elements, such as an invocation of God ("In the name of God Amen") and the testator's self-identification and the declaration of making a Will (preamble); the bequest of soul and body and burial instructions (religious part); the individual bequests and the appointment of a testator (secular bequests); and, in conclusion, a scribal statement, the testator's signature, the date of the Will, and the names of the witnesses (assertion and confirmation of identity). Apart from the invocation of God and the bequest of the soul and body, all these elements can be found in the three Wills analysed in this paper, except for the mentioning of witnesses in Jane's case, which, as described, led to problems when Probate had to be granted. In addition, there was also her incomplete self-identification.

A comparison of the structure of the three Wills is presented in the overview below, which includes Jane's complete Will, most of the text of her mother's Will, and a summary of the one by Cassandra's, which is by far the longest of the three. The full text of the Wills of the two Cassandra's is presented in the Appendix.

Structure		Jane (1817)	Cassandra (1817)	Cassandra Elizabeth (1843)
Preamble	Self-identification	I Jane Austen of the Parish of Chawton	I Cassandra Austen Widow of Chawton in the County of Southampton	I Cassandra Elizabeth Austen of the Parish of Chawton in the County of Southampton Spinster
	Declaration of making a Will	do by this my last will & Testament	make this my last Will and Testament in manner following	do make and publish this my last Will & Testament
Secular bequests	Individual bequests	give and bequeath to my dearest Sister Cassandra Eliz th . every thing of	I give and bequeath all my property of every kind to my sole surviving	I give and bequeath to my said Brother Edw ^d . Knight [...] to my Brother Henry

(Continued)

⁵⁶Ibid., 632; 604.

⁵⁷Bach, "Wills and Will-Making", 137–8. Bach distinguishes between conventional and radical Wills. In the latter category, Puritans took the opportunity to voice their religious beliefs rather than having risked doing so openly during their lifetime.

Continued.

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Jane (1817)</i>	<i>Cassandra (1817)</i>	<i>Cassandra Elizabeth (1843)</i>
	which I may die possessed, or which may be hereafter due to me, subject to the payment of my Funeral Expenses , & to a Legacy of £50. to my Brother Henry, & £50. to M ^{de} – Bigeon – which I request may be paid as soon as convenient.	Daughter Cassandra Elizabeth	Thomas Austen [...] to my Brother ffrancis William Austen [...] to my Niece Jane Anna Elizabeth Lefroy [...] to Caroline Elizabeth fflowle [...] I give the same to my Niece and Goddaughter Cassandra Esten Austen [...] And [...] the Remainder [...] after my just debts & funeral expenses have been paid to my said Brother Charles John Austen upon condition that he pays twenty pounds a year [...] M ^{rs} . Mary Perigord [...]
Appointment of executor	And I appoint my said dear Sister the Executrix of this my last will & Testament :	and I make her my said Daughter my sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament	to which I appoint my Brother Edw ^d . Knight of Godmersham Park in the County of Kent Executor
Assertion of identity	Signature	Jane Austen	In witness whereof I the said testatrix Cassandra Elizabeth Austen have hereunto set my hand and seal [...] Cass. Eliz th . Austen
	Date	April 27. 1817.	this 22nd. day of July in the year of our Lord 1817.
	Witnesses	–	Signed sealed published & delivered by the within named Cassandra Elizabeth Austen as and for her own Will & Testament in the presence of us who in her presence and in the presence of each other have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto Edw ^d . Knight J ^r . Chawton Hants Esq ^{re} . – Charles B. Knight Rector of Chawton Hants.

A structural comparison of the three Wills analysed, based upon Bach (1995).

One striking feature in this overview is the absence in the preamble of all three Wills of an invocation of God, which would have been expected in the Wills of the wife and daughters of a clergyman. Possibly, this common opening, which we still find in the Wills of Samuel Johnson and Hester Thrale, for instance, and the one of a certain Susanna Smith found on the website of the National Archives, was become increasingly rare; we don't find it, for instance, in Robert Lowth's Will either,⁵⁸ despite the fact that he was Bishop of London at the time of his death. Nor do any of the three testators studied here give any burial instructions, while only Jane and her sister specify that the funeral expenses should be paid out of their estate.

⁵⁸See NA PROB 1/19 for Samuel Johnson's Will (9 December 1784), NA PROB 11/1645 for Hesther Lynch Piozzi, formerly Thrale (29 March 1816) and NA PROB 11/510/72 for the widow Susanna Smith (21 July 1709). For Lowth's Will, see NA PROB 11/1160 (11 September 1783).

Two more comparative points are of interest here. In Cassandra's Will the appointment of the executor is part of the preamble rather than of the section dealing with the secular requests; possibly, appointing her eldest remaining brother, Edward Knight, as her executor was uppermost in her mind (though the Codicil would later modify his role in the proceedings). Secondly, there is the form of the dates at the close of the Wills, which in Jane's case, "April 27. 1817", does not have the conventional legal phrasing found in the other two documents: "this 22nd. day of July in the year of our Lord 1817" (Mrs Austen) and "this ninth day of May 1843" (Cassandra). Jane's way of rendering the date, however, posed no problems in the verification of her Will. Secondly, in my analysis of Jane's Will, I commented on her language use, calling particular attention to her use of the words "which I **request may** be paid" with reference to the legacies intended for her brother Henry and his housekeeper, Madame Bigeon.⁵⁹ Making requests is not typical of the language of Wills, which merely serve to express the testator's wishes with regard to the disposal of his or her property after death and are thus phrased more directly. I also commented on her use of "And" when appointing Cassandra as her executor, since this appeared to reflect an afterthought. In her mother's Will, however, we similarly find the use of "and" in this context. One difference between the three Wills as shown in the above overview is the absence of punctuation marks in the Wills of Mrs Austen and Cassandra; the documents, however, are presented here based on their Probate copies, which don't as a rule contain any punctuation.⁶⁰ For the Probate copy of Jane's Will, all punctuation was removed as well. Legal texts make use of other features to structure the text.

One such feature is the use of *the said*, which has the same function as personal or demonstrative pronouns but which serves to avoid any possible ambiguity in legal texts like Wills.⁶¹ We do indeed find the phrase in all three Wills, as highlighted in the overview, and again, this confirms Jane's familiarity with the language of Wills. Legal language is also characterised by a frequent use of doublets, phrases consisting of multiple nouns, adjectives or verbs that are roughly identical in meaning and that are used as a means to avoid any misinterpretation.⁶² Even double determiners like *this my* commonly occur in Wills, as indeed in all three of the ones studied here. The Wills all have the phrase "this my last will & Testament", with both a double determiner and the noun doublet *Will and Testament*, as well as the verbal doublet *give and bequeath*. Cassandra once used only *give*, but this does not seem significant in the wider context. Finally, we see another standard legal phrase in the Wills of Cassandra and her mother, relating to the role of the witnesses: "in the presence of us who sign our names as Witnesses in her presence and in the presence of each other" (Mrs Austen) and "in the presence of us who in her presence and in the presence of each other have subscribed our names as witnesses" (Cassandra). Jane's Will was of course unwitnessed for reasons already discussed.

⁵⁹Tieken-Boon van Ostade, "To my dearest sister Casandra", 326–32.

⁶⁰See Crystal and Davy. *Investigating English Style*, 1969, Chapter 8.

⁶¹See e.g., Tiersma, *Legal Language*, 99.

⁶²Tiersma, *Legal Language*, 91.

5. Legacies and Their Importance for Single Women – Concluding Remarks

Wills are extremely valuable documents since, as I argued in *An Introduction to Late Modern English*, they “serve an important function in reconstructing the testator’s social network” at the time of death.⁶³ Wills, moreover, played a major role within the Austen family, as has already been demonstrated by the late Jon Spence in his collection called *A Century of Wills from Jane Austen’s Family 1705–1806*, but their importance continues well beyond the century covered by him. My analysis has not produced any new – later – Wills by members of the family, but by treating those of Jane, her mother and sister as a related set I have shown that it pays off to subject them to a close reading: by devoting detailed attention to the exact dates at which they were drawn up and by trying to account for the testators’ relationship with the beneficiaries of the various Wills studied in this paper, I have been able to provide a reconstruction of the reasons why the testators concerned – Jane herself, her mother and sister but also their brother Charles – made the provisions specified in their Wills. I was thus able to confirm a chance comment made during a conference at Chawton House while visiting St Nicholas Churchyard, that “Cassandra died a very rich woman, you know”.⁶⁴ In the light of the penurious circumstances the three Austen women were in after the death of George Austen in 1805, this seemed very unlikely to me at the time, and was not contradicted by my subsequent analysis of Jane’s Will, in which she left her fairly meagre possessions to Cassandra. The subject was next taken up by John Avery Jones and colleagues, resulting in two studies that supplied highly detailed information relating to the administration of the Wills of Jane and Cassandra.

Searching for Cassandra’s Will also produced the one her mother had drawn up, no less than four days after Jane’s death, and phrased in proper legal terms so that there would be no risk of the Will being similarly proved invalid. A specific way in which Cassandra Austen-Leigh was inspired by her daughter’s Will was by making Cassandra the sole beneficiary of whatever she would happen to possess by the time she herself would die as well, an event that took place only some ten years later. By that time, Mrs Austen evidently had enough possessions for her estate to be valued high enough so that her Will could be entered into the Probate records and could be executed. Just how much Cassandra consequently inherited is uncertain, but we do have a clear indication of a significant part of her assets at the time of her own death due to the total amount of the various legacies specified. Because Cassandra assigned her least wealthy brother Charles as the beneficiary of “the *Remainder* of whatever I may have a right to dispose of after my just debts & funeral expenses have been paid”, this made me turn to his Will as well. Considering the fact that he drew up his own Will less than a year after Cassandra’s Will had been proved, there seemed to be a clear connection between the large sums of money he in his turn bequeathed to his children and – indirectly – to his wife, and his inheritance from his sister’s estate. Cassandra thus did indeed die a rich woman, leaving behind an amount of money that today would be equal in value to between nearly 0.9 and 1.1 million pounds. As her principal beneficiary, Charles overnight turned into a wealthy man, to

⁶³Tieken-Boon van Ostade, *An Introduction to Late Modern English*, 2009, 137.

⁶⁴The conference, called “Novel Approaches: the Language of Women’s Fiction, 1750–1830”, took place in February 2012 and was organised by Christina Davidson and Victorina González-Díaz.

such an extent that he, too, needed to draw up a Will to dispose of his property in a responsible way.

But close-reading the various Wills, particularly Cassandra's, also brought to light a particular concern for unmarried – or otherwise husbandless – women in the Austen family and its social network. We already saw this in Jane's Will, which benefitted her unmarried sister Cassandra but also her bankrupt brother's housekeeper; but also in the Will of Cassandra's godmother Elizabeth Leigh, who herself never married and who bequeathed the interest from the land she had invested in to her two unmarried nieces. We also see this in Mrs Austen's Will, who, rather than dying intestate, chose to leave all her possessions to her remaining unmarried daughter, and in the one by Cassandra, whose legatees included unmarried Elizabeth Caroline Fowle (through which she at the same time returned to the Fowle family the legacy she herself had received upon her fiancé Tom Fowle's untimely death), her similarly unmarried goddaughter Cassandra Esten, and the Austen servant of long standing, Mary Perigord, whose husband had deserted her soon after their marriage. Through the years, Mary Perigord had been the recipient of regular financial gifts from members of the Austen family, including Mrs Austen and Cassandra, and she eventually left a Will of her own. Leaving the same amount of stock – £1000 – to her late brother James's daughter Anna Lefroy as to her three of her other brothers (Edward, Henry and Frank), Cassandra did indeed divide some of her money "between each branch of the family", as Le Faye suggested, but not all of it and not equally so, because Charles benefitted most from the Will. Besides, by this time, Anna was husbandless as well, because her husband Benjamin had died fifteen years previously. Furthermore, the desire to consider the financial plight of unmarried women in the family continues to be found in the nature of the legacies specified by Charles in his Will: a large part of his newly acquired estate was to go to his two unmarried daughters, Cassandra Esten and Harriet-Jane, and of course, as would be expected, to his wife in the form of investments from which she would benefit for the remainder of her life. Dividing his money among his children might be considered the responsibility of any father at the time, but to bequeath twice as much to his daughters as to their brothers confirms his recognition of the potential financial plight of their unmarried state after his death; in doing so he acted in the spirit of his recently deceased sister Cassandra's Will.

Closely analysing these four Austen Wills thus shows a particular concern for women who had not succeeded, or indeed had shown no desire to do so, in obtaining a financially secure position through marriage – "singlewomen" in the terminology coined by Bennett and Froide in their book *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250–1800*. This is particularly clear from Cassandra's Will, though it was possibly inspired by those of her mother and sister before it, while her own Will in turn may have inspired the one of her brother Charles, who through his inheritance was now able to provide well for his two unmarried daughters. Single women as a historical category have rarely been the focus of scholarly attention, Bennett and Froide noted twenty-five years ago.⁶⁵ In a later study, called *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Amy Froide focuses on urban single women, and she notes that modern historians have tended to

⁶⁵Bennett and Froide, "A Singular Past", the introduction to their book *Singlewomen in the European Past*, 3.

view them as a (new) problem during the latter part of that period.⁶⁶ While to the Austen brothers, upon the death of their father, the three women of the family presented a real problem in that they had to be financially supported, my analysis of their Wills suggests that these women managed well enough, aided financially by the brothers but also by their wealthy aunt Leigh-Perrot, but ultimately through specifically designated legacies that addressed their financial needs. Bennett and Froide consider the question of whether lifelong singleness represented a realistic option for Late Modern women.⁶⁷ For Jane and Cassandra Austen this was indeed the case: Cassandra continued to view herself as having all but married into the Fowle family, while Jane preferred the insecurities of becoming a professional writer to the responsibilities of a wife and mother.⁶⁸ Setting up house together along with their mother and their close friend Martha Lloyd proved instrumental in facilitating this very process, as Zoë Wheddon argues in her book *Jane Austen's Best Friend*.

"The Kinship networks of singlewomen could be [...] intense", Bennett and Froide note,⁶⁹ as indeed we have seen with the Austen women and their female relatives. Emily Midorikawa and Emma Sweeney likewise suggest in *A Secret Sisterhood* that there was a "circle of single women" among the Austen women who were aware of and catered to each other's needs in ways that included providing for them in their Wills. This circle included friends like Martha – though eventually she ceased to be single when marrying Frank – and dependants like Madame Bigeon and her daughter Mary Perigord. As Midorikawa and Sweeney argue, it also included another of Jane's friends, Anne Sharp (1776–1853), who likewise never married, but who first became a governess within Edward's family and later set up a boarding school for girls.⁷⁰ Midorikawa and Sweeney, however, as shown by this article, mistakenly claim that Cassandra "also left £30 in her Will to the elderly Anne",⁷¹ nor did she include Anne Sharp's name among the list of beneficiaries of her private property.⁷² What all this does demonstrate is the recognition of the existence of a kind of parallel world to that depicted in Jane Austen's novels, a world in which not all women found or indeed looked for husbands, either for themselves or for their daughters, but that such women could be provided for through specific legacies or other occasional gifts of money. Clearly, Wills were potentially powerful instruments for this, the inspiration for which, in this particular family at least, came from the unexpected and originally invalid Will of their nowadays very famous daughter and sister.

⁶⁶Froide, *Never Married*, 7–8. Note that for historical linguists, the Early Modern English period ends at around 1700 upon which the Late Modern period begins, while historians tend to include the eighteenth century among the former period.

⁶⁷Bennett and Froide, "A Singular Past", 21–23.

⁶⁸See Fergus, "The Professional Woman Writer", as well as Wheddon, *Jane Austen's Best Friend*, 122.

⁶⁹Bennett and Froide, "A Singular Past", 23.

⁷⁰Becoming a governess might seem like a viable alternative for women who chose a different path from marriage at the time, but according to Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, governesses were poorly paid and hard worked, and occupied an "equivocal" position within the families that employed them (244).

⁷¹Midorikawa and Sweeney, *A Secret Sisterhood*, 75.

⁷²Le Faye, *Chronology*, 663–4. The claim seems to be based on a misinterpretation of Tomalin's statement that "[t]wo years before her death Cassandra sent a gift of £30 to Anne Sharp" (284). The timing of this gift did indeed coincide with the date of Cassandra's Will and of her Letter of Wishes, but was not part of the Will proper.

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Appendix. Transcription of the Wills of Cassandra and Cassandra Elizabeth Austen

The Will of Cassandra Austen (NA PROB 11/722)

I Cassandra Austen Widow of =
Chawton in the County of Southampton make this my last Will and Testament
in manner following I give and bequeath all my property of every kind to my sole =
surviving Daughter Cassandra Elizabeth and I make her my said Daughter my sole
Executrix of this my last Will and Testament to which I sign my name this 22nd.
day of July in the year of our Lord 1817. *Cassandra Austen* – Signed and
published as her last Will and Testament by the Testatrix in the presence of us
who sign our names as Witnesses in her presence and in the presence of each
other. *Henry Thomas Austen – Martha Lloyd – Francis W^m. Austen ./.*

Proved at London 12th. March 1827 before the Judge by the oath of =
Cassandra Elizabeth Austen Spinster the Daughter the sole Executrix to whom
Admōn was granted being first sworn (by Cañon) duly to administer ./.

The Will of Cassandra Elizabeth Austen (NA PROB 11/2015)

I Cassandra Elizabeth Austen
of the Parish of Chawton in the County of Southampton Spinster
do make and publish this my last Will & Testament to which I =
appoint my Brother Edw^d. Knight of Godmersham Park in the =
County of Kent *Executor* I give and bequeath to my said Brother
Edw^d. Knight one thousand pounds Stock in the Three per cent Reduced
standing in my name I give and bequeath to my Brother =
Henry Thomas Austen one thousand pounds Stock in the Three =
per cent Reduced standing in my name I give and bequeath to =
my Brother Francis William Austen one thousand pounds Stock in
the Three per cent Reduced standing in my name I give and =
bequeath to my Niece Jane Anna Elizabeth Lefroy one thousand
pounds Stock in the Three per Cent Reduced standing in my name
I give and bequeath to Caroline Elizabeth fflowle Daughter of the
late Rev^d. ffulwar Craven fflowle of Kintbury Berkshire one =
thousand pounds sterling And as to the money secured on lands
in the parish of Higham in the County of Leicester belonging
to the vicarage of Cubbington in Warwickshire which was =
given to me and my late Sister by the late M^{rs}. Elizabeth Leigh
and which said money produces an annual interest of six =
pounds eight shillings I give the same to my Niece and God-

daughter Cassandra Esten Austen Daughter of my Brother = [Charles John Austen And I give and bequeath the *Remainder* of whatever I may have a right to dispose of after my just debts & funeral expenses have been paid to my said Brother Charles John Austen upon condition that he pays twenty pounds a year by = quarterly payments on the twenty first of March the twenty first of June the twenty first of September and the twenty first of = December to M^{rs}. Mary Perigord now residing in Edward Street = = Portman Square during the term of her natural life In witness whereof I the said testatrix Cassandra Elizabeth Austen have hereunto set my hand and seal this ninth day of May 1843 — *Cass. Elizth. Austen* – LS – Signed sealed published & delivered by = the within named Cassandra Elizabeth Austen as and for her = own Will & Testament in the presence of us who in her presence = and in the presence of each other have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto. *Edw^d. Knight J^r. Chawton Hants Esq^{re}*. ----- *Charles B. Knight Rector of Chawton Hants.*

This is a Codicil to the Will of me *Cassandra* = = *Elizabeth Austen* of Chawton Cottage Spinster Whereas I have = heretofore made my last Will and Testament and thereof appointed my Brother Edward Knight of Godmersham Park Esq^{re}. sole Executor Now I hereby appoint my Brother Captⁿ. Charles J. Austen R.N. = and my Nephew Edward Knight of Chawton House Esq. to be joint *Executors* of my said Will with my said Brother Edward Knight = And in all other respects I confirm my said Will In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of March one thousand eight hundred and forty five. *Cass. Elizth. Austen* – Signed published and declared by the said Cassandra Elizabeth Austen as & for a Codicil to her last Will and Testament in the presence of us who at her request in her presence and in the = presence of one another have hereunto set our hands as witnesses *Henry E. Austen Linc: Inn 7 New Sq^e. – Cassandra Eliza Austen – Portsdown Lodge.*

Proved

Proved at London with a Codicil 1st. April: 1845 before the = = worshipful Jesse Addams Ddoctor of Laws and Surrogate by the Oath of Charles John Austen Esq^f. the Brother one of the Executors named in the said Codicil to whom Admⁿon was granted having been = first sworn duly to administer. Power reserved of making the like grant to Edward Knight Esq^f. the ^x Nephew the other Executor named in the said Codicil when they shall apply for the same.

Margin: x

Brother the Executor named
in the Will and Edward =
Knight Esquire the = =