Austenobilia

Strident laughter from you would be unusual,

your metier was irony, palpable wit, the sound

of precise language, considered and cared for,

whilst I guess that lies, debauched speech,

courtesans, umbrella stealers, too much

alcohol, chattering, bored women, expensive perfume,

grand hotels, wife-swapping and roulette were ruled out,

as were the Prince of Wales, all his mistresses,

slavery, poodles and pomanders, hypocrites

bear-baiting, cock fighting, and, had they been invented,

Mills and Boone, selfies and cell-phones.

You had to wait fifteen years to be published

so you embroidered, wrote letters in copper-plate,

played the piano and cards and blushed sometimes.

You knew you would die earlier than most.

You collected the things I love. Listening to your

laugh, enjoying your irony and falling for you

would have been easy. One look enough, one nod.