**Jane Austen in a skip**

The last place I expected to find Jane Austen was in a skip

But as we strolled hand in hand down the narrow

Norman streets in that town of books

On the dawn of my twenty-third year

That is exactly where I spotted her, wedged in

Between Muhammed Ali and Carol Ann Duffy –

Heavyweights all three but no match for the landfill.

It broke my heart to see her there, the good quiet aunt

Who didn’t survive typhus to end up lost amongst

Banana peel and nappies. There was no Miss Cooper

To look out for her this time; no John Willoughby to

Ensure she didn’t get caught out in the rain.

But you saw my face as I considered Jane’s fate

And jumped in, disregarding of your clothes or

The strange looks of passers-by, wading through

Books that deserved their own rescue – and though

This wasn't Pemberley and there was no lake,

When I saw you emerge from the depths of that paper pool,

The Collected Works of Jane Austen cradled

Pristine and unsullied in your hands,

I could hear Miss Austen herself as she wrote:

‘Her heart did whisper he had done it for her’