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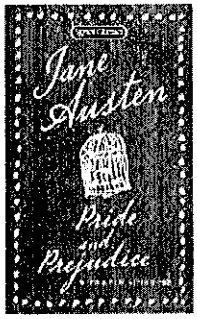
Pride and Prejudice

by Jane Austen



List Price: $4.95
Pages: 400
Format: Paperback
ISBN: 9780307386861
Publisher: Penguin Classic

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About This Book

(Excerpted from The Jane Austen Book Club)

Pride and Prejudice was originally entitled **First Impressions**. It was written between 1796 and 1797, and heavily revised before its publication in 1813. It is the most famous of the novels. Austen herself characterized it as "rather too light and bright, and sparkling," suggesting it needed some "solemn specious nonsense" for contrast. In an inversion of the classic Cinderella fairy tale, when the hero, Fitzwilliam Darcy, first sees the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, at a ball, he refuses to dance with her.

Elizabeth is one of five Bennet daughters, second in age only to the beautiful Jane. The Bennet estate is entailed on a male cousin, and although the girls are comfortable enough as long as their father lives, their long-term financial survival depends on their marrying.

The story revolves around Elizabeth's continued dislike of Darcy and Darcy's growing attraction to Elizabeth. When she meets the rake Wickham, he dislikes Darcy intensely; she is quickly won over by their shared distaste. A subplot involves her father's heir, the Reverend Collins, who attempts to

amend his financial impact on the family by asking Elizabeth to marry him. Elizabeth rejects him-he is pompous and stupid-so he proposes to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend, who accepts.

Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, but rudely. Elizabeth rudely rejects him. Wickham elopes with Lydia, the youngest Bennet sister, and Darcy is instrumental in finding the couple and buying Lydia a marriage. This, along with his steadfast love and improved manners, convinces Elizabeth that he is the man for her after all. Jane marries Darcy's friend Mr. Bingley on the same day Elizabeth and Darcy are married. Both sisters end up rich.

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Discussion Questions

1. Pride and Prejudice is probably Austen's most famous, most beloved book. One element, the initial mutual dislike of two people destined to love each other, has become a cliché of the Hollywood romance. I'm sure you can think of numerous examples.

This book has been described by scholars as a very conservative text. Did you find it so? What sort of position do you see it taking on the class system?

It has also been described as Austen's most idealistic book. What do you suppose is meant by that?

2. In 1814 Mary Russell Mitford wrote: "It is impossible not to feel in every line of Pride and Prejudice. . . the entire want of taste which could produce so pert, so worldly a heroine as the beloved of such a man as Darcy. . . Darcy should have married Jane."

Would you have liked the book as well if Jane were its heroine?

Have you ever seen a movie version in which the woman playing Jane was, as Austen imagined her, truly more beautiful than the woman playing Elizabeth?

Who doesn't love Elizabeth Bennet?!!

3. Two central characters in Austen have her own first name.

In Emma: Jane Fairfax is a decorous, talented, beautiful woman.

In Pride and Prejudice: Jane Bennet is everything lovely.

What do you make of that?

4. Lydia and Wickham pose a danger to the Bennet family as long as they are unmarried and unchecked. But as a married couple, with little improvement in their behavior, this danger vanishes.

In Pride and Prejudice marriage serves many functions. It is a romantic union, a financial merger, and a vehicle for social regulation. Scholar and writer Mary Poovey said that Austen's goal "is to make propriety and romantic desire absolutely congruent."

Think about all the marriages in the book with respect to how well they are fulfilling those functions.

Is marriage today still an institution of social regulation?

What about it would change if gay marriage were legally recognized?

5. Austen suggests that in order to marry well a woman must be pretty,

respectable, and have money. In the world of Pride and Prejudice, which of these is most important? Spare a thought for some of the unmarried women in the book-Mary and Kitty Bennet, Miss de Bourgh, Miss Georgiana Darcy, poor, disappointed Caroline Bingley. Which of them do you picture marrying some day? Which of them do you picture marrying well?

6. Was Charlotte Lucas right to marry Reverend Collins?

7. What are your feelings about Mr. Bennet? Is he a good father? A good husband? A good man?

8. Darcy says that one of Wickham's motivations in his attempted elopement with Georgiana was revenge. What motivations might he have had for running off with Lydia? (Besides the obvious. . .)

9. Elizabeth Bennet says, ". . . people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever."

Do any of the characters in the book change substantially? Or do they, as Elizabeth says of Darcy, "in essentials" remain much as they ever were?

10. Elizabeth is furious with Darcy for breaking up the match between Jane and Mr. Bingley. Although he initially defends himself, she changes his mind. Later when Lady Catherine attempts to interfere in his own courtship, he describes this as unjustifiable.

Should you tell a friend if you think they're about to make a big mistake romantically?

Have you ever done so? How did that work out for you?

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Critical Praise

"**Pride and Prejudice** has always been the most popular of Jane Austen's books ... with its good humoured comedy, its sunny heroine, its dream denouement"

—Claire Tomalin

"These modern editions are to be strongly recommended for their scrupulous texts, informative notes and helpful introductions"

—Brian Southam, the Jane Austen Society

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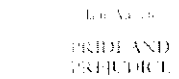

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Pride and Prejudice (1813)

Jane Austen (Author)

This Austen title tells the story of the upper-middle-class Bennett family, which includes father, mother and five daughters. The family home, Longbourne Manor, is entailed to a male cousin. It is thus a major objective of Mrs. Bennett, a silly woman given to inappropriate and outrageous statements, to secure the future of her daughters through marriage. When the wealthy Charles Bingley moves into the neighborhood and apparently falls in love with eldest daughter Jane, Mrs. Bennett does all in her power to throw the two together. Charles' sister and best friend Fitzwilliam Darcy do not approve of the Bennetts, a fact they do little to disguise. This causes a great deal of antagonism between Elizabeth and Darcy, and they spend much of their time together in verbal battle. The course of true love does not run smooth for anyone in this insightful and satirical story.

MAIN CHARACTERS :	Elizabeth Bennett, Gentlewoman, Jane Bennett, Sister (of Elizabeth), Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman, Charles Bingley, Gentleman, Mr. Bennett, Father, Mrs. Bennett, Mother
GENRE :	Historical fiction, Popular romances
SUB GENRE :	Historical - Regency
SETTING(S) :	England, Europe, Great Britain, United Kingdom, Western Europe
SUBJECT :	Love, Interpersonal relations, Romances (Fiction), Social history, British history, 1714-1815
TIME PERIOD :	19th century AD

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Gale Document Number: GALE|M1300041737

Gale Database: *What Do I Read Next?*, 2013

Title : Jane Austen Emma & Pride and Prejudice

Source : Library Journal 127.19 : pg.SS29(1)

Document Type : Book review

Book review, bookreview2

* Emma

First published in 1816, Emma is generally regarded as Jane Austen's most technically brilliant and comic work. An heiress who is determined not to marry ends up falling in love. Emma Woodhouse--a snob, a meddler, and spoilt, but she is also clever, funny, generous, and compassionate. As in all of Jane Austen's works, the simple theme of courtship belies the complexity of her vision of human nature.

* Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen herself called this brilliant work her "own darling child." Published anonymously in 1813, Pride and Prejudice is a superb comedy of manners. In recounting the courtship of the witty, independent Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy--the handsome bachelor whose arrogant pride Elizabeth regards as a fatal flaw--Austen illuminates the prejudices of society as a whole with subtle humor.

For almost two centuries, Pride and Prejudice has remained one of the most popular novels in English.

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

English novelist and letter writer.

The following entry presents criticism of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). For additional discussion of the novel, see *NCLC,* Volumes 13 and 150; for discussion of the novel *Emma* (1815), see *NCLC,* Volume 19; for discussion of the novel *Persuasion* (1817), see *NCLC,* Volume 33; for discussion of the novel *Northanger Abbey* (1817), see *NCLC,* Volume 51; for discussion of the novel *Sense and Sensibility* (1810), see *NCLC,* Volume 81; for discussion of the novel *Mansfield Park* (1814), see *NCLC,* Volume 95; and for information on Austen's complete career, see *NCLC,* Volumes 1 and 119.

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars regard *Pride and Prejudice* as Jane Austen's most important novel. Austen completed an early draft of the work in 1797 under the title *First Impressions,* but she put it aside after failing to find a publisher. More than a decade later, Austen revised the manuscript and renamed it *Pride and Prejudice,* publishing it anonymously in 1813. The book revolves around the character of Elizabeth Bennet, a strong-willed, intelligent young woman whose willingness to speak her mind frequently runs counter to the societal expectations of her era. As the novel progresses, Elizabeth gradually falls in love with the aristocratic Fitzwilliam Darcy; although Darcy's haughty attitude initially repels Elizabeth, his fundamental integrity soon proves an equal match to her own strength of character, and the novel ends with a celebration of their marriage. Austen tells her story primarily through the dialogue of her characters; their distinctive speaking styles reveal much about their individual personalities, while the complicated network of their social interactions are disclosed. Over the course of its history, the novel has emerged as Austen's most popular work of fiction. W. Somerset Maugham summarized the enduring legacy of *Pride and Prejudice* in his 1954 study *The Art of Fiction: An Introduction to Ten Novels and Their Authors.* Hailing Austen's novel as a "masterpiece," Maugham declared, "What makes a classic is not that it is praised by critics . . . but that large numbers of readers, generation after generation, have found pleasure and spiritual profit in reading it." In the twentieth century the novel inspired several theatrical productions in addition to numerous film adaptations and television miniseries.

PLOT AND MAJOR CHARACTERS

Pride and Prejudice focuses on the Bennet family, middle-class landowners living in Longbourn, a village outside of London. The story centers upon finding suitable marriages for the five Bennet daughters, a mission that Mrs. Bennet, who is a bit flighty and shallow, approaches with fierce single-mindedness. Mr. Bennet is a kindhearted but remote figure, a calm man of action behind the scenes, whose interactions with others are seemingly either sarcastic or indifferent. Jane, the oldest and most beautiful of the Bennet sisters, is a reserved, compassionate, and charming young woman who interacts gracefully with others. By contrast, the second Bennet daughter, Elizabeth, is outspoken and opinionated, frequently sparking conflict with her sharp wit. Because of her intelligence and independence, Elizabeth is her father's favorite daughter; she enjoys an intimacy with Mr. Bennet unavailable to others, including Mrs. Bennet. The younger Bennet daughters, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, are portrayed as immature and foolish, each in her own way. As the narrative unfolds, Elizabeth quickly emerges as the work's most compelling character.

The novel begins with the Bennets receiving the news that a wealthy young gentleman, Charles Bingley, has rented Netherfield Park, a nearby estate. Mrs. Bennet, recognizing the possibility of a union between Bingley and one of her daughters, hectors her husband into paying Bingley a visit in the hopes that the girls will subsequently be invited to his house. Mr. Bennet obliges his wife without appearing to, and a short time later the Bennet daughters attend a gala event at Netherfield Park. Jane and Bingley take to each other immediately and spend most of the evening talking and dancing. Despite the evident success of this first meeting, Jane does not find favor with Bingley's sister, the haughty, condescending Caroline Bingley, who immediately disapproves of the potential match. The scene at Netherfield also introduces Bingley's close friend, Fitzwilliam Darcy, an honest but self-important, arrogant young man. Darcy regards the other guests with disdain and

even insults Elizabeth, declaring her "not handsome enough" to tempt him. Elizabeth overhears and laughs off Darcy's rudeness, dismissing it jokingly to her family and friends.

As time passes, however, Darcy begins to recognize Elizabeth's intellect and strength of character, and his attitude toward her changes. Darcy's overtures fail to impress Elizabeth, however, who remains disenchanted with his snobbish attitude toward other people in the village. Darcy's attraction to Elizabeth also provokes the ire of Caroline Bingley, who has long been in love with him and who acts contemptuously toward Elizabeth and her sisters throughout the novel. Her antipathy for the Bennets becomes particularly pronounced after Jane becomes ill during a visit to Netherfield Park, which compels Jane and Elizabeth to stay there for several days.

After Jane recovers, the sisters return home to find their cousin, the Reverend William Collins, paying a visit to the family. Collins is Mr. Bennet's legal heir; British law decrees that a man's inheritance must go to the closest male relative, so the Bennet sisters have no claim to their father's property. A foolish, condescending man, Collins magnanimously suggests that he might marry one of the Bennet girls so that they might retain some ownership of their father's estate. He proposes marriage to Elizabeth, but she promptly refuses him, much to her mother's dismay. During Collins's visit, the sisters meet a group of militia soldiers stationed in a nearby town. One of the officers, George Wickham, befriends Elizabeth. When Wickham confides to her that Darcy, with whom he was raised, has cheated him out of an inheritance, Elizabeth becomes indignant and vows to stay away from Netherfield Park.

As winter approaches, Bingley, Darcy, and Caroline abruptly leave the mansion and return to London, causing much speculation in the neighborhood about the sincerity of Bingley's regard for Jane. Jane visits the city with her aunt in hopes of seeing him, but Bingley neglects to visit her. Meanwhile, Collins proposes to Elizabeth's friend, Charlotte Lucas, who immediately accepts him in order to ensure her future security; after their marriage they move into a house near the estate of Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, a very wealthy, imposing woman. When Elizabeth visits Charlotte and Collins the following spring, she unexpectedly encounters Darcy, who is traveling with his cousin. Elizabeth discovers through the cousin that Darcy has purposely separated Bingley and Jane. Unaware of this conversation, Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, and she turns him down, berating him sharply for his mistreatment of both Jane and Wickham. Stunned, Darcy departs abruptly. Elizabeth immediately receives a letter of explanation from him in which he confesses to urging Bingley to stay away from Jane, although with only good intentions (he believed Jane did not love his friend); he also decries Wickham as a liar and an opportunist who once tried to cajole Darcy's young sister into eloping with him. As she considers Darcy's letter, Elizabeth must confront her assumptions and biases against him, and she begins to reassess his character.

A short time later, to the great distress of the youngest two Bennet sisters, Kitty and Lydia, the militia departs from the neighborhood of Longbourn. Lydia, who has enjoyed a lively social life with the regiment, is particularly upset; she persuades her parents to allow her to spend the summer months with an acquaintance in Brighton, near the regiment's new garrison. Mr. Bennet ignores Elizabeth's strong representations against the plan; the only harm that can come to Lydia, he assures Elizabeth, is that of discovering her own insignificance. At the same time, Elizabeth goes on a trip with her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners. They take a tour of the countryside north of London, eventually stopping at Pemberley, Darcy's estate. Elizabeth, who only agrees to tour the estate once she is assured that its owner is absent, is immediately impressed by the natural beauty of Darcy's home; she is also touched by the testimonies of Darcy's servants, who attest to his decency and honesty. Unexpectedly, however, Darcy shows up. Elizabeth is mortified, but Darcy proves a gracious host, deftly avoiding the subject of his marriage proposal.

During her visit, Elizabeth receives a letter from her parents informing her that Lydia has eloped with Wickham. Fearing that Wickham will not marry her sister and that Lydia's ruined honor will disgrace the family, Elizabeth and the Gardiners immediately return home to do what they can to help. Eventually Mr. Gardiner discovers the lovers hidden in London, living together and unmarried. Wickham blackmails Mr. Bennet and Mr. Gardiner into paying him an enormous sum, in addition to an annual income, in exchange for marrying Lydia. The whole family is relieved at the resolution, although Mr. Bennet is unhappy about the marriage and his own negligence as a parent. Elizabeth feels it more deeply; while stunned at the cost to both her father and uncle as a result of Lydia's willful impropriety, she is convinced that she has now lost Darcy's regard forever. She soon receives a letter from her Aunt Gardiner, however, who accidentally reveals a secret: Darcy is the one who has paid Wickham off; he holds himself to blame for the pride that prevented him from making Wickham's degeneracy more widely known. Elizabeth suffers anew from the shame of both her sister's behavior and her own in so misjudging Darcy.

At around this time, Bingley and Darcy return to Netherfield Park. Bingley immediately recommences courting Jane and soon proposes to her. Darcy resumes his friendship with Elizabeth but doesn't broach the subject of marriage. At this point Lady Catherine de Bourgh

visits the village for the express purpose of forbidding Elizabeth to marry her nephew. Elizabeth is amazed to learn that Darcy intends to renew his proposals; she rebuffs the old woman on principle in any case, insisting that she will do whatever she pleases. A short time later, Darcy indeed proposes, and Elizabeth accepts him. At the novel's conclusion, the Bennets celebrate two marriages: Jane and Bingley's and Elizabeth and Darcy's.

MAJOR THEMES

In a broad sense, *Pride and Prejudice* concerns the various cultural pressures inherent in genteel British society in the late-eighteenth century. Austen explored a number of crucial dualities in the work. In the abstract, these dualities are reflected in the tensions that arise between intellect and action, solitude and community, and appearance and reality. At the novel's core, however, the principal dichotomy runs along gender lines; men have power and freedom while women are inevitably dependent on men for security and happiness. Symbolically, the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet offers an extreme example of the potentially devastating imbalance caused by this schism. Mr. Bennet's independence and complacency ultimately render him emotionally vacant, unwilling or unable to participate in the lives of his own daughters, while Mrs. Bennet's single-minded obsession with her daughters' marriages and financial security leaves her incapable of comprehending the deeper, more fulfilling aspects of human happiness. Elizabeth and Darcy are also at opposite poles, particularly in the beginning of the novel. One of the divides that separates them is the discrepancy in their social and financial circumstances; Darcy's wealth and prominence elevate him a considerable distance above Elizabeth's more modest status. In the realm of appearances, the difference between their class situations is significant. As Austen reveals the true depth and complexity of their characters, however, these distinctions gradually become irrelevant. When Elizabeth and Darcy fall in love, the boundaries of their incompatibility begin to blur; what emerges in its place is a sense of the complementary nature of their personalities. In the end they are able to overcome their differences through the union of marriage, which enables them to bring together their respective strengths.

For modern feminist scholars, *Pride and Prejudice* highlights the limited roles and rights of women in eighteenth-century English society. One of the novel's key plot points revolves around the question of entailment, a legal statute that prioritized the inheritance rights of men over those of women, even in cases in which there was no immediate male heir. The inequities of this law are made evident throughout *Pride and Prejudice,* particularly in the desperation with which Mrs. Bennet and her younger daughters approach the prospect of marriage. In this respect the fundamental injustice of the entailment laws sheds new light on the relentless plotting of Mrs. Bennet, whose sense of urgency concerning her daughters' futures is arguably driven more by economic anxiety than class ambition.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

On the whole, nineteenth-century reactions to *Pride and Prejudice* were mixed. A reviewer in the March 1813 issue of the *Critical Review* lauded the novel's entertainment value, claiming that every character in the book "excites the interest" and that the work as a whole "very agreeably divides the attention of the reader"; the writer expressed particularly high praise for the novel's protagonist, Elizabeth, whose "sense and conduct are of a superior order to those of the common heroines of novels." In a diary entry dated January 12, 1819, writer Henry Crabbe Robinson hailed the "perfectly colloquial style of the dialogue." One prominent voice of dissent was that of author Mary Russell Mitford, who, in a letter dated December 20, 1814, lamented the "entire want of taste" characterizing the novel's language and characters. Austen herself wasn't entirely satisfied with the work; in a letter to her sister Cassandra dated February 14, 1813, she complained that the novel was "rather too light, & bright, & sparkling," and needed "to be stretched out here & there" with "anything that would form a contrast & bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness & Epigrammatism of the general stile." Writing in 1848, Charlotte Brontë dismissed the novel as too artificial and contrived, comparing it to a "carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden" where she "should hardly like to live." In the March 1860 issue of *Blackwood's Magazine,* the critic George Henry Lewes remarked on the "fine artistic sense" underlying the novel's plot and structure. Author Margaret Oliphant, on the other hand, found the novel's characterizations of Elizabeth and Darcy uninteresting, a product of Austen's "strange delusion," although she commended the "varied and vivid originality" of the work's minor characters. Mark Twain was famously dismissive of the novel, proclaiming that as he tried to read the book, he felt as bewildered as a "barkeeper entering the kingdom of heaven."

In the twentieth century, scholars and critics have proven far more receptive to the book's inventiveness and humor. Sir Walter Raleigh described the novel's female characters as "marvelous and incomparable" in a letter dated October 23, 1917. In her 1929 work *A Room of One's Own,* Virginia Woolf praised the stylistic mastery of Austen's prose, as well as the "architectural quality" of the novel's structure with the brief state-

ment, "*Pride and Prejudice* has form." Scholar Dorothy Van Ghent offered an in-depth analysis of the novel within its historical and social context in her 1953 study *The English Novel: Form and Function.* A number of modern critics have focused on the novel's characters. More recently, Kenneth L. Moler examines the fundamental contrasts between Elizabeth and Darcy's personalities, while James Sherry describes the evolution of their relationship as a form of dialectic. Some scholars, notably Tim Fulford and Sandra McPherson, focus on the novel's treatment of British military and economic power at the dawn of the nineteenth century. Other commentators address issues of female identity in the work; Michael J. Stasio and Kathryn Duncan discuss the relationship between gender and marriage in the novel in their essay "An Evolutionary Approach to Jane Austen: Prehistoric Preferences in *Pride and Prejudice.*"

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Sense and Sensibility. 3 vols. (novel) 1810
Pride and Prejudice. 3 vols. (novel) 1813
Mansfield Park. 3 vols. (novel) 1814
Emma. 3 vols. (novel) 1815
Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. 4 vols. (novels) 1817
Lady Susan, and the Watsons (novella and unfinished novel) 1882
The Novels of Jane Austen. 5 vols. (novels) 1923
Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others (letters) 1959

CRITICISM

Edd Winfield Parks (essay date June 1952)

SOURCE: Parks, Edd Winfield. "Jane Austen's Lure of the Next Chapter." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 7, no. 1 (June 1952): 56-60.

[*In the following essay, Parks analyzes Austen's storytelling techniques in* Pride and Prejudice. *According to Parks, Austen concludes many of the novel's chapters with character summaries as a way of sustaining the reader's interest in the plot.*]

For a novelist who rarely mentioned the technical devices of fiction and apparently gave little thought to them, Jane Austen uncannily grasped the essential ones in a way that many conscious artists have not equaled. Some of these devices have been analyzed at length, but one that has apparently escaped comment is Miss Austen's ability to lure the reader on to the next chapter. She had to a remarkable degree the ability to keep the reader interested, to make him anxious to go on, *now,* with the story. Yet she rarely uses the obvious "what-happened-next" technique, or leaves the reader dangling in the midst of unfinished action after the manner beloved by writers who think in terms of installments rather than of a completed whole. With very few exceptions each chapter has a unified, rounded structure that leaves the reader satisfied with it as a unit. But the sense of continuity extends beyond the unit; the pattern is not complete, and the reader is aware of threads yet to be woven into the continuing whole. Miss Austen induces a strong desire to follow the development of the pattern.

This is the more remarkable because many chapters end with a brief summarizing paragraph. A summary by its nature would seem to provide a convenient stopping place, but Miss Austen's summaries do not. Since the six novels have an unusual homogeneity of method, an examination of one can be applied to the others. The quotations and references in this paper are taken entirely from ***Pride and Prejudice,*** but the generalizations could as easily be substantiated with references to other novels.

* * *

In the first chapter Mrs. Bennet is attempting to persuade her husband to call upon the newly arrived and eligible bachelor Bingley. Although Mr. Bennet never quite refuses, he never agrees to go, and the incident is stopped with a brief summing up by the author.

> Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

This is Miss Austen's favorite and most effective device for enticing us on into the story. She has shifted from action to character, and only on rare occasions does she supply us with summaries of events. She is concerned rather with summations of character, with pointing up the incidents through the persons, than with the events. The interest which she engenders is in following changes and revelations of character instead of changes in plot. Mrs. Bennet is fixed, and remains so, but Mr. Bennet is an unstable element. We have been dexterously told what to look for, but the paradox of character

will be resolved only by action. The art seems so artless that at first glance these final sentences do not seem to be leading anywhere; they may even appear to be closing off the action. Instead, they arouse curiosity by making us feel that only a part of the evidence is in, and that character may be confirmed, modified, or contradicted by additional evidence.

The subtle use of this method is more completely revealed when Mr. Darcy is becoming aware of Elizabeth Bennet's attractiveness and Miss Bingley is jealously aware of his feelings. Miss Austen concludes a conversation and a chapter (xi):

> "Do let us have a little music," cried Miss Bingley, tired of a conversation in which she had no share.
>
> "Louisa, you will not mind my waking Mr. Hurst?"
>
> Her sister made not the smallest objection, and the pianoforte was opened; and Darcy, after a few moments' recollection, was not sorry for it. He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention.

For Miss Austen's purposes the evening is over. With the next chapter the time sequence and the episodes are changed, so that there is a proper and inevitable break. But clearly more birds have been raised than have been killed. The people have been defined only as of the one night; they are not static, and Miss Austen makes us feel that they are not. The paragraph promises more than it tells, although the promise is implicit and not stated. If there are no sensational secrets to be dramatically revealed, there are reticences to be unclothed slowly and privately. This reticence becomes in itself a dramatic device, made the more alluring by the air of frankness with which the author tells us just so much of the matter that we feel certain there are more important matters yet to be told. Miss Austen's method works backward as well as forward; she makes us feel that the episode just ended will be given greater meaning by episodes yet to come.[1]

Miss Austen evidently enjoyed, also, concluding a chapter with an ironical paradox, but the paradox is in character rather than in action. Sometimes this quality depends upon a play on words, as when the Bingley sisters "solaced their wretchedness" over Jane Bennet's illness by ducts after supper (x); sometimes on what the reader suspects but does not know to be a misjudgment, as when Darcy is condemned by the "society of Hertfordshire" as "the worst of men" (xxiii); sometimes simply on a misunderstanding between characters (lvii).[2] The method works best when it changes the interpretation of earlier actions without nullifying them, and reveals characters in a new light, as the concluding part of Darcy's letter (xxxv) subtly changes without distortion the actions and characters of Wickham and of Darcy, and promises implicitly that through these disclosures Elizabeth will be able to make new discoveries about herself.

Even when Miss Austen is only summarizing events for persons who have been absent (xii) or rounding out an episode (xxxi), she spices the final sentences with biting wit and occasionally with an epigram. One long paragraph sums up the conclusion of the first evening that Elizabeth Bennet and her friends spent at Rosings, with Lady Catherine de Bourgh (xxix):

> When Lady Catherine and her daughter had played as long as they chose, the tables were broken up, the carriage was offered to Mrs. Collins, gratefully accepted, and immediately ordered. The party then gathered round the fire to hear Lady Catherine determine what weather they were to have on the morrow. From these instructions they were summoned by the arrival of the coach; and with many speeches of thankfulness on Mr. Collins's side, and as many bows on Sir William's, they departed. As soon as they had driven from the door, Elizabeth was called on by her cousin to give her opinion of all that she had seen at Rosings, which, for Charlotte's sake, she made more favourable than it really was. But her commendation, though costing her some trouble, could by no means satisfy Mr. Collins, and he was very soon obliged to take her ladyship's praise into his own hands.

Thus ends the evening. There is no indication of future action; there is no likelihood that Lady Catherine or Mr. Collins will change much, for better or worse. But the apt, pointed phrasing has implications of future comic developments, and augments interest in the persons. One other element is more subtly introduced: that of a future antagonism between Darcy's aunt and the already prejudiced heroine. This is done entirely in terms of character, and unobtrusively, but it helps to whet our interest.

I do not mean to say or imply that Miss Austen always embedded in the conclusion of one chapter matter that would entice the reader immediately into the next. Whether consciously or unconsciously, she was too good an artist constantly to play variations on the same theme. Also, there were chapters that simply needed to be ended, and she ended them—usually abruptly. When Mrs. Bennet and a Lucas boy argue about how much wine a man should drink (v), the author notes dryly that "the argument ended only with the visit," and turns back, to the reader's relief as well as her own, to more important and interesting affairs.[3] Occasionally Miss Austen breaks a longish episode into parts, although she does not generally seem concerned as to the length or brevity of each chapter; but when confronted (xx) with the long-windedness of Mr. Collins, the volubility of Mrs. Bennet, and the stubbornness of Elizabeth in connection with his proposal of marriage, Miss Austen evidently felt that matters were getting out of hand, and provided for a brief summary and slight change of emphasis by a break in the narrative.[4] These endings fit naturally enough into the framework and do not impede the action, but they are part of the stock-in-trade of every competent novelist.

Miss Austen does not use them often. Her distinctive chapter endings were at the time she wrote peculiarly her own, and few later novelists have been able to imitate them consistently and successfully. The secret, I believe, is in her ability to achieve an easy, flowing transition from what her people are doing to the people themselves. This is so smoothly done that the reader is hardly aware of the change of emphasis, or that she is preparing the way for new incidents growing out of complexities in the persons, but he feels that important modifications and changes are to be made. By engendering an interest primarily in character, Miss Austen gives us a sense of living, developing continuity. Episodes may end, but her people continue to grow, and it is this growth which she entices us to follow avidly.

Notes

1. For other excellent examples of summations of character with implications of action yet to come, see the concluding parts of chapters iv, vi, x, xiii, xiv, xix, xlii, lvii.
2. This device is employed much more frequently in *Northanger Abbey* and in *Emma.*
3. See also chapters xxxi and xli.
4. Much the same purpose may have caused the break between chapters xlvi and xlvii, although here the summary appears at the end of the chapter, instead of beginning the new one; and the break between lviii and lix.

Kenneth L. Moler (essay date summer 1967)

SOURCE: Moler, Kenneth L. "*Pride and Prejudice*: Jane Austen's 'Patrician Hero.'" *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 7, no. 3 (summer 1967): 491-508.

[*In the following essay, Moler traces the evolution of Darcy's character. In Moler's view, the novel hinges on the central tension between Elizabeth Bennet's individualism and Darcy's faith in an established social order.*]

It is Generally Agreed that ***Pride and Prejudice*** deals with a variant of the "art-nature" theme with which ***Sense and Sensibility*** is concerned. ***Sense and Sensibility*** primarily treats the opposition between the head and the heart, between feeling and reason; in ***Pride and Prejudice*** Elizabeth Bennet's forceful and engaging individualism is pitted against Darcy's not indefensible respect for the social order and his class pride. Most critics agree that ***Pride and Prejudice*** does not suffer from the appearance of one-sidedness that makes ***Sense and Sensibility*** unattractive. Obviously neither Elizabeth nor Darcy embodies the novel's moral norm. Each is admirable in his way, and each must have his pride and prejudice corrected by self-knowledge and come to a fuller appreciation of the other's temperament and beliefs. Ultimately their conflicting points of view are adjusted, and each achieves a mean between "nature" and "art." Elizabeth gains some appreciation of Darcy's sound qualities and comes to see the validity of class relationships. Darcy, under Elizabeth's influence, gains in naturalness and learns to respect the innate dignity of the individual.[1]

One of the few features of ***Pride and Prejudice*** to which exception has been taken is Jane Austen's treatment of the character of her Mr. Darcy. It is said that the transition between the arrogant young man of the early chapters of the novel and the polite gentleman whom Elizabeth Bennet marries is too great and too abrupt to be completely credible.[2] Reuben A. Brower and Howard S. Babb have vindicated Jane Austen to some extent, showing that much of Darcy's early conversation can be interpreted in various ways, and that our reactions to him are often conditioned by the fact that we see him largely through the eyes of the prejudiced Elizabeth.[3] Still there remain grounds for objection to Jane Austen's handling of Darcy. His remark about Elizabeth at the Meryton assembly is almost unbelievably boorish, and we have no reason to believe that Elizabeth has misunderstood it. We hear with our own ears his fears lest he should be encouraging Elizabeth to fall in love with him, and the objectionable language of his first proposal. Such things remain stumbling blocks to our acceptance of Darcy's speedy reformation.

This essay is concerned with Jane Austen's rather unusual treatment of a popular eighteenth-century character-type and situation. Mr. Darcy bears a marked resemblance to what I shall call the "patrician hero," a character-type best known as represented in the novels of Richardson and Fanny Burney; and it is rewarding to investigate the relationship between Darcy and his love affair with Elizabeth Bennet and the heroes of Richardson's and Fanny Burney's novels and their relations with their heroines. Jane Austen's treatment of her patrician hero has a marked relevance to the theme of the reconciliation of opposites that plays such an important part in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** And a study of Darcy's possible origins helps to account for those flaws in his character for which Jane Austen has been criticized.

Authority-figures of various sorts play prominent roles in many eighteenth and nineteenth century novels. There is the patriarch or matriarch—Fielding's benevolent Allworthy, Godwin's terrifying Falkland, Dickens's Miss Havisham—whose relationship with a young dependent acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the social order and individual, "natural" man. In the novels of Richardson the relationship—prosperous, or, in the

case of Lovelace and Clarissa, mutually destructive—between a young man of rank and fortune and a girl who is naturally good but socially inferior performs a similar function. This essay will be chiefly concerned with the particular type of figure that Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison represents.

Richardson's Lovelace is a lost soul; his Mr. B——has to be reformed by the virtuous Pamela.[4] In Sir Charles Grandison, however, Richardson depicted a perfect Christian aristocrat. Sir Charles is handsome and accomplished, dresses exquisitely (out of respect for his father's memory!), and has charming manners. He is immensely wealthy, an owner of splendid mansions and manors, and a powerful, important landholder. Yet he is a man of the strictest Christian virtue, a just, benevolent, and super-efficient steward of his estates, a protector of the weak, and a friend to the poor. As Richardson describes him in the preface to *Grandison* [*Sir Charles Grandison*], Sir Charles is "a man of religion and virtue; of liveliness and spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in himself, and a blessing to others."[5]

In the concluding note to *Grandison* Richardson admits that "it has been observed by some, that, in general [Sir Charles] approaches too near the faultless character which some critics censure as above nature" (XX.327). The reaction Richardson describes is not uncommon among readers of his novel. "Pictures of perfection," Jane Austen once wrote, "make me sick and wicked"; and most readers are wicked enough to resent a character who demands so much admiration as Sir Charles does. In addition to being annoyed by Sir Charles's incredible glamor and goodness, one tends to be revolted by the sycophantic deference with which he is treated by nearly every character in his history. Sir Charles's male friends attempt to emulate his virtues. His female acquaintance worship him as "the best of men," take his word for law, and all too frequently fall in love with him. His admirers—repeatedly, indeed *ad nauseam*—entrust their most important affairs to him when they are living, and leave their estates to his management when they die. Thus, Sir Charles, at his sister's request, frees her from an unfortunate engagement; later he arranges a suitable marriage for her. He extricates his uncle from the clutches of an unmanageable mistress and, on the uncle's insistence, provides him with a worthy wife. He sees to it that the relatives of Mr. Danby—Mr. Danby having left his estate in Sir Charles's hands—are provided with fortunes, employment, and matrimonial partners, and arranges for the distribution of the remainder of Danby's estate in charity. Indeed, it is a rare moment when Sir Charles is not dispensing advice and assistance to half a dozen of his family and friends simultaneously. At one point in the story the lovelorn Harriet Byron, after giving a list of some seven persons or families whose affairs Sir Charles is at present re-arranging, declares in despair: "O Lucy!—What leisure has this man to be in love!" (XVII.49-50. *Grandison,* IV, Letter V).

Among the most fervent of Sir Charles's *aficionados* is the heroine of *Grandison,* Miss Byron. Sir Charles is her oracle; she treasures up his every word, and is embarrassingly grateful when he condescends to give her advice. Her relationship with him is like that of an adoring younger sister to an older brother, or that of an infatuated pupil with a favorite teacher. He is, to use her own word, her "monitor," as much as he is her lover. Harriet is in love with Sir Charles long before she knows that he cares for her; and when, after months of heart-burning, she learns that he has decided to marry her, she is overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. "O my God!" she prays shortly after their marriage, "do Thou make me thankful for such a friend, protector, director, husband! Increase with my gratitude to THEE, my merits to him" (XX. 316. *Grandison,* VII, Letter LX).

As I have said, all of this deference, added to Richardson's insistence on Sir Charles's perfection, tends to make the reader react unfavorably towards both Sir Charles and his creator. One is inclined, in spite of Richardson's insistence on his humility, to think of Sir Charles as a stuffily superior, rather supercilious character, rather than as the noble and magnanimous hero that Richardson envisioned. And one is inclined to tax Richardson, as well as some of the characters in his novel, with an unduly sycophantic attitude towards his high-born hero. That Jane Austen reacted to *Grandison* similarly will become apparent later in this essay.

All of the three novels that Fanny Burney published before 1813 deal, as *Grandison* does, with the relationships between exemplary young authority-figures who are wealthy or well-born or both and heroines who are in some respect their social inferiors. *Cecilia,* however, is the Burneyan novel most frequently cited as a source for ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Many critics feel that Jane Austen's novel is simply a realistic rewriting of *Cecilia.* R. Brimley Johnson, for instance, has referred to the "title and plot, the leading characters and most dramatic scenes of ***Pride and Prejudice***" as "frank appropriations" from *Cecilia.*[6]

Cecilia is certainly an important source for ***Pride and Prejudice.*** In plot and theme it resembles Jane Austen's novel more nearly than any other single work does. It is possible—though not certain—that the title of ***Pride and Prejudice*** was borrowed from *Cecilia.*[7] It is often suggested that the first proposal scene in ***Pride and Prejudice*** was influenced by the scenes in *Cecilia* in which Mortimer Delvile states his objections to a marriage with Cecilia. And there are similarities between the scene in which Mrs. Delvile prevails on Cecilia to give Mortimer up and the scene in which Lady Catherine de Bourgh descends on Elizabeth Bennet. There

are, however, a number of significant points of resemblance between ***Pride and Prejudice*** and novels other than *Cecilia*. In some respects the situation of Fanny Burney's Evelina is closer to that of Elizabeth Bennet than Cecilia's is. Both Elizabeth and Evelina are relatively poor in addition to being inferior in rank to their heroes, while Cecilia is rich. And both Elizabeth and Evelina are surrounded by sets of vulgar relatives by whom they are embarrassed in the presence of their lovers. Moreover, as I shall show later, some specific scenes in ***Pride and Prejudice*** are certainly based on similar scenes in *Evelina*. Some others, on the other hand, have their originals in *Sir Charles Grandison*. I am certain that in ***Pride and Prejudice*** Jane Austen is not merely rewriting *Cecilia*, but manipulating a character-type and a situation made familiar to her audience in various novels by Richardson and Fanny Burney—and in numerous works by their imitators as well. The relationship between *Evelina* and ***Pride and Prejudice*** has never been fully explored; and since it seems to me that it is in some respects very rewarding to compare Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy to Fanny Burney's Lord Orville, I shall use *Evelina* to illustrate Fanny Burney's treatment of the patrician hero.

While all of Fanny Burney's heroes resemble Richardson's patrician hero somewhat, Lord Orville is Sir Charles Grandison writ small. He is a picture of perfection, a paragon among men—at least in the eyes of his heroine and his author. He is handsome, well-born, rich; yet he is wise and good. A heartsick Evelina describes him as "one who seemed formed as a pattern for his fellow-creatures, as a model of perfection."[8] The relationship between Orville and Evelina is much the same as that between Sir Charles Grandison and Harriet Byron. Evelina adores Orville from their first meeting, and she is fully convinced of her own inferiority. "That he should be so much my superior in every way, quite disconcerted me," she writes after their first dance together (I, Letter XI, p. 36). She cringes when she learns that he has referred to her as "a poor weak girl" and is "grateful for his attention" even after she believes that he has insulted her with a dishonorable proposal. Orville, like Sir Charles, is regarded as an oracular "monitor" by his heroine. Evelina seeks, and is delighted to receive, his counsel. "There is no young creature, my Lord, who so greatly wants, or so earnestly wishes for, the advice and assistance of her friends, as I do," she says to him on one occasion (III, Letter V, p. 383); and Orville quickly becomes a substitute for her absent guardian. It is he who arranges an interview with Mr. Macartney for her at Bristol, who persuades the repentant Sir John Belmont to receive her—and who, later on, magnanimously disposes of half of her fortune to provide for Macartney and the one-time Miss Belmont. Like Harriet Byron, Evelina is overcome with gratitude when her hero finally proposes to her. "To be loved by Lord Orville," she writes "—to be the honoured choice of his noble heart,—my happiness seemed too infinite to be borne, and I wept, even bitterly I wept, from the excess of joy which overpowered me." (III, Letter XV, p. 443).

The Burney-Richardson character-type and situation were imitated in the sub-literature of the period. In Thomas Hull's *The History of Sir William Harrington*, for example (1771), the exemplary Lord C——, nobly born, extremely wealthy, and "as perfect as a human being can be" in person, mind, and character, is very obviously modeled on Sir Charles Grandison. And Mr. Charlemont, the hero of a novel by Anna Maria Porter entitled *The Lake of Killarney* (1804), is "a young Apollo," "the god of his sex," and the son of a lord. Rose, a dependent in a family of Charlemont's acquaintance, loves him desperately, but is by no means unaware of his vast superiority to her. At one point in the novel, in an episode that may have been inspired by the scene in *Cecilia* in which Mrs. Delvile warns Cecilia to beware of falling in love with Delvile, Rose is cross-examined by an older woman who is a friend of Charlemont's family. "If nothing else were wanting to crush presumptuous hopes on my part," Rose replies, ". . . the difference in our rank, our birth, our fortune, would place them beyond all doubt. Mr. Charlemont is . . . a prize, for which all his equals may contend.'"[9] Similar heroes, often similarly difficult of attainment to admiring heroines, are to be found in numerous other works of Jane Austen's day.

Jane Austen must have been as much amused by the all-conquering heroes and too humble heroines of the day as many other readers have been, for in the juvenile sketch entitled "Jack and Alice" she reduces the patrician hero to absurdity with gusto. Charles Adams, in that sketch, is the most exaggerated "picture of perfection" conceivable. He is incredibly handsome, a man "of so dazzling a Beauty that none but Eagles could look him in the Face."[10] (The continual references in "Jack and Alice" to the brilliance of Charles's countenance are probably specific allusions to *Sir Charles Grandison*: Richardson repeatedly describes Sir Charles in similar language.[11]) But the beauties of Charles's person are nothing to those of his mind. As he tells us himself:

> I imagine my Manners & Address to be of the most polished kind; there is a certain elegance, a peculiar sweetness in them that I never saw equalled. . . . I am certainly more accomplished in every Language, every Science, every Art and every thing than any other person in Europe. My temper is even, my virtues innumerable, my self unparalleled.
>
> (VI.25)

The superciliousness and conceit that readers cannot help attributing to Sir Charles Grandison or Orville becomes the very essence of Charles Adams's being. The

kind of praise that Richardson and Fanny Burney heap on their heroes is most liberally bestowed by Charles on himself. And just as Charles is a burlesque version of the too perfect Burney-Richardson hero, so he is provided with two heroines who are ten times more inferior, and twenty times more devoted to him than Evelina and Harriet Byron are to their heroes. Charles is the owner of the "principal estate" in the neighborhood in which the lovely Lucy lives, and Lucy adores him. She is the daughter of a tailor and the niece of an alehousekeeper, and she is fearful that Charles may think her "deficient in Rank, & in being so, unworthy of his hand" (VI.21). Screwing up her courage, however, she proposes marriage to him. But to her sorrow, she receives "an angry & peremptory refusal" from the unapproachable young man (VI.21). Alice Johnson, the titular heroine of the novel, is also infatuated with Charles. Although, like the rest of her family, Alice is "a little addicted to the Bottle & the Dice," she hopes, after she has inherited a considerable estate, to be found worthy of Charles. But when Alice's father proposes the match to him, Charles declares that she is neither "sufficiently beautifull, sufficiently amiable, sufficiently witty, nor sufficiently rich for me—." "I expect," he says, "nothing more in my wife than my wife will find in me—Perfection" (VI.25-26). Fortunately, Alice is able to find consolation in her bottle. "Jack and Alice," I believe, was not Jane Austen's only attack on the patrician hero. There is a good deal of Charles Adams in her Mr. Darcy.

Darcy's actual circumstances are not an exaggeration of those of the patrician hero, as Charles Adams's are. In fact Jane Austen seems at times to be uncritically borrowing the popular Burney-Richardson character type and situation in ***Pride and Prejudice***—altering them, if at all, only by toning them down a bit. Mr. Darcy is not the picture of perfection that Sir Charles Grandison is, but he shares many of the advantages of Sir Charles and Lord Orville. He has, for instance, a "fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien . . . and ten thousand a year" (II.10). He has mental powers that command respect. He is not as powerful and important as Sir Charles Grandison, but he is the owner of a large estate and a giver, and withholder, of clerical livings. He marries a woman who, like Evelina, is embarrassed by the inferiority of some of her nearest connections, although even Mrs. Bennet can scarcely approach the supreme vulgarity of Madame Duval.

But Darcy is a Charles Adams in spirit, if not in circumstances. It is his exaggerated conception of the importance of his advantages, his supercilious determination "to think well of myself, and meanly of others" who are not so fortunate that causes him at times to sound very much like a caricature of the Burney-Richardson hero. He may not expect to have to address "an angry & peremptory refusal" to a fawning, lovelorn Elizabeth Bennet; but during Elizabeth's visit at Netherfield he is anxious lest, by devoting so much of his conversation to her, he may have been encouraging her to hope for the honor of his hand. On the eve of her departure from Netherfield, we are told: "He wisely resolved to be particularly careful that no sign of admiration should *now* escape him, nothing that could elevate her with the hope of influencing his felicity. . . . Steady to his purpose, he scarcely spoke ten words to her through the whole of Saturday" (II.60). The idea of a proposal which is humiliating to a heroine may come from *Cecilia.* But the language of Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth sounds like something that might have come from Charles Adams's lips, rather than the gallant, ardent language of a Delvile. During Darcy's proposal, we are told that "his sense of her inferiority" was "dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit" (II.189). And when Elizabeth rebukes him, he declares that he is not "ashamed of the feelings I related. . . . Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?" (II.192).

On two occasions, I believe, Darcy is specifically a caricature of Fanny Burney's Lord Orville. The scene at the Meryton assembly in which Darcy makes rude remarks about Elizabeth Bennet is a burlesque of Orville's unfavorable first impression of Evelina.[12] In *Evelina,* shortly after Orville and Evelina have had their first dance together, there is a conversation between Orville and Sir Clement Willoughby on the subject of Evelina's merits. Sir Clement says to Orville:

> "Why, my Lord, what have you done with your lovely partner?"
>
> "*Nothing*!" answered Lord Orville, with a smile and a shrug.
>
> "By Jove," cried the man, "she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life!"
>
> Lord Orville . . . laughed, but answered, "Yes; a pretty modest-looking girl."
>
> "O my Lord!" cried the madman, "she is an angel!"
>
> "A *silent* one," returned he.
>
> "Why ay, my Lord, how stands she as to that? She looks all intelligence and expression."
>
> "A poor weak girl!" answered Lord Orville, shaking his head.
>
> (I, Letter XII, p. 42)

In Darcy's remarks about Elizabeth at the Meryton assembly, Orville's gentle mockery becomes supercilious rudeness. Mr. Bingley sounds Darcy on the merits of the various ladies at the assembly, hoping to persuade his friend to dance. Like Sir Clement Willoughby, Bingley praises the heroine: Elizabeth, he declares, is "very

pretty, and I dare say, very agreeable"; and he proposes that Darcy ask her to dance. Darcy replies that Elizabeth is "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (II.12).

And another ballroom scene in *Evelina* is burlesqued in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** At one point in *Evelina* Sir Clement Willoughby, who is determined to punish the heroine for pretending that Lord Orville is to be her partner in a dance for which Sir Clement wished to engage her, conducts her to Lord Orville and presents him with her hand. Evelina writes:

> —he suddenly seized my hand, saying, "think, my Lord, what must be my reluctance to resign this fair hand to your Lordship!"
>
> In the same instant, Lord Orville took it of him; I coloured violently, and made an effort to recover it. "You do me too much honour, Sir," cried he, (with an air of gallantry, pressing it to his lips before he let it go) "however, I shall be happy to profit by it, if this lady," (turning to Mrs. Mirvan) "will permit me to seek for her party."
>
> To compel him thus to dance, I could not endure, and eagerly called out, "By no means,—not for the world!—I must beg—"
>
> (I. Letter XIII, p. 57)

Orville politely attempts to help Evelina recover from her confusion. Darcy, "all politeness," as Elizabeth ironically describes him, signifies his willingness to oblige Elizabeth Bennet with a dance when Elizabeth is placed in a similarly embarrassing situation at Sir William Lucas's ball.[13] Sir William and Darcy are conversing. Elizabeth approaches them and Sir William, "struck with the notion of doing a very gallant thing," declares:

> "Mr. Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner.—You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure, when so much beauty is before you." And taking her hand, he would have given it to Mr. Darcy, who, though extremely surprised, was not unwilling to receive it, when she instantly drew back, and said with some discomposure to Sir William,
>
> "Indeed, Sir, I have not the least intention of dancing.—I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner."
>
> Mr. Darcy with grave propriety requested to be allowed the honour of her hand; but in vain. Elizabeth was determined; nor did Sir William at all shake her purpose by his attempt at persuasion.
>
> "You excel so much in the dance, Miss Eliza . . . and though this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half hour."
>
> "Mr. Darcy is all politeness," said Elizabeth, smiling.
>
> (II.26)

Mr. Darcy is a complex human being rather than a mere vehicle for satire such as Charles Adams. Nevertheless, I think it is likely that Darcy has somewhere in his ancestry a parody-figure similar to the ones in which Jane Austen's juvenilia abound. Such a theory is consistent with current assumptions about Jane Austen's habits of composition. Her first three novels are the products of reworkings of drafts written at a period much closer to the time when her juvenile parodies of fiction were written than to that at which ***Sense and Sensibility*** as we have it was published. Both ***Northanger Abbey*** and ***Sense and Sensibility*** contain marked traces of satiric originals, and it seems reasonable to assume that ***Pride and Prejudice,*** as well as the other two novels, grew, through a process of refinement, from a criticism of literature into a criticism of life. Moreover, the theory accounts for what is perhaps the most serious flaw in ***Pride and Prejudice***: the vast difference between the Darcy of the first ballroom scene and the man whom Elizabeth Bennet marries at the end of the novel. We have seen that the most exaggerated displays of conceit and rudeness on Darcy's part—his speech at the Meryton assembly, his fears lest he should be encouraging Elizabeth to fall in love with him, and the language of his first proposal—could have originated as burlesques of the patrician hero. If we postulate an origin in parody for Darcy and assume that he was later subjected to a refining process, the early, exaggerated displays of rudeness can be explained as traces of the original purely parodic figure that Jane Austen was not able to manage with complete success.

Regardless of its origins, ***Pride and Prejudice,*** even as it stands, is in many respects a subtly ironic reflection on Richardson and Fanny Burney and their patrician heroes. In addition to Darcy's role as an ironically treated Orville or Sir Charles Grandison, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a reminiscence of Mrs. Delvile in *Cecilia* or Dr. Marchmont in *Camilla,* a humorous version of the kindly but mistaken friend who frowns upon the patrician hero's intended bride. And the scene in which she attempts to persuade Elizabeth not to marry Darcy is an exaggeration of what is potentially ridiculous in similar situations in *Cecilia*—not, as R. B. Johnson and others have suggested, a refined imitation. Mrs. Delvile is Mortimer's mother and exercises, according to Cecilia, an almost maternal prerogative upon Cecilia herself. Cecilia is grateful—exaggeratedly, unnecessarily grateful, many readers feel—to Mrs. Delvile for that lady's interest in her and for her kindness in providing her with a home during part of her minority. Mrs. Delvile has as much right as anyone could have to interfere in the love affair between Mortimer and Cecilia. And when she persuades Cecilia not to marry Mortimer, although what she says is prideful and humiliating to Cecilia, her language, at least, is kind and respectful.[14] Lady Catherine is Darcy's aunt, and she hardly knows Elizabeth. Her attempt to prevent Eliza-

beth's and Darcy's marriage, her arrogant language, and the manner in which she taxes Elizabeth with ingratitude, on the strength of having invited her to Rosings several times in the past, are a parody of the situation in *Cecilia*. Again, Darcy's relationship with Mr. Bingley is humorously reminiscent of Sir Charles Grandison and the friends who continually depend on him for advice and assistance. Richardson's super-competent hero was notable for his propensity to manage the lives and loves of his friends. Darcy, to our and Elizabeth Bennet's amusement, domineers over the spineless Bingley, arranging and rearranging Bingley's love-life, and at one point officiously separating him from the amiable and disinterested young woman whom Bingley truly loves. Darcy is provided with a mock-Evelina or Harriet Byron in Miss Bingley, who is all too obviously willing to play the role of the patrician hero's female adorer in order to become the mistress of Pemberley. The flattery Evelina and Harriet Byron unconsciously heap upon their heroes, their willingness to take their young men's pronouncements as law, become Miss Bingley's determined toadeating: when she is not praising Darcy's library or his sister, she is defending his views on feminine accomplishments or inviting his comments on the company at Sir William Lucas's ball.

Most important, while Miss Bingley is a caricature of Evelina or Harriet Byron, Elizabeth Bennet plays the role of an anti-Evelina in the novel's satiric pattern.[15] Throughout most of the novel she acts in a manner directly contrary to the way in which one would expect a Richardson or Burney heroine to behave. While the would-be Harriet Byron, Miss Bingley, courts Darcy in the traditional manner, Elizabeth makes him the butt of her wit, the prime target of her attacks on snobbery. While he worries lest he should have encouraged her to hope for the honor of his hand, she regards him as "only the man who made himself agreeable no where, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with" (II.23). Instead of being overwhelmed with gratitude when he proposes to her, she prefaces her refusal by saying: "if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly" (II.190). And she goes on to tax him with "arrogance," "conceit," and a "selfish disdain for the feelings of others" (II.193), and to accuse him of being snobbish and overbearing in his interference with Jane and Bingley and of abusing the power he holds over Wickham. Even when she and Darcy are reconciled she cannot help smiling at his casual assumption of the right to arrange and rearrange his friend Bingley's love-life, "his easy manner of directing his friend" (II.371). (We might also note that she answers Lady Catherine de Bourgh's demand that she renounce Darcy in a manner calculated to warm the hearts of readers irritated by Cecilia Beverly's deference to Mrs. Delvile's pride and prejudice.)

In the early stages of the novel's development, I believe, Lady Catherine, Mr. Bingley, and Miss Bingley were more exaggerated and distorted versions of their prototypes than they are at present. Elizabeth Bennet was merely an anti-type to the Burney-Richardson sycophantic heroine; Darcy, a caricature of the patrician hero. Later, although she retained an element of ironic imitation, Jane Austen refined her characters, transforming them from mere vehicles for satire into human beings interesting in their own right as well as because of their relationship to their literary prototypes. And, as the remainder of this essay implies, she also changed her attitude toward her patrician hero and her anti-Evelina, and accordingly altered her treatment of Darcy drastically and made Elizabeth, as well as Darcy, a target for her irony. Theories about the development of the novel aside, however, the fact remains that ***Pride and Prejudice*** as we have it is not simply, as critics have suggested, an imitation of the work of Jane Austen's fellow-novelists. It is, in part at least, an attack on Richardson and Fanny Burney and their patrician heroes.

Jane Austen thoroughly humbles her patrician hero. Darcy is subjected to a series of "set-downs" at the hands of the anti-Evelina, Elizabeth Bennet, and through his love for Elizabeth and the shock he receives from her behavior, he comes to see himself as he really is, and to repent of his pomposity and pride. "By you, I was properly humbled," he admits to Elizabeth towards the end of the novel (II.369).

Interestingly enough, however, Jane Austen does not allow her anti-Evelina to rout her patrician hero completely. For once Darcy has been humbled, she turns her irony on Elizabeth Bennet. She shows that Elizabeth, in her resentment of Darcy's conscious superiority, has exaggerated his faults and failed to see that there is much in him that is good. Elizabeth proves to have been blind and prejudiced in her views on the relationship between Darcy and Wickham, too willing to accept Wickham's stories because they so nicely confirm her own feelings about Darcy. When she reads the letter that follows Darcy's first proposal, she is forced to admit that her resentment has led her to be foolish and unjust. Again, until Darcy's letter shocks her into self-knowledge, Elizabeth has seen Darcy's interference in the affair between Jane and Bingley only as an instance of cold-hearted snobbery on Darcy's part. Reading Darcy's letter, and considering Jane's disposition, Elizabeth is forced to admit that Darcy's view of the affair, his belief that Jane was little more than a complacent pawn in her mother's matrimonial game, is not unjustified. Darcy's interference, Elizabeth must admit, was motivated not merely by snobbery, but by concern for his guileless friend's welfare as well. With her eyes thus opened, Elizabeth comes to see later in the novel that Darcy's position and fortune, and his pride in them, can be forces for good as well as sources of snobbery

and authoritarianism. Seeing Pemberley, and hearing his housekeeper's praise of Darcy's conduct as a brother and a landlord, she learns that Darcy's position is a trust and a responsibility, and that his not unjustifiable self-respect leads to a code of conduct worthy of admiration. And in his action in the Lydia-Wickham affair she is provided with an impressive and gratifying instance of his power to do good and his sense of responsibility. At the end of the novel Jane Austen's anti-Evelina is defending her patrician hero. "I love him," Elizabeth says of Darcy to the astounded Mr. Bennet. "Indeed, he has no improper pride" (II.376).

As many critics have pointed out, a pattern of "art-nature" symbolism in ***Pride and Prejudice*** added depth of suggestion, for Jane Austen's early nineteenth century audience, to the novel's love plot. I suggest that Jane Austen's continual allusions, through parody, to her fellow-novelists' treatment of an eighteenth century authority-figure served a purpose similar to that which the "art-nature" symbolism served. We cannot, of course, assume that Jane Austen thought of her Mr. Darcy as an "authority-figure," in our sense of the term, any more than we can assume that she considered ***Pride and Prejudice*** a treatise on the eighteenth-century "art-nature" antithesis. But we can be sure that she expected the novel-reading audience for which she wrote to respond to her work on the basis of their impressions of the insufferable Sir Charles Grandisons and Lord Orvilles, the sycophantic Evelinas and Harriet Byrons, of noveldom. At the beginning of ***Pride and Prejudice*** Darcy is a pompous Burney-Richardson aristocrat, with many of the most disagreeable attributes of his literary progenitors as well as a representative of "art" and excessive class pride. Elizabeth is a determined anti-Evelina as well as a symbol for "nature" and aggressive individualism. The marriage at the end of the story joins a "properly humbled" patrician hero and an anti-Evelina who has also undergone a partial reformation. This element of burlesque-with-a-difference co-operates with the novel's "art-nature" symbolism in broadening and deepening the significance of Elizabeth and Darcy's love story.

In view of what has just been said, it is interesting to note that in the latter part of ***Pride and Prejudice*** Jane Austen ceases to laugh at the works of Richardson and Fanny Burney and even imitates them rather obviously. At Pemberley Darcy behaves toward Elizabeth with a marked tact and gallantry that is reminiscent of Sir Charles Grandison or Lord Orville. In the manner of Richardson's and Fanny Burney's heroes he takes over his heroine's affairs, rescuing Elizabeth and her family from imminent disgrace and providing for the erring Lydia. Moreover, the scenes in which Elizabeth visits Pemberley may well be specific imitations of similar scenes in *Sir Charles Grandison.* Sir Charles, we are told, "pretends not to level hills, or to force and distort nature; but to help it, as he finds it, without letting art be seen in his works, where he can possibly avoid it" (XVI.246. *Grandison,* III, Letter XXIII). He has a

> large and convenient house, . . . situated in a spacious park; which has several fine avenues leading to it.
>
> On the north side of the park flows a winding stream, that may well be called a river, abounding with trout and other fish; the current quickened by a noble cascade, which tumbles down its foaming waters from a rock, which is continued to some extent, in a ledge of rock-work, rudely disposed.
>
> The park is remarkable for its prospects, lawns, and rich-appearing clumps of trees of large growth.
>
> (XX.30. *Grandison,* VII, Letter VI)

The Pemberley grounds are kept up with a similar regard for nature and timber, and there is even a similarly managed, artificially swelled trout stream. Pemberley House, we are told, was

> situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste.
>
> (II.245)

Was Jane Austen thinking of Harriet Byron's tour of Sir Charles Grandison's property when she described Elizabeth Bennet's visit to Pemberley? Both Elizabeth and Harriet are conducted around magnificent but tastefully appointed houses and both talk to elderly, respectable housekeepers who praise their masters' kindness to servants and tenants. "Don't your ladyship see," Sir Charles's housekeeper asks Harriet Byron, "how all his servants love him as they attend him at table? . . . Indeed, madam, we all adore him; and have prayed morning, noon, and night, for his coming hither, and settling among us" (XX.52. *Grandison,* VII, Letter IX). Darcy's housekeeper, we remember, laments the fact that he is not at Pemberley "so much as I could wish" and declares him "the best landlord, and the best master . . . that ever lived. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name" (II.248, 249). Harriet and Elizabeth are both conducted around noble picture-galleries, and both view pictures of their lovers with admiration during their tours.

As Darcy becomes a modified but genuine Sir Charles Grandison, so does Elizabeth cease to resemble an aggressive anti-Evelina or Harriet Byron. She becomes more and more impressed with her patrician hero, more and more attracted to his many good qualities. Indeed,

as she stands in the gallery at Pemberley, there is even a trace of Evelina-like gratitude in her thoughts, and she feels honored by the love of such a man as Darcy:

> As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship!—How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow! . . . Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character. . . . Elizabeth thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before.
>
> (II.250, 251)

Pride and Prejudice is a story about two complex, sensitive and often blindly wrong-headed "intricate characters" and their progress toward a better understanding of one another, the world, and themselves. This drama of self-knowledge is played out in the context of a symbolism based on the antithesis between "art" and "nature," in the comprehensive eighteenth-century sense of those terms. It is also referred, at many points, to the fiction of Jane Austen's day—particularly to her fellow-novelists' handling of the figure that I have called the patrician hero. Jane Austen's first response to the patrician hero, I believe, was purely satiric. Later, I think, she refined, revised, and greatly complicated her treatment of him. At any rate, ***Pride and Prejudice*** is something more than a much-improved imitation of the novels Jane Austen knew. It is a work in which she tumbles an eighteenth-century authority-figure from the pedestal on which Richardson and Fanny Burney had placed him—and, with a gesture that distinguishes her also from some later novelists, then stoops to retrieve him from the dust.

Notes

1. The most detailed study of *Pride and Prejudice* in terms of the "art-nature" dichotomy is Samuel Kliger's "Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the Eighteenth-Century Mode," *UTQ* [*University of Toronto Quarterly*], XVI (1947), 357-370.

2. See, for example, the comments in Mary Lascelles's *Jane Austen and Her Art* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 22 and 162, and Marvin Mudrick's complaints about the change in Darcy in his *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton, 1952), pp. 117-119.

3. See Brower's *The Fields of Light* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 164-181, and Babb's *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue* (Columbus, Ohio, 1962), pp. 115-118.

4. Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy is sometimes compared to Richardson's patrician "villain-hero," Mr. B——. E. E. Duncan-Jones, in "Proposals of Marriage in *Pamela* and *Pride and Prejudice*," *N & Q* [*Notes and Queries*] (N.S.), IV, 76, calls the proposal scene in *Pride and Prejudice* a reminiscence of Mr. B——'s first honorable proposal to Pamela. More general resemblances between *Pamela* and Jane Austen's novel are discussed in Henrietta Ten Harmsel's "The Villain Hero in *Pamela* and *Pride and Prejudice*," *CE* [*College English*], 23 (1961), 104-108. Although I do not think that it is entirely unprofitable to compare *Pamela* and *Pride and Prejudice*, I believe, for reasons that will be apparent later, that it is more rewarding to compare Darcy to heroes modeled on Sir Charles Grandison.

5. Samuel Richardson, *Novels* (London, 1902), XIV, p. x. All references will be to this edition.

6. The quotation is from Johnson's introduction to *Sense and Sensibility* in *The Works of Jane Austen*, ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1950), p. v. The relationship between *Cecilia* and *Pride and Prejudice* is more fully discussed in Johnson's *Jane Austen* (London, 1927), pp. 124-127, and in his *Jane Austen: Her Life, Her Work, Her Family, and Her Critics* (London, 1930), pp. 137-139.

7. *Cecilia* is not necessarily the source for the title of *Pride and Prejudice*, since the terms "pride" and "prejudice" were very often used in conjunction in Jane Austen's day. R. W. Chapman's notes to the Oxford edition of *Pride and Prejudice* and numerous articles in the *TLS* [*Times Literary Supplement*] and *N & Q* testify to the popularity of the expression.

8. Fanny Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Sir Frank D. MacKinnon (Oxford, 1930), II, Letter XXVII, p. 321. All references will be to this edition.

9. Anna Maria Porter, *The Lake of Killarney* (London, 1804), I, iv, 219. Jane Austen mentions this novel in a letter of 24 October 1808: see the *Letters*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed. (London, 1959), pp. 58-59.

10. Jane Austen, *Works*, ed. R. W. Chapman (London, 1954), VI, 13. All references will be to this edition.

11. As E. E. Duncan-Jones points out in "Notes on Jane Austen," *N&Q*, 196 (1951), 114-116. Numbers of heroes in the minor fiction of the period, however, among them Lord C——in *The History of Sir William Harrington* and Mr. Charlemont in *The Lake of Killarney*, are similarly described.

12. In "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," Part I, *Scrutiny*, 10 (1941-42), 61-87, Mrs. Leavis recognizes the similarity between the two scenes.

13. Of course, as Brower (*Fields of Light*, pp. 168-169) points out, we see this scene largely through the eyes of the prejudiced Elizabeth Bennet. Darcy

is actually eager to dance with Elizabeth, although his manner of expressing himself is not very gallant.

14. See, for example, *Cecilia,* ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1893), III, Bk. VIII, Ch. iii, p. 22 and Ch. iv, p. 37.

15. Mrs. Leavis ("Critical Theory ['A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Novels']," Part I) adopts a somewhat similar view of Elizabeth's origins. She holds that much of *Pride and Prejudice* was originally a satire of *Cecilia,* and that Elizabeth is an "anti-Cecilia." She feels, however, that Darcy is simply a refined imitation of Mortimer Delvile—"Delvile with the minimum of inside necessary to make plausible his conduct." I am primarily concerned here with Darcy's role as a mock patrician hero; and, of course, I believe that Elizabeth is an antitype to a number of heroines, and not simply a vehicle for satire of one novel.

Joel Weinsheimer (essay date September 1972)

SOURCE: Weinsheimer, Joel. "Chance and the Hierarchy of Marriages in *Pride and Prejudice.*" *ELH* 39, no. 3 (September 1972): 404-19.

[*In the following essay, Weinsheimer examines the role of chance in Austen's novel. Weinsheimer identifies a thematic relationship between self-knowledge and "rational and deliberate choice" in the work.*]

Chance is given significance in Jane Austen's novels by her insistence on the value of its opposite—rational and deliberate choice. And it is an important aspect of her realism that she does not divide choice and chance into two mutually exclusive forces. Ideal choice made in full awareness of motives and consequences is, after all, a rare occurrence in her novels. Few characters achieve it at all, and they more often reach it as a climax rather than as the norm of their moral life. In general decision and action are determined by a variously composed mixture of choice and chance, and only as a given character increases his knowledge of self and others does choice begin to predominate.

Little critical comment has been devoted to the operation of chance in Jane Austen's works, perhaps because it has been eclipsed by the tightness of her plots and the preeminently unchaotic sanity of her ideals. But Lionel Trilling has wisely observed that "Jane Austen's first or basic irony is the recognition that the spirit is not free, that it is conditioned, that it is limited by circumstance" and that "only by reason of this anomaly does spirit have virtue and meaning."[1] Just as the spirit is morally dependent on and made meaningful by uncontrolled circumstance, so also is plot enriched by Jane Austen's consciousness of chance. W. J. Harvey, in discussing the plot of ***Emma,*** attributes the "solidity and openness of the novel" to the fact that "it allows for the contingent."[2] Again, Lionel Trilling finds ***Mansfield Park*** more unique than typical in its "need to find security, to establish, in fixity and enclosure, a refuge from the dangers of openness and chance."[3]

Paul Zietlow presents by far the most extensive analysis of chance in Jane Austen's novels in his examination of ***Persuasion,*** which is the novel of her canon that most overtly invites this treatment. But the presence of chance in ***Pride and Prejudice*** is neither so striking nor obtrusive as in ***Persuasion,*** where, as Zietlow has pointed out, the reunion of Anne and Wentworth seems almost Providential. The "dark, menacing quality"[4] which he and others sense in ***Persuasion*** is absent in the "light, and bright, and sparkling" ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Nor do the fortunes of Elizabeth Bennet undergo so complete a reversal as those of Anne Elliot. This comparative uniformity of happiness in ***Pride and Prejudice*** tends to conceal the operation of chance as a thematic motif and plot device in bringing the novel to a felicitous conclusion. But, like ***Persuasion,*** the fortuitous emerges in ***Pride and Prejudice*** as a force with which both its characters and its readers must contend.

As a working definition, we may suggest that all effects not voluntarily produced be considered, morally speaking, as the results of chance. Supplementing this definition, there are two distinct, but connected, phases of action[5] in which chance can interpose. The first occurs in the process of decision when, through self-ignorance or self-deception, a character remains unaware of the actual motivation that brings him to a specific conclusion or plan of action. The second occurs simply when a given intention fails to produce the desired effect, when the consequences of an action are unforeseen and unexpected. Chance then fills the gap left by the lapse of control either of one's self or one's circumstances.[6] Both instances are caused by a more or less avoidable (and thus morally significant) ignorance, and both are imaged in Jane Austen's novels as a variety of "blindness."

With this definition of chance in mind, we may investigate, first, Jane Austen's method of establishing chance as a credible and effective plot device, and, second, her evaluation of the balance of chance and choice in the novel's several marriages. Critics have already suggested several perspectives on the hierarchy of marriages in ***Pride and Prejudice;***[7] each couple seems to be yoked because both partners achieve the same moral rank, and thus are fit mates. What has not yet been fully explored is the fact that the characters' responses to chance are significant criteria for the evaluation of their relative merits. Ranked by their reactions to the fortu-

itous, the characters range from partial self-determination to complete domination by chance, and each married couple illustrates a double view of one position in the novel's scale of imperfect responses to chance.[8]

To assess the operation of chance in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** it may first be helpful to consider Jane Austen's method of making the most fortuitous incidents seem probable and natural. Dorothy Van Ghent replies to those readers who feel that ***Pride and Prejudice*** is so limited that its value is minimal by reminding them that "when we begin to look upon these limitations . . . as having the positive function of defining the form and meaning of the book, we begin also to understand that kind of value that can lie in artistic mastery over a restricted range."[9] "The exclusions and limitations are deliberate,"[10] and as soon as we acknowledge them so, we also realize that the novel's restricted setting is defined by and thus implies the larger world which comprehends it. How this double awareness of part and whole can account for the credibility of chance events in ***Pride and Prejudice*** is best illustrated by examining the three incidents that appear most fortuitous.

The rerouting and rescheduling of the proposed trip to the Lake country, the early return of Darcy to Pemberley in time to meet Elizabeth there, and Elizabeth's failure to expose Wickham to Lydia or her parents all seem to be the result of chance. Yet the author assigns each a cause: Mr. Gardiner is "prevented by business" (283)[11] from his original plans; Darcy's "business with his steward had occasioned his coming forward a few hours before the rest of the party" (256); and Wickham is spared exposure because when Elizabeth "returned home [from the Collins parsonage], the—shire was to leave Meryton in a week or a fortnight's time" (285). Here the duties of an active businessman, the concerns of the landed nobility, and the directives of the war office each signify a sphere of causation alien to the provincial setting of the novel. Yet precisely because of its provinciality, they achieve significance and probability. Jane Austen balances the surprise and the credibility of improbable events by imposing limitations that both suspend and maintain our awareness of the larger world. Thus whether chance occurrences will imply direction by Providence becomes a matter of choice for Jane Austen, since she suggests in the novel an alternative sphere of terrestrial causation intervening between the Providential and the immediate.

By establishing chance as a realistic technique of plot development, Jane Austen enables the reader to acknowledge its presence without apology for mystery or legerdemain. Consequently, we can understand that the operation of chance minimizes the danger (which Mary Lascelles warns is inherent in its "exactness of symmetry"[12]) of imposing a benumbing order on the material of the novel. Chance has its own symbology, and is employed in a pervasive thematic pattern paralleling that of choice.

Two significant symbols of chance underlying the affairs of the Longbourn circle are the entail by which Mr. Bennet's estate will devolve on Mr. Collins ("'such things . . . are all chance in this world'" [65]) and the lottery at the Phillips home, where Lydia "soon grew too much interested in the game, too eager in making bets and exclaiming after prizes, to have attention for anyone in particular" (77). The entail typifies the financial insecurity of the middle-class woman, which participation in the marriage lottery is intended to remedy. As Mr. Collins remarks using an associated metaphor, "'When persons sit down to a card table, they must take their chance of these things'" (83). Here Jane Austen depicts the hope of chance solutions for chance ills. But the gamble of the marriage lottery also symbolizes design—even though we usually conceive of design as effort directed toward a particular end, thus limiting the operation of chance.

In ***Pride and Prejudice*** (as in ***Emma***) design and its correlates—art, scheming, contrivance, and cunning—become associated with chance by the partial disjunction of intention and effect. In the cases of Mrs. Bennet's contrivances for Jane, Lady Catherine's frank condescension to Elizabeth at Longbourn, and Miss Bingley's arts of captivating Darcy, the existence of the design *per se* initiates its own frustration. The "quality of powerlessness"[13] which Marvin Mudrick finds characteristic of the "simple" characters in the novel derives from their inability to conceive of an event as a somewhat unpredictable intersection of diverse causes. There are, for example, at least five forces operating in Jane's estrangement from Bingley: her reserve, her parent's impropriety, Darcy's interference, Miss Bingley's cooperation with Darcy, and Bingley's malleability—any one of which would have been insufficient to separate them. Without an awareness of this multiplicity, design is ineffectual, and its bafflement will seem attributable to the perversity of ill fortune.

If Charlotte Lucas is typical of the designers engaged in the marriage lottery, it becomes clear that those who most credit chance, most employ art. Her marriage, of the three we will center on, is the most pathetic. Charlotte demonstrates her intelligence, as does Elizabeth, by acknowledging that marriage does not always bring happiness. Marriage, Charlotte implies, can be contrived successfully: "'Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on.' '. . . Your plan is a good one,' replied Elizabeth, 'where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married; and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it'" (22). Conversely, from Charlotte's

perspective, "'Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. . . . And it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life'" (23).

Charlotte's plan *is* a good one if she is to catch "any husband."[14] She succeeds in the same way as Lydia, who is also too involved in the lottery "to have attention for anyone in particular" (77). But the pathos of Charlotte's marriage is that, because of her intelligence, her ignorance must be a pretense. And thus she never arrives, as does Lydia, at the "sublime and refined point of felicity, called, the possession of being well deceived."[15] Charlotte begins, as we have seen, by espousing the value of ignorance in courtship, since the knowledge of the partner's defects has no bearing on one's chance of happiness, and she follows her prescription unswervingly. After Elizabeth rejects Collins, Charlotte satisfies her curiosity by "walking toward the window and pretending not to hear" (114) Mr. Collins rationalize his disappointment. When thus informed that Collins is, for the moment, unattached, she sets the pretended ignorance of her marriage scheme into motion: "Miss Lucas perceived him from an upper window as he walked toward the house, and instantly set out to meet him accidentally in the lane" (121). And as is usual in Jane Austen's novels, the means justify the end. During Elizabeth's visit to the parsonage, she notices that "when Mr. Collins said anything of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, . . . Charlotte wisely did not hear" (156). Whatever modicum of happiness Charlotte enjoys in her marriage results not from chance, as she had predicted, but from her persistence in the same pretended self-deception that characterized her courtship. In this way she unwittingly becomes a fit mate for Collins, who is similarly defined by the "perseverance in wilful self-deception" (109) in his deafness to Elizabeth's rejection.

Collins himself remarks the perfection of this union at Elizabeth's departure: "'My dear Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking. There is in everything a most remarkable resemblance of character and ideas between us. We seem to have been designed for each other'" (216). Here is at least a triple irony. Since their compatibility is small, only a perverse design could have joined them. Nevertheless, Collins does design Charlotte for a wife, and at the same time, she designs him for a husband—though both are merely searching for any mate available. But, most important, they are attracted to each other by a force superior to them both—their mutual identity. Here again Jane Austen posits a new sphere of causation, non-Providential, yet extrinsic to the forces of which the characters are immediately aware. In *The Family Reunion* Agatha concisely describes this sphere and the folly of ignoring it:

> Thus with the most careful devotion
> Thus with precise attention
> To detail, interfering preparation
> Of that which is already prepared
> Men tighten the knot of confusion
> Into perfect misunderstanding.
> Reflecting a pocket-torch of observation
> Upon each other's opacity. . . .[16]

Although all the characters in the novel get what they want, their designs do not affect their felicity. Contrivance is either the ignorant "preparation of that which is already prepared," or else it is simply irrelevant to the outcome. The most explicit instance of the folly of design occurs in Mrs. Bennet's self-applause for keeping Jane and Bingley together at Netherfield: "'This was a lucky idea of mine, indeed!' said Mrs. Bennet, more than once, as if the credit of making it rain were all her own" (31). Design and chance are allied in ***Pride and Prejudice*** because Jane's marriage and the rain are equally of Mrs. Bennet's devising.

While Jane Austen validates Darcy's claim that "whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable" (40), she does not conclude that its opposite is more laudable. Mr. Bennet's indolent detachment from his wife and daughters increases their vulnerability, and signals his moral deficiency. And Bingley, though not at all cunning, is fit for no better than Jane. The marriage of Jane and Bingley, like that of Charlotte and Collins, also discloses a dual perspective on a single position in the hierarchy of marriages, and, as we noticed in the parson and his wife, their placement in this moral scale results in part from their similar responses to chance.

It is the chance involved in Bingley's spontaneously picking Netherfield as a home that initiates the novel's action. "Mr. Bingley had not been of age two years, when he was tempted by an accidental recommendation to look at Netherfield House. He did look at it and into it for half an hour, was pleased with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately" (16). But his caprice is more estimable than that of Mr. Collins, since by this method Bingley chooses a house, Collins a wife. Bingley's "needless precipitance" is further developed in his reply to Mrs. Bennet's inquiry whether he will stay long at Netherfield: "'Whatever I do is done in a hurry . . . and therefore if I should resolve to quit Netherfield, I should probably be off in five minutes'" (42). However, Darcy remains unconvinced of his friend's resoluteness; such decisiveness is mere fantasy. On the contrary, Darcy informs him, "'Your conduct would be quite as dependent on chance as that of any man I know; and if, as you were mounting your horse, a friend were to say, "Bingley, you had better stay till next week," you would probably do it, you would probably not go—and, at another word, might stay a month'" (49). What Darcy clarifies for us is that capricious choice is not the affirmation of individual power or of freedom from external restraint; rather it is the reliance

on an immediate cause (the nearby friend, Darcy) whose presence is accidental. Caprice is no more than the unacknowledged determination of choice by chance.

Bingley's unconscious dependence on chance parallels that of Jane, and thereby prepares us for their marriage. Like Bingley, Jane is without design. Quite the opposite, she nearly fulfills Charlotte's prophecy that her reserve will not suffice to hold Bingley. The complement of Jane's restraint in the display of affection is her restraint in censure, and the basis of both is her response to that ignorance which produces the appearance of chance. Jane's recognition that she does not know the degree of Bingley's affection accounts for her unwillingness to entrap him. Because of the same self-acknowledged ignorance she suspends judgment when Elizabeth repeats Wickham's version of Darcy's duplicity. Nothing remained for Jane to do "but to think well of them both, to defend the conduct of each, and throw into the account of accident or mistake, what ever could not otherwise be explained" (85). Jane's *sancta simplicitas* is thus preserved by her remaining in a cocoon of ignorance. In one sense, Jane is the personification of the comic hope of ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Of all the characters, she most consistently expects that all will end well (287). But this prognosis is undermined as the reader comes to realize that the "account of accident or mistake" will not sustain the new data continually being unfolded. And as chance yields to pattern, we understand more clearly that the "sanguine hope of good" which makes possible Jane's favorable interpretations of the presence of evil does not result from an accurate observation of her world, but is merely the projected "benevolence of her heart" (287). Our reaction therefore is twofold: we reverence her benevolence, and deprecate her fixation in it.

Jane's "angelic" response to chance is initially adequate. She humbly presumes the possibility of ignorance and error. But her benign skepticism produces no knowledge, and thus becomes its own caricature—stultified and incapable of adapting to the flux of the sublunary world. Her control is diminished, her choice incapacitated, and in their absence Jane is governed by chance. Both Bingley and Jane are characterized by a perseverance in self-deception like that of Charlotte and Collins, but their unscheming good nature elevates them above the parson and his wife. Of Bingley's ductility and Jane's petrification, we are forced to say (as does Elizabeth describing Darcy and Wickham), "'There is but such a quantity of merit between them; just enough to make one good sort of man'" (225).

Jane's fixation is not unique within the Bennet family. In the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet the reader discovers that both "neglect and mistaken indulgence" (280), both detachment and design, are manifestations of internal necessity or fixation. Elizabeth upbraids her father's indolence by illustrating its effect on his children: if he will not bestir himself, she says, "'Lydia's character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous'" (231). Nor is even Lydia's flirtation free; it is fixed on a scarlet coat (64). That the parents' fixation will contribute to the child's fixation is probable and natural. What is surprising is that any of the Bennet daughters escape "the disadvantages of so unsuitable a marriage" (236) as that of their parents. How Elizabeth does so is the central concern of ***Pride and Prejudice.*** And her liberation involves a response to chance that raises the moral value of her marriage above that of the others.

A significant form of verbal irony in the first half of the novel[17] is Elizabeth's perversion of metaphors of chance: "'Mr. Bingley's defence of his friend was a very able one I *dare* say, but since he is unacquainted with several parts of the story, and has learnt the rest from that friend himself, I shall *venture* still to think of both gentlemen as I did before'" (96; my italics). Ironically, the limitations of Bingley's defence of Darcy are identical to the defects in Elizabeth's defence of Wickham. Yet Elizabeth is unaware that her evaluation of Wickham is a "venture," not a certainty. Similarly, while trying to penetrate Mr. Collins' deafness, Elizabeth assures him, "'I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so *daring* as to *risk* their happiness on the *chance* of being asked a second time'" (107; my italics). Elizabeth knows that to refuse Collins' offer does not "risk" her happiness since the chance of any is nil: "'You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so'" (107). The similarity of this rebuff of Collins to Elizabeth's rejection of Darcy is striking: "'I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry'" (193). This parallel phrasing in Elizabeth's two refusals of marriage suggests one facet of her fixation. To refuse Darcy does risk her happiness, but Elizabeth denies the gambling metaphor by presuming an omniscience of Darcy like that she possessed of Collins. In the first half of the novel Elizabeth's continual repetition of the metaphors associated with the marriage lottery indicates that while she seems unaffected by it, her attempt to deny chance proves it real and threatening.

If Collins is often impenetrably deaf to Elizabeth, the reverse is also true. "'My dear Miss Elizabeth,'" he remarks to her at the Netherfield ball, "'I have the highest opinion in the world of your excellent judgment in all matters within the scope of your understanding, but permit me to say . . .'" (97). Disguised in Mr. Collins' flatulence is Elizabeth's unawareness that the scope of her understanding is too small, that it has gathered too little data, to evaluate circumstances accurately. These

limitations of self-knowledge must become conscious if she is to escape entrapment in her own illusory omniscience. What Elizabeth must learn, among other things, is that chance is predicated on ignorance, and insofar as ignorance can be under one's control, to that extent is chance capable of regulation. The paradigm of her awakening occurs in Rosings Park. "More than once did Elizabeth in her ramble within the Park, unexpectedly meet Mr. Darcy.—She felt all the perverseness of the mischance that should bring him where no one else was brought; and to prevent its ever happening again, took care to inform him at first that it was a favorite haunt of hers.—How it could occur a second time was very odd!—Yet it did, even a third" (182). At least one critic has noted that it is a "series of incidents over which Elizabeth has no control that reunites"[18] her with Darcy. And in Rosings Park only by an involuntary empiricism does Elizabeth discover a pattern emerging from what seemed to be fortuitous in his actions.

On the possibility of Darcy's knavery Jane is in a quandary: "'It is difficult indeed—it is distressing.—One does not know what to think.'" But Elizabeth retorts, "'I beg your pardon;—one knows exactly what to think'" (86). Throughout the novel Elizabeth recognizes, as Jane does not, the necessity of judgment in the presence of evil. But Elizabeth here manifests the same needless precipitancy in decision that characterizes Bingley, and is thus to a similar extent directed by chance. Her prejudice originates in the coincidence of her being near enough to overhear Darcy's snub. And only when Elizabeth comes to understand that she has persevered in willful self-deception, has "'courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away'" (208), is she released from the dominion of chance. Her perspective is then broadened, and she becomes capable of "giving way to every variety of thought," of "reconsidering events," and, most significantly, of "determining probabilities" (209).

Although Reuben Brower finds it "an odd, rather legalistic process,"[19] "determining probabilities" is, nevertheless, the most appropriate of the responses to chance dramatized in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** and Elizabeth's capacity to determine the probabilities of possible events validates the novel's placement of her marriage above that of Jane in the moral hierarchy. If one must have a fixation, Jane's fixation in the suspension of censure is more praiseworthy than Elizabeth's in prejudice. But because Elizabeth escapes herself, she achieves the higher moral status. If Jane superficially affirms chance but ultimately denies it, the reverse is true of Elizabeth. She finally credits chance and attempts to cope with it.

For a gambler, determining probabilities is relatively easy. He knows the dice and how they are marked. But Elizabeth and Darcy must discover while blindfolded how the dice are constructed. They are forced to define their world inductively before deciding the probability of a given outcome. The possibility of error in this process destroys the self-assurance with which Elizabeth had judged Darcy and Wickham. And had Darcy known the difficulty of determining probabilities when he first proposed, his countenance would not have "expressed real security" while "he *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety" (189). Such security only causes vexation. As Jane comments, "'His being so sure of succeeding, was wrong . . . and certainly ought not to have appeared; but consider how much it must increase his disappointment'" (224). That by the time of his second proposal Darcy has been educated in the vagaries of mischance is shown by the "more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation" (366). And here his humility is rewarded with success because it presumes that Elizabeth is free either to accept or reject him. Likewise, when Darcy returns at last to the Bennet home, Elizabeth acknowledges the possibility of a variety of motives and distrusts what appears to be simple cause and effect relationship. She hopes that his return means "that his affection and wishes must still be unshaken. But she would not be secure" (334).

The anxiety of Elizabeth and Darcy demonstrates that their reappraisal of the operation of chance does not make them capable of molding the world to their satisfaction. Whatever additional control the recognition of chance gives them is dwarfed by their glimpse of the far greater chaos beyond their direction. Nor does Jane Austen lead us toward the pride of Stoicism. The inner world, like the outer, is susceptible of only small (though significant) control. "Health and temper to bear inconveniencies—cheerfulness to enhance every pleasure—and affection and intelligence, which might supply it among themselves if there were disappointments abroad" (240) characterize the Gardiners as a couple high in the moral scale; but these qualities are rare and can be generated only in a naturally fertile soil of which there is very little on this earth.

It is true that for Jane Austen self-knowledge and self-control crown the moral hierarchy, and where her characters fail in these respects they fall under the lash of her wit. The art of self-manipulation to prevent the deception of others is laudable and difficult of mastery. But the qualms one has about the value of complete self-consciousness result from its persistent tendency toward knavery; or from a more Romantic perspective, self-consciousness might be imaged as the wearing of a true mask, a persona identical to the person behind it. But what the viewer of such a mask always realizes is that this duality is perilously close to the duplicity of such as Wickham.

Jane Austen circumvents the problems involved in over-rationalizing behavior by reminding us of the operation of the unconscious even in the most consequential

choices. Reason is parodied in Mary's windy moralizing and in Mr. Collins' formulaic proposal to Elizabeth. But, more important, the central marriage of ***Pride and Prejudice*** is based not alone on reason and the growing mutual understanding between Darcy and Elizabeth, but also on a thoroughly spontaneous affection—one which flowers entirely contrary to the efforts and expectations of the characters. Bingley and Jane "considered it, we talked of it as impossible" (373). One reason why the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth seems impossible is that "it has been most unconsciously done" (190). Elizabeth can take no credit for having knowingly elicited Darcy's addresses, yet "it was gratifying to have inspired unconsciously so strong an affection" (193). Elizabeth cannot say how long she has loved Darcy: "'It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began'" (373). And similarly Darcy, when Elizabeth asks him to describe the origin of his love, replies, "'I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I *had* begun'" (380). Finally, there is no immediate cause—not even conscious will—for the affection of Darcy and Elizabeth, and this freedom constitutes their peculiar felicity.

Elizabeth wonders at one point "how far it would be for the happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of [Darcy's] addresses" (266). Luckily she never has the opportunity to do so, for this would bring her to the level of Miss Bingley. As we have seen, it is superfluous or worse to arrange what is already arranged. This inefficacy of the will in matters of affection is found not only in the "simple" characters, as Mudrick contends, but in "complex" characters as well.[20] Rather than attempting to snare Darcy, Elizabeth acts toward him as she resolves to act toward Bingley. It is hard, she thought, "'that this poor man cannot come to a house, which he has legally hired, without raising all this speculation! I *will* leave him to himself'" (332). Such is Elizabeth's response to the "truth universally acknowledged" that governs the novel. What she here clarifies for us is that when left alone by the Mrs. Bennets of this world, the individual's self emerges lucidly, without being falsified by the pattern imposed by other's wishes.

The unpredictability of events in ***Pride and Prejudice*** results from the fact that, from the characters' point of view, all manner of improbability is discovered. Wickham's knavery teaches Elizabeth to "draw no limits in the future to the impudence of an impudent man" (317). And at the other extreme, she finds in Darcy's assistance of Lydia "an exertion of goodness too great to be probable" (326). Even determining probabilities is inadequate if we are not prepared for the unlikely.

On the other hand, when probability of action or motivation is too easily calculated, Jane Austen puts us on our guard. Just as she portrays the improbable, so also do we find the over-probable, and sometimes both simultaneously:

> Never, since reading Jane's second letter, had [Elizabeth] entertained a hope of Wickham's meaning to marry [Lydia]. No one but Jane, she thought, could flatter herself with such an expectation. *Surprise was the least of her feelings* on this developement. . . . But now *it was all too natural.* For such an attachment as this, she might have sufficient charms; and though she did not suppose Lydia to be deliberately engaging in an elopement, without the intention of marriage, *she had no difficulty in believing* that neither her virtue nor her understanding would preserve her from falling an easy prey.
>
> (279-80; my italics)

Here the over-probable becomes a source of pity or aversion because it implies an involuntary entrapment by an exterior and mechanical cause. Lydia falls an "easy prey" to Wickham because he is thoroughly self-conscious, and she is not. And she is a prey to herself by her self-will and carelessness (213). Here, as elsewhere, Wickham falls victim to his own contrivance. Nevertheless, they do surprisingly marry, contrary to Elizabeth's expectations, and at the same time fulfill her suspicion that little "permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue" (312). Likewise, the over-probable and improbable are combined when Miss Bingley teases Darcy about his pleasure from Elizabeth's fine eyes: "'I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favorite?—and pray when am I to wish you joy?'" To which Darcy replies, "'That is exactly the question I expected you to ask'" (27). Miss Bingley's comment is completely predictable and therefore inane; yet ultimately it is justified.

Samuel Kliger has observed that in ***Pride and Prejudice*** the eighteenth century's "rationalistic quest of the mean between two extremes requires that the probabilities for the heroine's behavior be set up between two alternatives, neither of which is acceptable alone. . . ."[21] Just such a quest for the mean is completed in Jane Austen's reconciliation of the over-probable and the improbable, the inevitable and the impossible. Indeed this union informs the whole of ***Pride and Prejudice*** since it is the basis of the "truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." We would assume any truth universally acknowledged in a Jane Austen novel to be either false or trite; yet, as one critic concedes, "by the end of the novel we are willing to acknowledge that both Bingley and Darcy were 'in want of a wife.'"[22]

The ignorance of this truth occasions the most significant illusion of chance in ***Pride and Prejudice*** and, perhaps, in all Jane Austen's novels. It is an illusion that

appears in the frequent, but repressed, response that the impossibly happy conclusion of the novel is, after all, fortuitous. This response springs from the only partial awareness of a cause neither Providential nor physical, but rather moral. ***Pride and Prejudice,*** taken as a whole, enforces our recognition that an unmarried man or woman is incomplete. Not only is the urge to mate a physical drive, but it is a moral necessity if one is to become more than the sum of the multiple idiosyncrasies that compose the individual personality. Jane Austen sees the individual "not as a solitary being completed in himself, but only as completed in society."[23] The "complex" individual is not isolated by his freedom, as Mudrick contends,[24] quite the opposite. If anyone, only the "simple," myopic, and fixated individuals are isolated, since for them other people never become real. Darcy increases the scope of his freedom by enlarging his society to include not only Elizabeth, but her family as well. And in Wickham he creates a brother. By his freedom Darcy establishes and vindicates his position in society.

The truth universally acknowledged that *humanitas* cannot be achieved alone is sometimes lost among the welter of socio-economic interpretations of the novel's marriages, but the driving force of ***Pride and Prejudice*** cannot be explained by reference to the pocketbook. Rather, Jane Austen invites us to examine the possibility that an individual can merit and achieve happiness in a community that becomes valuable by his joining it. "'Without scheming to do wrong, or to make others unhappy, there may be error, and there may be misery. Thoughtlessness, and want of attention to other people's feelings, and want of resolution, will do the business'" (136). The sources of misery are various; but when informed by thoughtfulness, sympathy, and commitment, fulfillment in marriage is not a matter of chance.

Notes

1. Lionel Trilling, "*Mansfield Park,*" in *The Opposing Self* (New York, 1955), p. 207.
2. W. J. Harvey, "The Plot of *Emma,*" *Essays in Criticism,* 17 (1967), 56-57.
3. Lionel Trilling, p. 210.
4. Paul N. Zietlow, "Luck and Fortuitous Circumstance in *Persuasion*: Two Interpretations," *ELH,* 32 (1965), 179.
5. I have deliberately excluded from this discussion what may be called "circumstantial chance," for example, the coincidence that Darcy's aunt is Mr. Collins' patron. This form of chance has little moral significance—at any rate, far less than the chance involved in decision and action.
6. I am not suggesting by this definition that chance should be identified with causelessness, but rather that it is the ignorance of causes or consequences.
7. For a useful summary see Mordecai Marcus, "A Major Thematic Pattern in *Pride and Prejudice,*" *NCF* [*Nineteenth-Century Fiction*], 16 (1961), 274-79.
8. For an analogous discussion of the novel's scale of imperfection, see W. A. Craik's observation that "all of the characters are deficient in some way" in *Jane Austen: The Six Novels* (London, 1965), p. 64.
9. *The English Novel: Form and Function* (1953; rpt., New York, 1967), p. 124.
10. Van Ghent, p. 123.
11. All references to *Pride and Prejudice* are from *The Novels of Jane Austen,* ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd ed. (London, 1932), Vol. II.
12. *Jane Austen and Her Art* (London, 1939), p. 165.
13. *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton, N. J., 1952), p. 104.
14. From another perspective, Collins is not "any husband," since he is heir apparent to the Bennet estate. And it is significant that Charlotte, the spokeswoman of chance, should marry the recipient of a fortuitous sufficiency.
15. Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub,* eds. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, 2nd ed. (London, 1958), p. 174.
16. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (New York, 1952), pp. 230-31.
17. For a convincing argument that "irony is more totally verbal in the first half of the novel than in the second," see Joseph Wiesenfarth, *The Errand of Form* (New York, 1954), pp. 63 ff.
18. Wiesenfarth, p. 83.
19. Reuber A. Brower, "Light and Bright and Sparkling: Irony and Fiction in *Pride and Prejudice,*" in *The Fields of Light: An Experiment in Critical Reading* (New York, 1951), pp. 176-77.
20. Mudrick, p. 104. We may note that Elizabeth equates the inefficacy of Darcy with that of Miss Bingley in attempting to separate Jane and Bingley: "'And this . . . is the end of all his friend's anxious circumspection! of all his sister's falsehood and contrivance! the happiest, wisest, and most reasonable end!'" (347).
21. "Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the Eighteenth Century Mode," *UTQ* [*University of Toronto Quarterly*], 16 (1947), 360.
22. A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (London, 1965), p. 107.

23. Richard Simpson, rev. of the *Memoir, North British Review* (April, 1870), rpt. in B. C. Southam, *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage* (New York, 1968), p. 249.

24. Mudrick, pp. 124-25.

Walter E. Anderson (essay date December 1975)

SOURCE: Anderson, Walter E. "Plot, Character, Speech, and Place in *Pride and Prejudice*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30, no. 3 (December 1975): 367-82.

[*In the following essay, Anderson provides an in-depth analysis of the novel's plot. Anderson asserts that the novel's "luminosity" derives from "its central love story."*]

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James Sherry (essay date autumn 1979)

SOURCE: Sherry, James. "*Pride and Prejudice*: The Limits of Society." *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 19, no. 4 (autumn 1979): 609-22.

[*In the following essay, Sherry investigates the novel's various thematic oppositions. Sherry describes the*

evolving relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy, with its movement from contentiousness to conciliation, as "dialectical" in nature.]

I think it is probably fair to say that for most people both the interest and the meaning of ***Pride and Prejudice*** reside in the splendid opposition and gradual reconciliation of Darcy and Elizabeth. There may be differences in the interpretation of individual episodes, or in the estimation of where or with whom the values of the novel finally lie; but there seems to be general agreement that the essential impulse of the novel is dialectical, and hence that both Darcy and Elizabeth must undergo some changes of heart and of opinion before the novel can reach its beautifully poised and profound resolution in their marriage.

But even beyond this initial agreement about the dialectical thrust of the novel, there has been a remarkable consensus about the terms which ought to be used to describe its antitheses. Again and again in discussions of ***Pride and Prejudice*** we come upon some variation of the terms "individual" and "society." In Dorothy Van Ghent's essay in *The English Novel: Form and Function* (1953), for instance, ***Pride and Prejudice*** is described as illuminating "the difficult and delicate reconciliation of the sensitively developed individual with the terms of his social existence."[1] In A. Walton Litz's *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (1965), Darcy and Elizabeth are said to "dramatize the persistent conflict between social restraint and the individual will, between tradition and self-expression."[2] And in *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971) written almost twenty years after Dorothy Van Ghent's essay, we find Alistair Duckworth still working within what is clearly the same framework of description. "Only when Elizabeth recognizes that individualism must find its social limits," he says, "and Darcy concedes that tradition without individual energy is empty form, can [***Pride and Prejudice***] reach its eminently satisfactory conclusion."[3]

In the face of such a long-standing consensus of interpretation it may seem merely ingenious at this point in time to question either the essential validity or the usefulness of this description of the novel. But in at least two important respects it seems open to objection. In all the interpretations to which I have referred, the word "society" and its derivatives suggest a sociological abstraction—an institution, a set of laws, or a tradition (to use a word common to two of them). For Jane Austen, on the other hand, the word has quite a different meaning.

Here, for instance, in a passage from ***Pride and Prejudice,*** is how Elizabeth uses the word in a conversation with Lady Catherine.[4]

> But really, Ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early.
>
> (165)

And here is how one of those younger sisters uses it in the same novel while providing her own appropriate remark on the subject.

> "While I can have my mornings to myself," said [Mary], "it is enough.—I think it no sacrifice to join occasionally in evening engagements. Society has claims on us all; and I profess myself one of those who consider intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable for every body."
>
> (87)

And finally, here is how the narrator of ***Emma*** uses the adjectival form of the word in her description of the background and character of Mr. Weston.

> He had received a good education, but on succeeding early in life to a small independence . . . had satisfied an active, cheerful mind and social temper by entering into the militia of his county, then embodied.
>
> (E [*Emma*]: 15)

"Society" in these examples has nothing to do with conventions, laws, or traditions; perhaps its closest synonyms are "company" or "companionship." Similarly, "social" does not mean "of or pertaining to the institutions of society" but "gregarious" or, as we would now say it, "sociable." Far from being an abstraction, then, "society" always suggests for Jane Austen the presence of other individuals with whom it is either a duty or a pleasure to mix.

Of course it may be objected that criticism need not be limited to the vocabulary of its subjects. After all, Jane Austen never uses the word "irony," and yet that term has proven to be one of the most useful words for describing the quality of her vision. Indeed, it is not part of my intention to bar any word from criticism that serves its function in illuminating a text. But in this case, the "sociological" definition of "society" has had the effect of disinfecting Jane Austen's novels a little too thoroughly, of removing from them the complex sense of lived social life.

In the Austen criticism of the 40s (I am thinking now of D. W. Harding's classic "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen"[5]), this strong and sometimes sardonic sense of "other people" was, of course, much emphasized—in fact, too much so, for it led to an essentially false image of Jane Austen as a silent rebel with an unspoken hatred of the people around her. But though such criticism certainly overstated its case, it had at least the salutary effect of reminding us that Jane Austen wrote as a private individual in a milieu in which publicity—Mrs. Bennet's "visiting and news"

(5)—was a matter of course. To downplay or ignore this sense of social life, of "other people," is to lose something important in any of Jane Austen's novels. But it is particularly regrettable in the case of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** where the aura of a small, enclosed community of talking, visiting, and company is so strong.

It is not simply that an important historical dimension to the novel is lost, however. For the abstraction of the word "society" has also led, I think, to a fundamental misconception of Jane Austen's dialectic. As we can see most explicitly in the quotation from Alistair Duckworth, there has been a tendency in such discussions of the "individual" and "society" to allegorize Elizabeth and Darcy into representatives of those respective terms. Elizabeth, then, reveals the energy, the impulsiveness, the respect for personal merit which characterizes individualism, while Darcy, with his sense of propriety and his noble family connections, stands for "society" or the established social codes.

But if society for Jane Austen is not so much opposed to individuals as composed of them, we may be justified in turning such well-established associations on their heads. After all, it is Elizabeth whose values are primarily gregarious and social and who might fittingly stand for what Jane Austen conceives of as society, while it is Darcy whose reserve, privacy, and discretion are, in fact, protective of the individual.

Putting these terms aside, however, what is important is that the issues of ***Pride and Prejudice*** are much less abstract and much more localized than sometimes stated. And they have to do with nothing less than the conditions of personal existence in the small town world of three or four country families which Jane Austen delighted to describe. For in such a world social participation could be a duty, a delight, or a danger. In a novel like ***Emma,*** for instance, it is clear that society does have claims, not simply, as Emma learns, because the repetition of "old news, and heavy jokes" (E: 219) may be all that is left of enjoyment to people like Miss Bates and her mother, but because the quality of that society depends upon the willingness of those with superior moral and intellectual qualifications (like Emma and Darcy) to contribute to its tone and to be responsible for its sanity and generosity.

But just as clearly, there are limits to society and sociability which are inherent in the very confinement of small-town living. These limits are explored in such characters as Sir John Middleton in ***Sense and Sensibility,*** Mr. Weston and Miss Bates in ***Emma*** and, in very specific ways, in Bingley and Jane Bennet in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** But it is finally in ***Pride and Prejudice*** as a whole that we get our clearest look at what might be called the dialectic of social participation in Jane Austen's novels. For it is only there that she fully explored the necessary tension between the impulse, indeed the responsibility, to be open, engaged and responsive members of a community, and the need for reserve, distance, and privacy lest social intercourse become vulgarized and degraded by familiarity.

I

At the beginning of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** in fact even before we have proceeded twenty pages, our disposition towards much that follows is formed by an initial, and seemingly simple, antithesis. At the Meryton ball, the first public event of the novel, we meet two men between whom there is "a great opposition of character" (16). Charles Bingley is everything a sociable gentleman should be—lively, open, unreserved, with a pleasant countenance and an agreeable manner. He mixes well with the rest of the company, dances every dance, and soon finds himself liking, and liked by, nearly everyone in the room. (10, 16).

"What a contrast between him and his friend"! (11). Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, is almost completely antisocial. Haughty and reserved, he declines being introduced to anyone, talks only to members of his own small party, and dances only twice. He feels not the slightest interest in any other people at the assembly, and in return is heartily disliked for it. (11, 16).

Unlike her cousin, Egerton Brydges, whom she criticized for his sloppy novelistic methods, Jane Austen never introduces characters merely to be described.[6] Nor does she ever describe a character simply because he figures in the action of the novel. Her characterizations always serve thematic as well as mimetic purposes. The extended contrast between Darcy and Bingley is no exception. For the opposition between openness, candour, and sociability on the one hand, and reserve, fastidiousness, and exclusiveness on the other is not allowed to end here. Indeed, once we have expanded our notion of Darcy's social distance to include its apparent source in his snobbish regard for wealth and great connections, we can trace the same opposition at work in the "grouping" of some of the other characters.

At almost the same time that we encounter the differences between Darcy and Bingley, we are also introduced to the characters and dispositions of Bingley's sisters. Elizabeth immediately suspects that they do not possess the same open temper and sociable good nature as their brother—"their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general"—and the narrator soon leaves us no doubt about it. The sisters, we are told, are "proud and conceited," and though not incapable of being agreeable when they wished to please, have become so enamoured of their own beauty, wealth,

and rank (the latter almost entirely mythical, of course) that they now believe themselves fully "entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others" (15).

If this description were not in itself sufficient to suggest the association of Bingley's sisters with Darcy's own apparent brand of pride and conceit,[7] we are certainly invited to make the connection by subsequent events. For once Elizabeth has taken the measure of Bingley's sisters' "superciliousness" (21), she finds it easy to believe them as "charmingly group'd" (53) with Darcy in their opinions as they are in their walks. In fact, much of the animosity we feel towards Darcy in the first part of the novel is created by a form of guilt by association. We are *shown* the snobbishness, the shallowness, the ill-nature of the Bingley sisters; we *extrapolate* Darcy's few remarks or actions, as Jane Austen quite intends that we should, to resemble those of the people who are so much his companions.[8]

But while we are thus building up a sense of Darcy and the two Bingley sisters as a group united by a common pride and selfishness, it is hard to resist seeing Bingley and the two Bennet sisters as an antithetical group characterized by a generous sociability. At least part of this sense of polarization is the result of our age-old interest in comic resolution. Jane and Bingley are clearly established as lovers, and we can see quite as well as Elizabeth that they are meant for one another. Darcy and Bingley's sisters, on the other hand, are cast in the role of the "blocking society," holding out for wealth and connections against true love. But though plot certainly reinforces our sense of the polarity of the two groups, the real contrasts and differences are established by the remarks and reactions of Elizabeth.

A noble tradition in Jane Austen criticism has cast Elizabeth in the role of ironic commentator and has even suggested that her irony is subversive of society.[9] But this is again to misunderstand the nature of society in the novel. For while Elizabeth is certainly fond of laughing at the follies and inconsistencies of her fellows, her wit is almost completely social in its bias. Far from being either detached from or subversive of society, her irony normally claims as its victims precisely those selfish, vain, or foolish people (like Miss Bingley, Darcy, Collins or Lady Catherine) who either cannot or will not contribute to making society as lively, open, and full of community as a good conversation. The people whom she instinctively prefers, men like Bingley, Wickham, and Colonel Fitzwilliam, are all open, agreeable, sociable people, with "a happy readiness of conversation" (72). And even Elizabeth's occasional bitternesses arise not from any real detachment from society, but from too great a dependence upon its merely superficial aspects, from a failure not dissimilar to her father's to distinguish between a pleasing face or manner and something more substantial. With Elizabeth as the basis of our point of view, then, our sense of the contrast between the pride and exclusiveness of some of the characters and the generosity and sociability of others is strengthened by the force of her own social convictions.

II

Throughout much of the first half of ***Pride and Prejudice*** we have little reason to doubt the justice of these convictions or the polarization of character and judgment to which they lead. For despite our superior view of events (particularly where Darcy's interest in Elizabeth is concerned), so much of the action seems to support Elizabeth's "reading" of the other characters that we scarcely notice the inconsistencies and ambiguities that do exist. Consider the arrival of Wickham, for instance. Coming as he does almost immediately after the introduction of Mr. Collins, he seems to confirm the fact that in this novel only characters without inflated notions of wealth and rank can be rational, unprejudiced, and attractive. Like Bingley, he is open, unreserved, agreeable, and with such easy and engaging manners that he seems as clearly a member of that sociable "good" group of characters as Mr. Collins, with his eternal prating about Lady Catherine, seems to belong with the Darcys and Miss Bingleys. Indeed, Wickham's subsequent revelations make both associations even more appropriate. For not only does he admit to a dislike for Darcy (and at this point a dislike for Darcy is an almost certain passport to Elizabeth's and the reader's affections), but he also reveals the hitherto unknown link between Darcy and Collins through Collins's characteristically proud and conceited patroness.

But if Wickham's story appears to confirm the opposition between sociable and unsociable characters, it also deepens our sense of the antagonism. Up till now we have been concerned with what has seemed to be a question of manners, of courtesy, though not without larger implications. Wickham's story adds a new dimension to the action, for now we get our first glimpse of the power of wealth and rank, a power capable of ruining a young man for life. For if Wickham's story is true, his chances for economic security have been destroyed almost solely as a result of Darcy's dislike for his warmth of temper, and his envy of Wickham's more intimate relationship with Darcy's father. Moreover, it is an injustice which Wickham's own comparative poverty prevents him from redressing.

Nor is this the only instance in which lives are capriciously altered and fates menaced or determined by the power concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. Bingley's sudden disappearance and Jane's resulting suffering, Charlotte Lucas's miserable capitulation, Colonel Fitzwilliam's pathetic admission that younger sons cannot marry where they will—all of these point

to the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of maintaining values like simple openness, candour, and kindness in a world dominated by their opposites. Perhaps the most striking and symptomatic example of this deepening of tone, this antagonism of viewpoints, is the confrontation between Elizabeth and Collins at the time of his proposal. For though the scene begins light-heartedly enough with the incomparable foolishness of Collins's pretended passion, it ends with the menace of poverty and loneliness for those, like Elizabeth, without money and rank. And whatever else one might wish to say about it, the threat cannot be ignored.

At Rosings, of course, we return briefly to the broader comic contrast of pride and sociability in the characters of Lady Catherine and Colonel Fitzwilliam. The "superlatively stupid" (166) conversation at dinner and cards, in fact, seems to sum up once and for all the kind of stifling parody of society to which wealth and rank seem to lead. But the hints inadvertently dropped by Colonel Fitzwilliam of Darcy's "triumph" in detaching Bingley from Jane bring us back once again to the level of antagonism. Responsible for Jane's suffering, Wickham's poverty, Bingley's inconsiderateness and, we almost feel, for Colonel Fitzwilliam's hesitation, Darcy seems now to symbolize all that inhibits real happiness and sociability. His arrogance, his conceit, his disdain for the feelings of others, these have become more than personal qualities. They have come to stand for a whole way of life. And thus, Darcy's rejection by Elizabeth at the moment when he seems to have felt an impulse stronger than pride is an irony which we as readers have been fully prepared to appreciate.

III

It is a short-lived irony, however. For with the arrival of Darcy's letter, both Elizabeth and (to a lesser extent) the reader are shown to be partly wrong. The neat polarization of characters into groups and the unambiguous judgments of events are revealed to be too simple—at least where Darcy is concerned. It is appropriate, of course, that our common disillusionment should come by way of a letter, a simple narrative. For it has been largely the result of personality, of the dramatic immediacy of the events in the first part of the narrative that we have been deceived. Like Elizabeth, we have trusted ourselves too implicitly to qualities like liveliness, openness, and apparent good nature, without really questioning their ultimate value. Darcy's letter is thus the herald of a new sobriety and detachment which can be felt even in the mode of the novel itself as we move away from dramatic presentation towards the less exciting but more mediated account of events which characterizes the last half of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** particularly Lydia's elopement which we do not "see" at all.

This new sense of "distance" or detachment in the novel is, of course, entirely in keeping with the devaluation of sociability which now takes place. For if Elizabeth learns to distinguish between personal agreeableness and the more important quality of moral integrity, she also learns how little one can be taken as the index of the other. Furthermore, she now realizes the part played by her own desire to be thought agreeable in her mistaken judgments of Darcy and Wickham. "Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other . . . [she had] courted prepossession and ignorance" (208).

But to say that Elizabeth now sees the danger of judging people solely on the basis of qualities such as liveliness, candour, or conversability is to recognize only one part of a rather complex shift of perspective. For in admitting that she has misjudged Darcy, Elizabeth is now faced with the problem of understanding him. It is a problem she shares with the reader. With Darcy's departure from Rosings, our chance of observing him first hand is gone for another fifty pages. It is upon Darcy's letter, then, and the light it throws upon his earlier actions that we must rely in beginning to reassess his character. And if it is to be a positive revaluation, that letter must enable us to see the past action of the novel in quite a different way. If it does not allow us to excuse the *extent* of Darcy's pride, it must at least make it possible for us to accept Darcy's own estimate of his character—that his faults are rather of temper than understanding (58).

In fact, this is exactly what the letter does. By explaining that his objections to Elizabeth's family were based primarily on the grounds of their "impropriety" rather than their deficiency in great connections, Darcy's letter opens the way not only for a reassessment of his character and behaviour but to the recognition that there may be a form of pride and reserve which differs from that of mere snobbishness, and which may be both unobjectionable and necessary. But before we can get anywhere with this new look at Darcy, we must first get rid of some important misconceptions about "propriety." For most modern readers the word "propriety" has nothing but unfortunate connotations. Seen through the distorting lens of the Victorian age, the word has come to stand for a kind of rigid and even hypocritical adherence to the outward customs and usages of polite society. Indeed it is perhaps this conception of the word as much as anything which has contributed to the idea that Darcy "stands for" the "social restraints" imposed upon individual freedom.

For Jane Austen and, in fact, for most people of the 18th century, on the other hand, the word had not become so fixed or so pejorative. It was in a state of flux. For though it was just beginning to take on something like the meaning we now attribute to it, most of the

eighteenth-century definitions of "propriety" still carried the impress of its Latin root, *proprius,* meaning "belonging to the individual," or, in other words, "peculiar," "characteristic." Far from suggesting a conformity to common rule, then, most senses of the word still connoted a concern for what was unique, special, or "proper" to a circumstance or person. We must keep this in mind if we are to see how Jane Austen understood the word.

As it is most frequently used in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** "propriety" suggests a kind of behaviour which is particularly careful not to violate the privacy, the integrity, and the right to respectability of every individual. As a concept governing social relations, then, "propriety" is intimately concerned with the discretion and reserve necessary to prevent individuals or actions from becoming "common" through excessive familiarity. Wickham's "general unreserve" about his relations with Mr. Darcy, his freedom in allowing his claims to be "openly acknowledged and publicly canvassed" (138), though another instance of his apparent sociability, is, in truth, an act of "impropriety" because it represents a breach of such discretion and privacy, a breach made all the more culpable since "respect for [Darcy's] father" ought to have stopped him from "exposing the son" (207).

Mr. Bennet's "impropriety . . . as a husband" (236) shows a similar disregard for necessary social distance. By continually "exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children" (236), Mr. Bennet is, in effect, robbing her of the respect which is due to her as both a wife and mother, no matter how silly she is.

But if "propriety" thus enjoins a certain respect for the individuality and reputation of other people, it also prescribes a concern for, indeed a pride in, one's own name and character. And it is in this sense of the word "propriety" that Darcy finds the Bennets lacking as a family. And it is for this reason that he is reluctant to see Bingley connect himself with them. "'For what do we live,'" Mr. Bennet asks Elizabeth, "'but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?'" (364). It is all too typical a question. For having lost all respect and esteem for his wife, Mr. Bennet has now lost any respect he might have had for the name and character of the man who was fool enough to marry her. Caring little or nothing for his reputation as a gentleman, he allows his wife and daughters to make spectacles of themselves (and him) at any public place, and even contributes to their exposure. In so doing, of course, he may purchase a kind of grim entertainment, but it is finally at the expense of his own respectability as well as that of his family. And given the kind of talking, gossiping world described at the beginning of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** it is not to be expected that the contempt that Mr. Bennet shows for himself and his kin will be slow to be communicated to the rest of the community.

With this in mind, then, I think we can now see the importance of Darcy's letter and the interval of time between its arrival and his reappearance in the novel. It is not that we give up our earlier notion of the contrast between reserve and sociability, but that our attitude towards both is radically redefined. Through Darcy's letter, we are forced to "re-see" the entire first half of the novel, to recognize not only the errors of judgment which can proceed from a prejudice for sociable people, but the limitations of sociability itself, the danger of living so much in the public eye that familiarity turns to contempt. But in thus revising our sense of the rights and wrongs of characters like Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and Wickham, we are slowly led to an appreciation of Darcy's superiority. For though we may still deplore the snobbishness and lack of consideration for others which is evident in his manner, we can now see that there is a positive need for qualities like pride and discretion that Darcy possesses.

The prominence given to Lydia in the fifty pages following Darcy's letter is only too obvious a reflection of these same issues. Lydia has been called "highly sexed" by at least one critic, and Jane Austen has been praised for her refusal to sentimentalize Lydia's strong "animal spirits."[10] But what characterizes Lydia is not so much passion as it is a mere carelessness about herself and her reputation. Brought out into society before her time and consequently without the kind of reserve or shyness which ought to characterize girls of her age[11] (contrast Georgiana Darcy at the other extreme), Lydia has always been loud and forward. But in the pages that follow Elizabeth's return to Longbourn, Lydia's indifference to publicity is stressed with such a heavy hand—"'we talked and laughed so loud, that any body might have heard us ten miles off'" (222)—that it seems surprising it has gone so long unnoticed.

That we should now see all this through Elizabeth's eyes is one of Jane Austen's usual triumphs of plotting. For not only is Darcy further justified in his characterization of the Bennets' behaviour, and Elizabeth raised in our eyes by the conscientiousness of her attempts to act upon that knowledge, but the scene is thereby prepared for Elizabeth's trip to Pemberley just a few chapters off. Though she doesn't know it yet, Elizabeth's conversation with her father, her representations of the "improprieties of Lydia's general behaviour" (230), her concern for her family's "importance, [its] respectability in the world" (231—all of these are bringing her closer in spirit to Darcy than ever before in the novel, and helping to make possible the rapprochement which begins at Pemberley.

The chapters at Pemberley, indeed, represent the second climax of the novel, and for many people its essential resolution.[12] Elizabeth has come to realize what we might call the "limits of sociability," the function of re-

serve, and the need for a "proper pride" in one's character. And Darcy, on his side, now reveals that he has recognized the errors of manner into which his excessive self-regard and exclusiveness have led. The result of this recognition is a new sociability. Never before has Elizabeth seen him so friendly, "so desirous to please, so free from self-consequence, or unbending reserve" (263) as he is at Pemberley. Instead of remaining detached and distant, he now makes every effort to be agreeable to Elizabeth and to the Gardiners to whom she now introduces him. The dialectic of sociability and reserve seems to have resolved itself perfectly into a new synthesis, and there seems to be little more reason to continue the novel except to complete the engagement between Darcy and Elizabeth.

IV

Why then does the novel go on? Why is Lydia's elopement necessary? Is it merely to prolong the suspense of the love plot? Is it a concession to the popular-novel-reading audience and its desire for melodrama? Is it that the elopement section of the novel is part of an earlier and insufficiently revised draft? All of these are possibilities, of course; but if we now shift attention away from the elopement as such and turn again to Darcy, I think we can at least make a case for another explanation.

The course of Darcy's progress in the novel is both consistent and revealing. Beginning in his chill refusal to participate in a dance, the entire history of his relationship with Elizabeth can be described as a struggle between the contrary impulses of pride and love—the one keeping him reserved and aloof, the other leading him increasingly towards that form of social communion which Jane Austen once likened to a dance.[13] His first proposal comes at the midway point of this struggle. For though love has by this time so far gotten the better of pride that all Darcy's efforts to remain unintrigued by Elizabeth have failed, yet pride still musters sufficient strength to make his proposal as vain and complacent as Mr. Collins's own. At Pemberley, however, Darcy takes a clear step forward and begins to get out of the closed circle of his pride by consciously and concertedly taking Elizabeth's advice and "practicing" sociability.[14] But is this really enough? Aren't we trivializing Jane Austen's own sense of society by suggesting that all Darcy owes to it is a certain refinement of manner? It is true, of course, that at Pemberley both Elizabeth and the reader become aware of the larger sphere of influence which is Darcy's by right of his position as landlord. But as Wickham has pointed out earlier, Darcy's efforts here are completely consistent with his pride. Are there no obligations to society which run against the notion of pride? Or, to put it another way, is Darcy now immune to the laughter, the foolishness, which seems to be so much a part of Jane Austen's own vision of social relations. The answer, I think, is no.

As is perhaps already obvious, the direction in which Darcy is moving in the last half of *Pride and Prejudice* is not only towards an attitude of greater candour and sociability but also towards an involvement in laughter and ridicule. Darcy is as clearly aware as Elizabeth herself that such attentions as he pays to the Gardiners "would draw down the ridicule and censure of the ladies both of Netherfield and Rosings" (263). But now he willingly exposes himself to it.

With Lydia's elopement, however, Darcy takes the last step: he risks the exposure of his own name and reputation by actively involving himself in retrieving the fallen reputation of the Bennets. Love is, of course, a major factor in Darcy's decision to open his family name to the remarks of such a scandal, but love only provides the willingness, the impulse. As Darcy realizes, and as I think Jane Austen intends the reader to realize too, the duty, the responsibility of such a risk has always been there.

Before Elizabeth's refusal, Darcy thought it beneath him "to lay his private actions open to the world" (322). With the same (in this case mistaken) pride which he had shown in his proposal to Elizabeth, he had simply assumed that his reputation would speak for itself without further effort on his part, that his character, his wealth, his position would be more than sufficient to confound any lies that Wickham might dare to spread. But as Darcy discovers more than once in the novel, people are not to be moved in this way. And it is precisely because of his refusal to be open, his inordinate fear of involving himself in ridicule that Wickham's designs are able to succeed.

But it is not simply that Darcy thereby exposed his name to greater indignities by his fear of publicity than he would have if he had been more open. He also allowed a great number of people in Hertfordshire (particularly the Bennets) to be seriously victimized through their ignorance of Wickham's past. "It was owing to him," as Darcy tells Mrs. Gardiner, "to his reserve, and want of proper consideration, that Wickham's character had been so misunderstood, and consequently that he had been received and noticed as he was" (324). Had Darcy been less proudly reserved, and more willing to risk the idle remarks of the usual town gossips, Wickham's elopement with Lydia (certainly his constant reception at Longbourn) would almost surely have been avoided. Had he been less careful of his own reputation and more aware of his responsibilities to the society of which he is a part, the Bennets need not have been so threatened.

It is only through the events surrounding Lydia's elopement, then, that we arrive at the final adjustment of the relations between sociability and reserve. For with her usual good sense, Jane Austen realizes that however

important it is to maintain one's dignity in the world, such dignity cannot be an end in itself. The final step Darcy takes towards an involvement in society, therefore, goes beyond the simple candour he learns when he begins to meet people like the Gardiners halfway. It includes being actively engaged in a society where to be a responsible, feeling, and discriminating adult means to risk at times the exposure to laughter.

For Darcy this means stepping down off the pedestal where his pride has kept him aloof in Grandisonian perfection, and joining the mass of men who, as Elizabeth will teach him, are laughing and laughed at. For whatever else it is, laughter is the great equalizer in Jane Austen's novels. And though it may vary in profundity from the vulgar "fun" of Lydia to the sociable playfulness of Elizabeth to the moral consciousness of Jane Austen herself, laughter is there as an eternal reminder that we are all part of one community, and not even the best of men can be totally beyond the responsibility and the reproach of belonging to it.

Notes

1. *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Rinehart, 1953), p. 100.
2. *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 105.
3. *The Improvement of the Estate* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1971), p. 118. I am indebted to Duckworth and particularly to the note which accompanies the passage I have quoted for first suggesting to me the prevalence of the "individual-society" interpretation of *Pride and Prejudice.*
4. All quotations from Jane Austen's novels are from the standard Chapman edition [*The Novels of Jane Austen*] (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971).
5. *Scrutiny,* 8 (1940), 346-62.
6. *Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others,* 2nd edn., ed. R. W. Chapman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), p. 32.
7. See the exchange between Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth about Darcy's pride, p. 20.
8. We are told, for instance, that the Bingley sisters can be agreeable when they wish to be. And in fact we see them turn on their charm more or less when they will. Their reserve seems to be under their own control. In Darcy's case, reserve is a part of his character, and it is by no means clear that he will ever be entirely comfortable in society. Yet Jane's remark, early in the novel, before we have had a chance to know Darcy, makes it almost impossible for us to interpret Darcy's reserve in this way. "'Miss Bingley told me,' said Jane, 'that he never speaks much unless among his intimate acquaintance. With *them* he is remarkably agreeable'" (19). This again seems to make Darcy and the Bingley sisters all of a kind.
9. See Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 94-126, and D. W. Harding, "Jane Austen and Moral Judgment," in *From Blake to Byron,* ed. Boris Ford (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1957), pp. 51-59.
10. Mudrick, p. 100.
11. In a letter to her sister, Jane Austen lamented the contemporary loss of reserve, asking, "What is become of all the Shyness in the World?" (8 Feb. 1808). This letter is usually quoted apropos of Fanny Price's remark in *Mansfield Park,* "'There must be a sort of shyness'" (*MP* [*Mansfield Park*]: 197). But it applies equally well to Lydia's case and perhaps suggests that there is a greater sense of continuity between the two novels than is usually recognized.
12. Critics have in fact so long complained about the second half of the novel (and particularly Lydia's elopement) that Joseph Wiesenfarth devoted an entire chapter of his book on Austen to answering the charge. For the arguments on both sides, see his *The Errand of Form* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 60-85.
13. I am referring of course to Henry Tilney's celebrated comparison of marriage and dancing in *Northanger Abbey,* pp. 76-77.
14. I use the word "practicing" advisedly. For as Elizabeth demonstrates to Darcy at Rosings, sociability, like piano-playing, is an acquired art (175).

Karen Newman (essay date winter 1983)

SOURCE: Newman, Karen. "Can This Marriage Be Saved: Jane Austen Makes Sense of an Ending." *ELH* 50, no. 4 (winter 1983): 693-710.

[*In the following essay, Newman evaluates the parodic elements in the novel's conclusion. Newman suggests that Austen employed irony as a means of subverting the patriarchal underpinnings of literary language.*]

> You agree with me in not liking Corinne, then?
>
> I didn't finish the book, said Maggie. As soon as I came to the blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up and determined to read no further. I foresaw that the light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I'm determined to read no more books where the

> blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. If you could give me some story now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance.
>
> *The Mill on the Floss*

Despite Maggie Tulliver's plea for novels in which the dark woman triumphs, many feminists have not been kind in their judgment of such plots. Marriage, almost inevitably the narrative event that constitutes a happy ending, represents in their view submission to a masculine narrative imperative that has traditionally allotted women love and men the world. Ironically, perhaps, such readers have preferred novels that show the destructive effects of patriarchal oppression, for they complain that Austen's endings, her happily-ever-after marriages, represent a decline in her protagonists: "as in much women's fiction, the end, the reward, of women's apprentice-ship to life is marriage . . . marriage which requires [Elizabeth Bennet] to dwindle by degrees into a wife."[1]

The question I want to address is, can this marriage be saved? That question poses a larger and more theoretical question about how we read endings generally. In his foreword to a recent number of *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* devoted to endings, Alexander Welsh suggests that "endings are critical points for analysis in all examinations of plot; quite literally, any action is defined by its ending."[2] Many readers of Austen have taken just this attitude toward her endings. Either the critic reads an Austen novel as a romantic love story in which social and economic realities of nineteenth-century women's lives are exposed but undermined by comedy, irony, and most tellingly marriage, or she reads marriage as a metaphor for self-knowledge, the overcoming of egoism and the mark of psychic development: in Austen's ***Emma,*** for example, marriage "is most significant as a social ritual which ratifies a transformation in Emma herself . . . [just as] the union of Jane Eyre and Rochester . . . takes its meaning from the heroine's own psychic growth."[3] Neither approach seems satisfactory, for both ignore important aspects of these texts and their historical context. The event, marriage, does after all refer to a real social institution that, in the nineteenth century particularly, robbed women of their human rights.[4] The most cursory look at the legal and cultural history of women makes it clear that these narrative events reflect the social and legal limitations that women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries faced and that in turn reflect the way a patriarchal society has manipulated biological roles for its own advantage. To read marriage as metaphor is not a sufficient answer.

Nor can we accept the feminist judgment that Austen's endings undermine her critique of social and economic forces and their effects on women.[5] The assumptions of such a reading bear scrutiny, for they read the novel as an object to be consumed by the dominant culture. As D. A. Miller observes in his recent book on narrative closure, "once the ending is enshrined as an all-embracing cause in which the elements of a narrative find their ultimate justification, it is difficult for analysis to assert anything short of total coherence."[6] By reading an Austen novel as a unity with romantic marriage as its final statement, we impose a resolution on her work that makes it conform to the very expectations for women and novels that Austen's irony constantly undermines. Such a habit of reading, which, as Welsh puts it, defines any action by its ending, falls prey to a teleological prejudice that contemporary criticism has called into question. As critics and feminists, we must refuse the *effect* of her endings; instead of simply accepting the text as it presents itself, we must investigate the contradictory, disparate elements from which it is made: the psychological paradigms, the raw materials of ideology and of women's place in culture. An Austen novel and indeed any fashioned work of art conceals and diverts attention from the visible seams where these contradictory materials are joined; the critic's task is to analyze how this diversion takes place, to investigate *how* the text produces its meaning and effect.[7]

If instead of assuming that endings define the action of a novel (an enterprise we would never even attempt in reading poetry) we assume that our sense of an ending is a function of the principles of structure by which the novel is generated or according to which one element follows another, in the case of Austen our sense of closure is markedly different from the one a teleological reading provides. Austen exposes the fundamental discrepancy in her society between its avowed ideology of love and its implicit economic motivation. But her response to this conflict is more complex than the simple juxtaposition of the languages of love and money so often remarked by her critics since Dorothy Van Ghent and Mark Schorer in the early fifties.[8] Her consistent use of economic language to talk about human relations and her many portraits of unsatisfactory marriages prevent us from dismissing her novels as romantic love stories in which Austen succumbs uncritically to the "rewards" her culture allotted women. Even more important, however, are the unresolved contradictions between romantic and materialist notions of marriage and human relationships that govern the production of meaning in her texts.[9] Austen's novels provide us with rival versions of a single set of facts that coexist without final reconciliation or resolution, and the text displays these gaps or disjunctions on the levels of both plot and sentence.

Nancy Miller has called attention to the usefulness of formalist approaches, particularly the work of Gérard Genette, for reading women's fiction.[10] In his essay "Vraisemblance et Motivation," Genette defines *vraisemblance* in a literary text as action that conforms to the maxims, presuppositions, or received opinions of

the public or society: "Real or assumed, this opinion is pretty much what today would be called ideology, that is to say, a body of maxims and prejudices which constitute both a vision of the world and a system of values."[11]

For Genette, texts solve the problem of *vraisemblance* in three ways. In the first kind of text, "the relationship between a plausible narrative and the system of plausibility to which it subjects itself . . . is essentially mute." Such works conform to the "tacit contract between a work and its public," and this silence indicates the text's conformity to the dominant ideology. The second kind of text is liberated from ideology, but is also silent because it refuses to justify the "motives and maxims of the actions." The silence of the first text is a function of what Genette calls "plausible narrative"; that of the second, a function of "arbitrary narrative." It is only in the third type of narrative that these silences are voiced in what Genette calls the "endless chatting" of the Balzacian novel. Balzac presents the reader with an "artificial plausibility" in which authorial commentary justifies the plot by inventing the missing maxims. I would like to suggest that Jane Austen's novels represent a variant of this third type. ***Pride and Prejudice*** begins with a maxim on which the ensuing narrative is based—that "it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."[12] What is the relation of this maxim to the novel and its context? Neither of the young men in possession of a fortune in the novel seems in want of a wife; on the contrary, it is the young women without property—the Bennets, Charlotte Lucas—who are in need of spouses, and not the reverse. The maxim, then, on which the novel is based does not justify the story; its function is not *vraisemblance* but exposure, for it serves as a continual ironic reminder of the discrepancy or gap between social convention and economic necessity.

In *Emma,* maxims serve a somewhat different function. Early in the novel, in talking to Harriet of that lady's farmer suitor, Robert Martin, the heroine announces that "The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do."[13] This maxim does not function for everyone of Emma's rank and social class but is designed to expose her own snobbery and class prejudice. Knightley has "to do" not only with Robert Martin, but also with William Larkin; the Westons dine with the Coles. The maxim serves to expose the contradiction between Emma's ideas of herself and her class and the actual social relations the novel portrays.

Genette argues that the maxims and generalizations that an author makes are all determined by the *telos*—in this case marriage. In Austen's case, however, the generalization that opens ***Pride and Prejudice*** in no way explains or justifies the ultimate ending of the novel, for it is not the young men who are in want of spouses, but all those without property. In this novel, then, Austen creates a deliberate disjunction between received opinion and social reality. Her epigrammatic maxims, instead of being designed to justify ends, or simply to create irony, are designed to expose the contradiction between their own pretense of causality and the real economic basis for action in the novel.

There are abundant examples in Austen's novels of her ironic juxtaposition of incongruous elements to satirize a character. One of my favorites is, not surprisingly, a conversational tidbit of Mrs. Bennet's. After lamenting the defection of Bingley and the treachery of the Lucases in gaining Mr. Collins, she says to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Gardiner, "your coming just at this time is the greatest of comforts, and I am very glad to hear what you tell us of long sleeves" (178). The wonderful parallel juxtaposition of "comfort" and "long sleeves," both of which fall at the end of their respective independent clauses, and the superlative "greatest" expose marvelously Mrs. Bennet's characteristic exaggeration of trivialities and corresponding diminution of real values. But there are other moments in the text when Austen's irony does not serve so simple a purpose.

In chapter 3 Austen finally provides us with a description of the Netherfield party that has been the subject of such interest and anxiety in the neighborhood:

> Mr. Bingley was good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance and easy and unaffected manners; his sisters were fine women with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Darcy drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley.
>
> (58)

Here Austen's irony is not directed at a fool but at society, and she does not exclude Elizabeth or Jane Bennet, those characters whom we regard as admirable. On the contrary, she emphasizes that the report was in *general* circulation and uses the generic *ladies* and *gentlemen.* This passage details the way in which wealth determines judgment, not only of character, but also even of appearance. Each member of the Netherfield party, though seemingly rated according to his or her "natural" attributes, is actually rated according to his fortune—Darcy, Bingley, the sisters, Mr. Hurst.[14] Austen's point here is clearly the way in which wealth determines point of view. Traditionally Elizabeth is excluded from this judgment, but as Sir Walter Scott long ago

noticed, Elizabeth's change of heart toward Darcy happens at Pemberley in response to his property. I do not mean to denigrate Elizabeth—she is a superior individual, and what impresses her about Pemberley is not simply its wealth but also the taste and judgment it implies.[15] Scott was, of course, wrong in reducing Elizabeth's change of heart to crass materialist motives, but not, I think, entirely, for a close examination of Elizabeth's relation to property reveals a deliberate intention on Austen's part to show us not simply a moral development, Elizabeth's sense that she had not known herself and had misread others in her prejudice, but a growing recognition of her "interest."[16]

Austen is at pains from early in the novel to show us Elizabeth's response to Darcy's wealth. When she is at Netherfield nursing her sister, Austen unfolds a scene in which Elizabeth overhears a conversation between Darcy and Miss Bingley about his property in Derbyshire. The function of the scene is not simply to introduce and describe Darcy's property or to show Miss Bingley's clear interest in it; its function is explained by the description of Elizabeth's behavior that follows the conversation:

> Elizabeth was so much caught by what passed, as to leave her very little attention for her book, and soon laying it wholly aside, she drew near the cardtable and stationed herself between Mr. Bingley and his eldest sister, to observe the game.
>
> (84)

Clearly the motivation for Elizabeth's action is not the ironic one given by the narrator, "to observe the game," but to hear more on the subject of Darcy's estate. Elizabeth was so much *caught* by what passed. Later, when she seeks to discover from Wickham the reason for Darcy's reaction to meeting him, Elizabeth says to him tellingly, unwilling, we are told, to let the subject drop, "he is a man of very large property in Derbyshire, I understand" (121). In her revealing conversation with Mrs. Gardiner about Wickham's affection, she says that "he is the most agreeable man I ever saw—and if he becomes really attached to me—I believe it will be better that he should not. I see the imprudence of it—Oh, that abominable Mr. Darcy" (181). On a syntactic level, Darcy here literally blocks her affections for the impecunious Wickham! Austen voices through Elizabeth herself the fundamental contradiction of the novel: "What is the difference in matrimonial affairs between the mercenary and the prudent motive? Where does discretion end and avarice begin?" (188). No one, particularly no woman who is economically dependent, not *even* Elizabeth, whom we admire, is unmoved by property. We should remember that only the ignorant and imprudent Lydia marries "for love," and then a man whom Darcy has paid to tie the knot.

A close reading of ***Pride and Prejudice*** reveals the contours of the patriarchal ideology from which Austen's novels emerge and in which women are at the mercy of male control of the means of production. Should we say, as Judith Lowder Newton does, that the range and complexity of the Marxist-feminist problematic the novel poses is blocked or repressed by the fantasy-wish-fulfillment structure of the boy-meets-girl-leads-to-marriage convention? I don't think so, for I think the constant alternation between the fairy tale structure and the materialist language that pervades the novel emphasizes rather than represses or obscures what Terry Eagleton terms the "fault lines" of nineteenth-century English society.[17]

Let us return briefly to the sentence quoted earlier describing Darcy at the ball: "but his friend Mr. Darcy drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year" (58). Austen juxtaposes the "Prince Charming" description of Darcy—his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien—with the final attribute of the series that reports his having ten thousand a year. The juxtaposition of these two clauses represents the two conflicting and independent perspectives that function in the novel—love and money. The tension created by this contrast in which neither perspective is subordinated to the other reveals what the French critic Pierre Macherey would call the "not said" or silence of the novel—the true place of women in a materialist culture in which men control money: this silence "is the juxtaposition and conflict of several meanings which produces the radical otherness which shapes the work; this conflict is not resolved or absorbed, but simply displayed."[18] The happy ending of an Austen novel gives it an apparent unity that is false, for meaning is produced not so much by resolution, but by means of oppositions and contradictions, by the incompatibility of several meanings.

Such an understanding of Austen's art explains the extremes of critical thinking her novels have generated—the claims, such as Marilyn Butler's on the one hand, that Austen's books "belong decisively to one class of novels, the conservative," which criticizes individualism and the unconventional, or those of Van Ghent and more recently Nina Auerbach and Susan Morgan, who read her novels as revolutionary, romantic, or both.[19] Butler is convincing in her claim that Austen works out of the anti-Jacobin tradition, but to conclude that her novels are therefore conservative is problematic. To justify such claims, Butler is forced to infer that the meaning of ***Pride and Prejudice*** "is not precisely or not sufficiently written into the text" and worse, that ***Persuasion*** is "muddle."[20] And however many times we are told that "Austen's subject is perception" or that ***Persuasion*** is about the self imperiled by change and

time, we still recognize in Austen's work principles of proportion and social integration quite unromantic and unrevolutionary.[21]

If, instead of taking a partisan view, we admit that culture is not a harmonious and unified whole in which political and social beliefs and institutions are at one with aesthetic productions, whether anti-Jacobin or romantic, we are in a better position to understand Austen's art and its relation to ideology. In his "Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre," Althusser proposes that art makes us "see" or "perceive" "the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes."[22] Art is not a reflection of ideology because this act of seeing, the "view" that art provides, presupposes "an internal distanciation from the very ideology from which such novels [Balzac's] emerged."[23] We are not required, therefore, to argue that Austen abandoned a conservative political position in order to claim that her novels criticize the patriarchal ideology from which they emerged, for her personal political views are only one component of the content of her work.

Instead we must recognize that Austen's artistic achievement in rendering the inner life of her characters, of Elizabeth, Emma, and Anne, wins our sympathy regardless of the ultimate "lessons" these heroines may learn. Our sympathy with their inner lives may even conflict with the author's critical intentions, just as Austen's irony in treating her romantic endings contradicts their conventional claims for the happily-ever-after. These contradictions are not artistic failures or "muddle"; they allow us a view, from a critical distance, of English society and the position of women in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Oppositions are also evident in the ironic ambiguity of Austen's diction. For example, Johnson defines "to fix" as 1) to make fast, firm or stable; 2) to settle, to establish invariably; 3) to direct without variation; 4) to deprive of volatility; 5) to pierce, to transfix; and finally, 6) to withhold from motion. Austen plays on the polysemous nature of "fix" at various, often significant, moments in her text. The novel's opening maxim, we learn in the second paragraph, "is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families" that a single man "is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters" (51). The second meaning of "fix" occurs so frequently in the novel as not to require example, but those senses concerned with motionlessness deserve quotation: Charlotte judges Jane's composure with Bingley disadvantageous because "If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him" (68). Here the entomologist's eye and pin seem fixed on that "single man in possession of a good fortune." In the plot of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** women try to fix men, but it is women who are "fixed" in all of Johnson's senses of the word. When Elizabeth stands before Darcy's portrait at Pemberley, she does not fix her eyes on him; instead we find an oddly subjectless clause that inscribes Elizabeth in a scopic economy and highlights her position in a patriarchy:

> Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before.
>
> (272)

Here the syntax leads us to expect Elizabeth as the subject of "fixed," but we are brought up short by the possessive pronoun "his." It is Darcy's "regard" that fixes Elizabeth.

The multiple meanings of words in Austen's prose are means for exposing the social contradictions that are the subject of her novels. Johnson defines "amiable" as 1) "pleasing or lovely" and 2) "pretending or shewing love." When Elizabeth thanks Charlotte Lucas for listening to Mr. Collins and thus sparing Elizabeth herself, Charlotte

> assured her friend of her satisfaction in being useful, and that it amply repaid her for the little sacrifice of her time. This was very amiable, but Charlotte's kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of;—its object was nothing less, than to secure her from any return of Mr. Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself. Such was Miss Lucas's scheme.
>
> (162)

As her emphasis on Charlotte's scheming suggests, Austen intends both meanings of "amiable" to work on the reader in this passage. Two chapters later the narrator remarks: "After a week spent in professions of love and schemes of felicity, Mr. Collins was called from his amiable Charlotte" (177). The adjective with its contradictory meanings, here linked with other similarly ambiguous words—"schemes," "professions"—becomes almost an epithet for Charlotte, perhaps even for courtship itself, in this section of the novel.

"Prudent," like "amiable," also has conflicting meanings in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** In its original sense, *prudentia* was one of the cardinal virtues in pagan and Christian ethics. Prudence was the practical wisdom of moral conduct, but as Glenn Hatfield has pointed out in his discussion of the word in Fielding, in the eighteenth century the term was debased by custom and usage to mean cunning or deceit making for the appearance of virtue.[24] In ***Pride and Prejudice*** Elizabeth puzzles over the meaning of prudence in matrimonial affairs. Jane

deems Charlotte prudent when she endeavors to soften Elizabeth's condemnation of her friend's match with the boorish Mr. Collins, but Elizabeth counters "that selfishness is not prudence" (174).[25] Soon afterward, Mrs. Gardiner warns her of the imprudence of a match with Wickham. Elizabeth admits to her aunt, "I see the imprudence of it" (181). When Wickham begins courting the heiress Mrs. King, the narrator comments:

> Elizabeth, less clear-sighted perhaps in his case than Charlotte's, did not quarrel with him for his wish of independence. Nothing, on the contrary, could be more natural . . . she was ready to allow it a wise and desirable measure for both, and could very sincerely wish him happy.
>
> (186)

The *perhaps* that follows "less clear-sighted" undermines the force of this judgment. We wonder, is Elizabeth really clear-sighted in her condemnation of Charlotte, or is the novel as much about her learning the complexities of "prudence" as those of "pride" and "prejudice"?[26]

Though the meaning of imprudence may be clear enough, prudence in matrimonial affairs is more complex.[27] Charlotte is prudent, and, as the quotation above suggests, scheming in her pursuit of Mr. Collins. Yet the narrator's report of what are admittedly Charlotte's reflections on her choice do not betray Elizabeth's prejudice:

> A
> Without thinking highly either of men
> B
> or matrimony, marriage had always been
> C
> her object; it was the only honourable
> provision for well educated young women
> A
> of small fortune, and however uncertain of
> B
> giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want.
>
> (163)

The careful eighteenth-century balance of clauses in this passage emphasizes the conflicting forces women encounter in culture. The negative clause that begins the passage is contrasted with the contradictory "marriage had always been her object," just as the negative clause of the final lines is juxtaposed with the opposed sentiment expressed in the final clause to give us the following scheme: A/B C A/B.[28] The realistic Charlotte has no romantic illusions about marriage, but she nevertheless deems it the best alternative for "well educated young women of small fortune" in her society. The unresolvable conflicts inherent in her situation are expressed in the characteristic Austenian balance the novelist inherits from the Augustans. In Jane Austen, prudence is not only the practical wisdom of moral conduct; it is also what we might define as acting in one's own interest in accordance with virtue, but with a realistic appraisal of the limits and difficulties life presents. When she visits Charlotte, Elizabeth is compelled, we recall, to meditate "upon Charlotte's degree of contentment, to understand her address in guiding, and composure in bearing with her husband, and to acknowledge that it was all done very well" (193).

That this technique of exploiting the connotations or variations in meaning of key words is central to Austen's irony and meaning is evident in the titles of her novels. In those with paired words, this opposition is clear, but even in the late novel ***Persuasion*** variation in meaning is important.[29] Johnson's dictionary defines "persuade" as 1) "to bring to any particular opinion" and 2) "to influence by argument." So in ***Persuasion*** Anne Elliott "was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing—indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" by Lady Russell's influence on her pliant will.[30] Now that Anne is more mature, however, even after considering every argument against her engagement to Wentworth,

> She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home, and every anxiety attending his profession, of all their probable fears, delays and disappointment, she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement than she had been in the sacrifice of it.

If we turn to the endings themselves, we find an ironic self-consciousness that emphasizes the contradiction between the sentimentality of Austen's comic conclusions and the realism of her view of marriage and of women's plight.[31] Darcy's second proposal is prompted by Elizabeth's thanking him, despite her aunt's admonitions of secrecy, for his part in effecting the marriage of Lydia and Wickham. In chapter 60, after they are united and reflecting on the past, Elizabeth exclaims: "what becomes of the moral, if our comfort springs from a breach of promise" (389). Here Austen subverts the traditional sentimental ending with a moral. Though often brought about by ironic reversals or miraculous coincidences from which moral lessons can be drawn, reconciliations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction are not usually dependent on a breach of promise! Darcy counters with his version by claiming that it was not Elizabeth's breach of promise but Lady Catherine's interference that led him to hazard a second proposal.

In Austen's novels, our conventional expectations are often met but at the same time undermined by self-consciousness and parody. Wickham and Lydia are not punished with misery and unhappiness, but live tolerably well given their weaknesses and extravagance; Miss Bingley has no change of heart when acquainted with her brother's happiness—her congratulations "were

all that was affectionate and insincere" (391). But perhaps no detail in the final pages better suggests Austen's ironic treatment of her own happy endings than Mr. Bennet's brusque letter to Mr. Collins: "I must trouble you once more for congratulations. Elizabeth will soon be the wife of Mr. Darcy. Console Lady Catherine as well as you can. But, if I were you, I would stand by the nephew. He has more to give" (390).

In *Emma* the heroine despairs over her father's anxiety about her marriage. We are told "she could not proceed" (380). Austen pointedly observes that no "sudden illumination" or "wonderful change" in Mr. Woodhouse's character made the marriage possible; instead a pilfering of poultry yards so frightened the old man that Emma's marriage became desirable (380-81). So also in *Persuasion* she consistently undercuts our expectation of a reconciliation between Anne and Wentworth. The so-called autumnal descriptions of Anne's faded beauty and the overheard conversations between the Musgroves and Wentworth serve to contradict our usual expectations for a comic ending of matrimonial reunion. Austen's comic conclusions neither undermine her heroines by making them dwindle into wives nor institute what has been called a virtual "ideological paradise";[32] they reveal the gap between sentimental ideals and novelistic conventions on the one hand, and the social realities of sexist prejudice, hypocrisy, and avarice on the other.

Austen's novels show us women confronting the limitations imposed by late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English society. Instead of assuming, as critics so often have, that Austen's respect for limits grows out of eighteenth-century philosophical thought and the conservative anti-Jacobin sentiments of the 1790s we might attribute a part at least of her strong sense of boundaries to her experience of women's limited horizons and opportunities for action.[33] If Jane Austen had not written with a deep sense of those limitations, she would have written utopian fantasy, not novels. What is positive and pleasurable about Austen's or Bronte's novels is that their heroines live powerfully within the limits imposed by ideology. In doing so, they redefine what we think of as power, helping us to avoid the trap that traditional male definitions of power present, arguing that a woman's freedom is not simply a freedom to parody male models of action. These novels of the past and their endings are valuable because they do not assume that what men do is what every human being wants to do. As I suggested earlier, the marriages that solve the narrative problem created by an independent female protagonist are strategies for arriving at solutions that ideology precludes. In ***Pride and Prejudice,*** everything about Elizabeth—her poverty, her inferior social position, the behavior of her family, her initial preference for Wickham, and her refusal of Darcy's first offer of marriage—all these things ideologically should lead if not to death, at best to genteel poverty and spinsterhood. Instead Austen has her marry despite her violations of these accepted norms of female behavior, and in so doing, she distorts the very historical and economic realities of marriage that her novel so forcefully depicts. Bronte does similar things both in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette.* In *Jane Eyre,* traditional critics call Bertha, the madwoman in the attic, a gothic-romantic holdover from Bronte's childhood fantasies of Angria; feminists, however, interpret Bertha as the incarnation of Jane's repressed rage and sexual desire. In terms of narrative, this element of the plot, then, is a device for expressing what cannot be articulated; Bertha is a literary device for circumventing the ideological strictures that prevent Bronte from writing openly about Jane's sexuality.[34]

The literary text's mode of resolving a particular ideological conflict may also produce conflicts on levels of the text other than that of plot, as in Austen's sentence describing Darcy in which the two clauses mediate our understanding of love and money in the novel. A novel's value, then, or indeed the value of any work of art for feminists, is determined not by its progressive picture of woman or by any exhortation to change a sexist society, but rather by its articulation of the conflict, or what is sometimes called the problematic, posed by a sexist ideology, in the background but nevertheless dominant, in which female consciousness is foregrounded. Austen's novels in fact suggest that space, time, and human relations—what we might call ideology—are understandable and controllable, that power is in self-mastery, internal not external. Bronte, on the other hand, implies that circumstances should and can be overcome; her heroines, in fact, change them.

So Austen, as students notice and puzzle over, is both reactionary and revolutionary. She takes women's exclusion from political power and action as she finds it. In the nineteenth century she clearly looked backward, and her sense of order represents in part at least a reaction to the social and political upheaval caused by the revolutions in France and America. But she is also revolutionary in her determination to change our ideal of what power is by arguing that women cannot be excused from power by the limits society imposes on them. She in fact argues that those who succeed are larger than their circumstances, that they control their fate and exercise real power, and from such characters and actions come the claims for Austen's kinship with the Romantics. In ***Persuasion,*** Wentworth seems to have the power of choice over Anne. He has all the advantages of male power and privilege—travel, the opportunity to make his fortune, the power to choose a wife—but he must return to the limits of the neighborhood of Kellynch Hall and finally wait for Anne to choose him, for her words to pierce his soul. "Only Anne," as Austen introduces her, to whom no one lis-

tened and whom no one heard (11). Austen is in this sense revolutionary—she redefines our traditional assumptions about the nature of power.

The feminist critic's rejection of Austen's endings is all too easily subsumed by the old complaints about the smallness of her art, the claims that it is limited because she ignored or even fought against currents of thought released by the French revolution, or in the case of the feminist critic, by Wollstonecraft and the early movements for women's rights. No criticism of Austen's art more effectively reveals the dangers of what has been called "phallocentric" criticism, which privileges the traditional male domains of action and modes of reading, for as the London-based Marxist Feminist Literature Collective points out:

> Austen's refusal to write about anything she didn't know is as undermining to the patriarchal hegemony as Wollstonecraft's demand for a widening of women's choices: the very narrowness of her novels gave them a subversive dimension of which she herself was unaware, and which has been registered in critics' bewilderment at what status to accord them.[35]

I would quarrel with this statement only in its assertion that Austen was unaware of the subversive dimension of her novels, for how can we know?

In closing I want to consider briefly the problem of specificity in women's writing. Feminist critics have been preoccupied with discovering "what, if anything, makes women's writing different from men's."[36] The most common answer is that women's lives and experiences differ from men's, and that the difference is inscribed in their writing—in imagery, and more important, in content. This judgment is ironically consonant with the traditional rejection of Austen's small world, her "little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory," though the feminist critic usually, but not always, recognizes the value of the women's world Austen portrays. Alternatively feminists have hypothesized a feminine or female consciousness different from the masculine that produces a specifically feminine or female style. Both approaches have met criticism from those who point out that male writing often manifests a content or style elsewhere termed feminine or female. Rather than attempt to label particular features of style or units of content as feminine, we would be better served by recognizing common strategies among women and men who are, for whatever reason, excluded or alienated from traditional patriarchal power structures. In Austen's case, irony and parody are subversive strategies that undermine the male hegemony her novels portray and reveal the romantic and materialist contradictions of which her plots and characters are made.

The French feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray claims that women's writing is impossible because men control language. Women's access to language, to the Word, is determined by the cultural constructions of patriarchal power.[37] Their only recourse, according to Irigaray, is mimesis, imitation of male forms, but imitation that is self-conscious or reflexive, what we might call imitation with a difference. Parody is that literary form which most openly declares its status as imitation, its difference.[38] We might say, then, that Austen's parody, particularly her parodic endings, is her means of interrogating patriarchal plots and power. The marriages that end her novels can only be saved by reading them not as statements of romantic harmony or escape, but in the context in which she placed them. Far from acquiescing to women's traditional role in culture, Austen's parodic conclusions measure the distance between novelistic conventions with their culturally coded sentiments and the social realities of patriarchal power.

Notes

1. See Judith Lowder Newton, "*Pride and Prejudice*: Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen," *Feminist Studies* 4 (Fall, 1978), 41; and her more recent *Women, Power, and Subversion* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1981), 55ff. See also Nina Auerbach's discussion of "equivocal" female power and Elizabeth's acquiescence to Darcy in *Communities of Women* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), 38ff.; and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 154ff.
2. Alexander Welsh, Foreword, *Narrative Endings, Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (1978), 1; see also D. A. Miller's discussion of the "common assumption of an a priori determination of means by the ends" in twentieth-century narratology in *Narrative and its Discontents* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), xiiff.
3. Ruth Yeazell, "Fictional Heroines and Feminist Critics," *Novel* 8 (1974), 34.
4. For a survey of the legal and social aspects of marriage and their impact on women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Patricia Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine; A Changing Ideal* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956); Duncan Crow, *The Victorian Woman* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971); Françoise Basch, *Relative Creatures,* trans. Anthony Rudolf (New York: Schocken, 1974); and Jenni Calder, *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976).
5. Newton, "*Pride and Prejudice,*" 27-42; Gilbert and Gubar, 154ff.
6. Miller, xiii.
7. My discussion of the critical enterprise owes a great deal to Pierre Macherey's *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1971).

8. Mark Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" *Kenyon Review* 11 (1949), 539-60; Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel* (New York: Rinehart, 1953); and David Daiches, who calls Austen a "Marxist before Marx" ("Jane Austen, Karl Marx and the Aristocratic Dance," *American Scholar* 17 [1948], 289-98).

9. For an interesting discussion of contradiction in literary texts, see Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 87ff.

10. Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," *PMLA* 97 (1981), 36-48; my remarks on maxims are based on Miller's discussion.

11. Gérard Genette, "Vraisemblance et Motivation," in *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 71-99; translated by Nancy Miller, 38-39.

12. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* ed. Tony Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 51; all references are to this edition.

13. Jane Austen, *Emma,* ed. R. W. Chapman (Cambridge: Riverside, 1957), 20. All references are to this edition.

14. In an essay on *Persuasion,* Gene Ruoff points out that at the end of *Pride and Prejudice,* the worth of each character is represented by his or her "proximity and access to Pemberley" ("Anne Eliott's Dowry: Reflections on the Ending of *Persuasion,*" *The Wordsworth Circle* 7 [1976], 343).

15. See Tanner's introduction to the Penguin edition in which he points out that "the grounds, the house, the portrait, all bespeak the man—they represent a visible extension of his inner qualities, his true style" (24).

16. Remember that late in the novel in response to Jane's question, "tell me how long you have loved him," Elizabeth says, "I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (382). This sentence is followed by "another entreaty that she should be serious," but Austen's point is clear enough—no one is immune.

17. Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (New York: Schocken, 1978) discusses the way in which novels display the "fault lines" of a particular period or culture. His Marxist perspective is useful to any feminist analysis of literary texts.

18. Macherey, trans. Geoffrey Wall, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 84. See also Wolfgang Iser's discussion of indeterminacy in *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), 29-56.

19. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 3. For recent examples of the opposing point of view, see Nina Auerbach's "O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in *Persuasion,*" *ELH* 39 (1972), 112-28; and Susan Morgan, *In the Meantime* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).

20. Butler, 215, 290.

21. Morgan, 10; and William A. Walling, "The Glorious Anxiety of Motion: Jane Austen's *Persuasion,*" *The Wordsworth Circle* 7 (1976), 333-41.

22. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays,* trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 222.

23. Althusser, 222-23.

24. Glenn W. Hatfield, *Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), 177-96.

25. See Morgan, who takes Elizabeth's view (92-97). She condemns Charlotte Lucas to the "immoral" company of Isabella Thorpe, Mary Crawford, and Lucy Steele, a singularly ungenerous judgment that distorts the text and ignores both Austen's ironic commentary on Elizabeth's very different judgment of Wickham's engagement and Elizabeth's own changed opinion of Charlotte's situation later during her visit with her friend (see 703).

26. Butler sees Elizabeth's conflicting attitudes toward Charlotte and Wickham as "pointlessly inconsistent" (214). She ignores Austen's emphatic critique of the double standard that condoned such behavior for a man who must, after all, head a household, but condemned a woman who makes similar choices as mercenary.

27. Hatfield claims that Austen insists only on the "original" meaning of the word *prudence* rather than on its increasingly common meaning in eighteenth-century usage, "deceit" or "cunning" (196); however, attention to the various uses of the word in her novels suggests that Austen, like Fielding, plays with the conflicting meanings of the term.

28. For a discussion of style as meaning and of eighteenth-century parallelism and antithesis generally, see W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1941).

29. Lloyd W. Brown, *Bits of Ivory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973) presents an interesting discussion of Austen's ambiguous diction in terms of eighteenth-century philosophical and moral writings (15-51). See also K. C. Phillips,

Jane Austen's English (London: Deutsch, 1970); Stuart Tave, *Some Words of Jane Austen* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973); and most recently, Janice Bowman Swanson, "Toward a Rhetoric of Self: The Art of *Persuasion*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 36 (1981), 1-21.

30. Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (New York: NAL, 1964), 31. All references are to this edition.
31. See also Brown's discussion of Austen's narrative conclusions, 223-35.
32. For Miller in *Narrative and its Discontents*, Austen's fiction enacts a perpetual double bind between "its tendency to disown at an ideological level what it embraces at a constructional one," that is, the moral lapses, blindness, or waywardness of her heroines. Despite the richness of his reading of Austen, he fails to see that the "coincidence of truth with closure in Jane Austen's novels" is undermined by her ironic play with the conventions of the female plot (46, 54).
33. For a detailed and scholarly discussion of Austen's place on the philosophical and political map of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Butler, and Tanner's introduction, 42-45.
34. Marxist Feminist Literature Collective, "Women's Writing; *Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Aurora Leigh*," *Ideology and Consciousness* (Spring, 1978), 34-35. Nancy Miller argues that the fantasy and extravagance of plot in women's fiction is linked to their unsatisfied ambitious wishes or desires often concealed in seemingly erotic longing (40-41); see also Gilbert and Gubar, 336ff.
35. "Women's Writing," 31.
36. Annette Kolodny, "Some Notes on Defining a 'Feminist Literary Criticism,'" *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1975), 78.
37. *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 134ff.
38. See Froma I. Zeitlin's interesting discussion of parody and mimesis in "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981), 311ff.

Claudia Brodsky Lacour (essay date fall 1992)

SOURCE: Lacour, Claudia Brodsky. "Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Hegel's 'Truth in Art': Concept, Reference, and History." *ELH* 59, no. 3 (fall 1992): 597-623.

[*In the following essay, Lacour explores modes of abstract and concrete representation in Austen's novel. Lacour argues that* Pride and Prejudice *represents a pivotal work in the history of literary realism.*]

I: Historicisms and Narrative

It is a truth generally acknowledged, that narrative is in need of a new form of analysis. A field of study that not very long ago seemed coherently defined and self-contained is presently undergoing historical change, as interpretative activities of an avowedly partisan stamp all but replace the structuralist and semiotic pursuit of a formal poetics or "science" of narration. The leading notion of a generative "grammar," of a single syntactic pattern abstractable from every narrative text, has been succeeded by a hyperrealist investigation of narrative *context*; the truth of the archive, the labyrinth of quotidian detail, has come to command the kind of belief previously accorded to indexical charts and geometrical paradigms, the spare outlines of Chomskian trees and Greimasian rectangles.

Characterized as a change in conceptual models, this shift conforms to a traditional picture of the history of modern literary criticism, and may indeed appear typical. On closer scrutiny, however, a less familiar theoretical complication emerges, setting this picture askew if not altering it altogether. For the current change in the focus of narrative interpretation also involves a significant shift of *reference*, a turn from the concerns and terms of literary theory to theories of history. This movement may be viewed in turn as a translation between theoretical genres, or, more often the case, as a closer approximation of literary studies to the real. But the interpretation of narrative fiction by way of contextual data organized according to concepts originating in theories of history sets into motion a considerable theoretical difficulty resembling in certain fundamental respects a vicious circle.

At the level of methodology, the shift from the study of the specificity of literary form to the pursuit of a truth embedded in specific historical content inevitably engages the interpretation of narrative in an ambiguous conceptual relation to narration itself. The theoretical writings that have served as cognitive models or supports for the contextualist approach make this ambiguity conspicuous. For those theories that have largely encouraged new historicisms of literature often rely in their own conceptualization of history on some version of narrative form. Foucault's layered narrative of successive perceptual "ages" identified with homogeneous and hegemonic doctrines of "representation," and Lyotard's speculative tale of the metahistorical "grand narratives" that have served to "legitimize" cognitive and political practices come to mind most obviously as widely diffused examples of *theoretical* narration whose explicit conceptual aim was to provide a truer understanding of history, and so of the present, by taking the form and content of narration to task.[1]

In attempting to merge empirical with theoretical or epistemological interests, contemporary historicisms

that seek to dispute the claims of historically delimited, ideological fictions derive needed leverage from narrative form and narrative representation. Within the course of abstract formulations aimed at elaborating a general conception of history such ambivalent discursive practices are entirely understandable, if not indeed inevitable, and it may only be in their own claim to operate without narrative means that some current theories of history can most accurately be considered "new." But contextualist studies of *literary* narrative that take up a "post-narrative" historical stance manifest this ambivalence in a different, more literal manner, directly displacing their own field of reference from textual details to external events, from the already-narrated, tainted by the "fictions" of history, to non-literary, historical narration. Such efforts at reconceiving the past or of rediscovering history as it is at once excluded and suggested by literature are less interpretive than they are like narratives themselves, alternatives to, or fresh historical explanations of, stories no longer viewed as merely formal or innocent fictions. In the place of stories once relegated, along with problems of concrete narrative analysis, to the empirically slippery category of artistic expression, appear stories credited with telling the truth about nonfictional agents and occurrences. In substituting the object of historical reality for the representations of literary fiction, contextual studies of narrative fashion other narratives with claims to new referential accuracy. Thus it is that, on a second level of actualization, the turn to empirical, archival history remains—if in displaced form—literary. The new historicisms, like the old historicisms, conceive of history and narrative as reflected in one another, whether it is the right or the left hand of history that writes the text.

The same hand, however, fashions an infinite variety of artifacts, all the made phenomena, self-representations, and fetishes a culture throws up. In this regard contextualist critics may have taken another theoretical cue from the program of an overarching *Kulturkritik* developed by Adorno, without distinguishing, as Adorno himself generally did not, the literary from any other kind of artifact.[2] While Adorno's own purely theoretical writings (on dialectic, epistemology, and aesthetics) were more thoroughly enmeshed in the conceptual logic of idealist and critical philosophy than those of any other philosopher of cultural history since Hegel, his writings on literature tended to take the literary *less,* so to speak, at its word, demonstrating little of the same admirably excessive attention to problems of articulation.[3] That conceptual rigor Adorno reserved for the language of critical philosophy, revealing the social contagion of culture always about to become kitsch.[4] But, as consciously post-philosophical as post-narrational in orientation, new historical or contextualist critics who similarly consider narrative fiction as but another specimen of general cultural production lay no such claim to a rigor dependent—as Adorno never failed to recall—on a concept of "objective," because negatively constituted, "truth."[5] Their inclusion of narratives and narrative form within a defined field of cultural givens thus operates quite differently, effectively raising narrative to the level of reliable historical evidence and reducing it to the reflection of a transhistorical truth, the tautological (Adorno would say vulgar) power of power to distort perception. Unlike dialectical analyses, the contextualist interpretation of narrative may ascribe either a naively mimetic or a subtly complicitous intention to the historical author. But since all authorship, inscribed *a priori* in history, is conceived to reiterate preexistent relations of power and authority, the interpretative result in either case is an affirmation of discursive culpability, a strangely anthropomorphic view of literary form most frequently expressed in the question of what narrative (a or any narrative) is up to. Here it is the critic of ideology whose gaze indicts as it defines, ultimately miming the self-legitimizing techniques of *surveiller et punir.*

Yet, to gaze is not to read, and to judge narrative is to misjudge literature. By switching the verdict on narrative from (aesthetically) innocent to (ideologically) guilty, proponents of contextualist literary criticism continue to measure the promise of truth in discourse against the writing of fiction, and thus remain within a historiographic tradition which, younger only than the writings of Thucydides, is as old as the conventional division between empirical and conceptual history. Contemporary historical criticism continues to enforce conventional notions of discursive truth by opposing empirical history to *narrative* literature in particular, because narrative more than any other discursive form seems to imply a conceptual manipulation of the empirical, a *mis*representation of the real toward the end of constructing a coherent fiction. Inattentive to the links between truth and fiction formed at every moment by the discourse of narrative fiction, contextualist narratives and appropriations of narrative attempt to distinguish the truth of their own representations, whether factual or theoretical, from the distortions of literature. In so doing they pile fiction upon fiction, telling a story *about* story-telling, a story in which narrative itself already stands convicted of iniquitous activities.[6]

II: Hegel's History of "Truth in Art"

A closer look at individual narrative constructions routinely wreaks havoc with the contextualist protocol. While almost every narrative can be retold as a series of events, it is only at their most superficial level that narrative fictions may be equated simply with the stories they tell. The hybrid language and dynamic character of narrative call for more complicated forms of analysis, just as the lived experience that historical writings strives to represent literally seems to call forth all the verbal complexity and formal precision of repre-

sentational literature.[7] Finally, it is in this interaction of history with its verbal analysis that the path of contextual criticism proves most circular. For if the truth of a fictive representation is to be located in concrete historical detail, such detail must first be *abstracted,* for theoretical reasons, from its empirical context. The privileging of concrete particulars *outside* the fiction may yield a theory, which, in seeking to avoid nonreferential abstraction, generalizes the particular.

More than any other theory of history, Hegel's philosophy attempts to navigate this Scylla and Charybdis of the general and the particular. His dialectic describes thought in general as the translation of the particular into the absolute. But, for Hegel, that general translation must also be concretely perceivable. The particular objects which, for Hegel, concretely embody and reveal the general are the fictions of art. As the "sensory embodiment of truth" art precedes both religion and philosophy in Hegel's universal history of spirit.[8] If, as Hegel famously remarked, "art in its highest determination is for us a thing of the past" (1:25), it is also the beginning of the future of all speculation—of religion, of philosophy, and, ultimately, of the overcoming, in absolute spirit, of thought. A theory of art which argues that its fictions make thinking possible by first particularizing the general in concrete form, must itself begin by clearing away theories of art which make thinking impossible, in that they conflate or isolate the abstract and the concrete.

In the section of the Introduction to the *Aesthetics* entitled, "Scientific Modes of Treating the Beautiful and Art" [*Wissenschaftliche Behandlungsarten des Schönen und der Kunst*], Hegel juxtaposes his dialectical thesis that "truth" is "revealed in the sensory form of art" (1:82) to two already existing and "opposed modes" of treating art [*zwei entgegengesetze Behandlungsweisen*]:

> On the one hand we see the science of art concern itself only externally with real works of art, classing them chronologically in art history, offering observations on the work of art at hand, or sketching theories which should provide the general point of view for judgment as well as for artistic production.
>
> On the other hand we see science independently relegate thought about the beautiful to *itself,* thought that only brings forth the universal, an abstract philosophy of the beautiful which does not touch upon the work of art in its particularity.
>
> Insofar as the first of these is concerned, which takes the *empirical* as its point of departure, this is the necessary path for those who wish to educate themselves as art scholars . . .
>
> In this view each art work belongs to *its time, its people,* and its environment, and depends especially on historical and other representations and aims . . . the individual nature of the work of art is related to the particular.
>
> (1:29-30)

Hegel notes that, while they originate in the historical and the particular, these considerations of concrete works of art give rise historically to more general "theories of the arts." Such "theories" may have much to say "*im einzelnen*"—"in specific"—but, Hegel observes, they become "very trivial reflections" once translated from the "narrow sphere of the work." In their *universality,* they "progress to no determination of the *particular,* which is, after all, the first business of theory of art [*um welches es doch vornehmlich zu tun ist*]" (1:31). Over the course of their own history, then, *historical* treatments of art come to resemble their opposite, that second mode "which strives to recognize the beautiful as such," considering objects "not in their *particularity* but in their *universality*" (1:39). Hegel argues that this abstraction—"the ground of an abstract metaphysics" beginning with Plato—"no longer suffices. We must grasp this [idea of the beautiful] deeper and more concretely, for the contentlessness [*Inhaltslosigkeit*], which clings to the Platonic idea, no longer satisfies the richer philosophical needs of our spirit today" (1:39).

"Today," according to Hegel, the spirit demands another way, a path of reflection which "contains mediated within it both these extremes, in that it unites metaphysical universality with the determination of real particularity" (1:39). This way is Hegel's aesthetics, a historical theory of art that doubles as a theoretical history, the speculative tale of symbolic, classic, and romantic phases in which art forms develop so as to "disclose the truth in art": the particular as prelude to the universal. It is also, however, before Hegel, the way of Austen's ***Pride and Prejudice,*** a fiction of the universal pretensions of the particular which, *as* a fiction, rings changes upon the order of Hegelian history. A narrative fiction, it also marks a change in literary history, a dialectical moment when literature becomes identified with the historical and the particular, the representation (or misrepresentation) of the real classified chronologically by literary scholars as "realism."

III: "Realism" Historically

Before the categorization of "realism," the relationship between the concrete and the abstract—the basis of "truth in art" for Hegel—was the particular linguistic focus of early modern fiction. In eighteenth-century "realist" fictions by such experimenters in prose as Richardson, Diderot, Rousseau, and Goethe, the real is the heterogeneous reality of narrated lived experience.[9] Such fiction we now classify as "psychological," as less intent on representing objective reality than giving voice to personal subjectivity. This retrospective judgment of course is indebted largely to the first-person format of early realist fictions: journal, dialogue, and epistolary novels that purposefully avoided the third-person vehicle of traditional epic, mock-epic and romance.[10] The third-person narratives we now identify as realist ap-

pear to circumvent the problem of subjective *versus* objective narration by representing subjectivity "objectively" as a function of "character," a quasi-empirical, describable feature. But before the fiction of objectivity became equated with realism, first-person realist fiction represented not subjectivity as such but the recognition that realism in narration could only begin by representing reality *as it was experienced.* The primary activity narrated in early realist fiction is the act of articulating experience itself, an act combining sensory immediacy with linguistic mediation, discursive understanding and imagination with incomprehensibility, and which effects the actions of the fiction, its story, rather than the other way around. Early realist fiction is "true" to life neither in its power to represent historically delimited "truths," whether deemed subjective or ideological, nor in the level of referential accuracy with which it represents an empirical object world. The distinct categories of truth and reality meet explicitly in the composition of early realist fiction in the only manner in which they meet in reality, which is to say, in the mind's composition of experience.

But if truth in early realist fiction has everything to do with the mental activity of narration, the translation of realism from the first to the third person must introduce another means of representing the truth of experience now attributed to conventionally fictitious, reported individuals. On one level third-person realism displaces the process of articulating experience imitated in first-person realist fiction by conceptualizing its own representations in the articulate form of a plot; events draw their meaning not from the conceptual acts narrated to produce them but from the part they play in a narrated story, much as the writing of history gives narrative shape and meaning to events attributed to the reported dead. But in general third-person realist narrative replaces articulation with representation, conceptual speculation (now limited to stylized interventions of the narrative "voice") with description. To call such narrative "omniscient" or "authorial" is a convenient shorthand for saying that it already knows the reality it represents, as opposed to the immediate vagaries and urgencies of experience its characters may fall prey to. Representing its own omniscience through techniques of emplotment and description, realist narrative written in the third person introduces another dimension and problem of fiction. For such realism would be the fiction of knowing everything about a fiction about which nothing really needs to be known.

IV: Abstract and Concrete Language in Austen

The historical transition between first and third-person narrative fiction, between speculative and representational realism—and the attendant difficulty in reconceiving the category of truth in fiction—are central to the works of Richardson's most important literary descendant, Jane Austen. The very titles of Austen's completed novels reveal the division between notional and concrete language in her understanding of narrative realism, dividing, as it happens evenly, between abstract nouns (***Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice,*** and ***Persuasion***) and the names of particular people and places (***Northanger Abbey, Mansfield Park,*** and ***Emma***; the uncompleted works, ***Lady Susan, The Watson,*** and ***Sanditon,*** are also named for fictive particulars). The specific problems involved in relating these two kinds of language—in representing "persuasion," for example, in the form of a realist or nonallegorical story—were never directly addressed by Austen. But the difficulty of translating between abstract and representational language by way of narration and thus of representing an abstraction, truth, in fiction, pervades the structure of the novel often regarded as her purest success.[11] More than any other work by Austen, ***Pride and Prejudice*** gives free rein to the powers of conceptualization, and it is just this continuous conceptual motion of the novel that Austen considered its structural defect. In a celebrated letter to her sister Cassandra of 4 February 1813, she criticized the recently completely ***Pride and Prejudice*** for the very qualities that would make it the most popular of her fictions:

> The work is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or anything that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style.[12]

Pride and Prejudice, Austen fears, may be overrich in its own verbal brilliance, the quickness and levity of wit that have come to characterize her writings as a whole. For like the curt articulations of opinion that are the hallmark of her dialogues, Austen's narrative voice is often viewed as too knowing, too consistently ironic in tone, her novels (with the possible exception of ***Mansfield Park***) as lacking in a regard for the hard facts of reality and moral responsibility of art.[13] In her letter Austen mocks just such a criticism of her fiction, one which esteems that, in order to be read seriously, novels must incorporate kinds of writing which they are not: "an essay on writing, a critique of Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté." Yet ***Pride and Prejudice,*** she reflects, may be so much itself as to impede the reader's "increased delight." In the absence of any objective "contrast"—whether "a long chapter of sense" or "of solemn specious nonsense"—the displays of quicksilver wit that comprise the predominant verbal mode of the novel may be so "sparkling" as to divert the reader from appreciating the "general style" of which they are a part.

Three years later, such an appreciation of Austen's style was written by the same author whose writing she suggested be critiqued so as to provide the wanted contrast to her own. In a review of ***Emma*** written shortly after that novel's publication in 1816, Walter Scott drew a general comparison between Austen's fiction and the history of the novel from which it departs. Most important for the present analysis is his discussion of Austen's realism, which he describes as a freeing of the novel from the constraints of its "original style," the representation of the "extraordinary" it inherited from romance:

> In its first appearance, the novel was the legitimate child of romance; and though the manner and general tone of the composition were altered so as to suit modern times, the author remained fettered by many peculiarities derived from the original style of romantic fiction. . . . [T]he reader expected to peruse a course of adventures more interesting and extraordinary than those which occur in his own life, or that of his next-door neighbours.[14]

The new style of Austen's fiction recalls the "course" of one's "own life" on two related levels for Scott: as a structured series of mimetic actions ("the studied involution and extrication of the story"[15]) and as internally ruled experience. Not only what people *do* but how they themselves *conceive* their actions compose the scope of the reality Austen represents according to Scott. It is this added dimension of internal comprehension, including, for the first time, the real consequences of misapprehension or mistake, which forever separates, in Scott's analysis, the new novel from the old. I quote from his description of romantic fiction at length because it provides, point for point, a perfect contrast with Austen's own:

> [T]he second broad line of distinction between the novel, as formerly composed, and real life, [is] the difference . . . of the sentiments. . . . In the serious class of novels, the hero was usually
>
> A knight of love, who never broke a vow.
>
> And although, in those of a more humorous cast, he was permitted a license . . . still a distinction was demanded even from Peregrine Pickle or Tom Jones. . . . The heroine was, of course, still more immaculate; and to have conferred her affection upon any other than the lover to whom the reader had destined her from their first meeting, would have been a crime against sentiment which no author . . . would have hazarded, under the old *régime*. . . . We, therefore, bestow no mean compliment upon the author of ***Emma,*** when we say that, keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events. . . . The narrative of all her novels is composed of such common occurrences as may have fallen under the observation of most folks; and her dramatis personae conduct themselves upon the motives and principles which the readers may recognize as ruling their own and that of most of their acquaintances. The kind of moral, also, which these novels inculcate, applies equally to the paths of common life.[16]

Like the new combination of mimetic with conceptual action (proceeding by "motives and principles") in Austen's fiction, Austen's "originality," as described by Scott, sets new standards for our perception of the original. With Austen, originality in prose fiction is no longer a matter of invention but rather a mode of representing the commonplace as it had never been comprehended before, of affording the reader a new medium for "observ[ing]" and "recogniz[ing]" "real life." The idea of originality in recognition may seem a regressive view of innovation in fiction, but only if one underestimates the power of recognition that is meant. According to Scott, the force of recognition that Austen's fiction effects may be so comprehensive as to invert our conception of mimesis itself, making the fiction appear the model for the real, as he illustrates by way of an anecdote relating to ***Pride and Prejudice***: "A friend of ours, whom the author never saw or heard of was at once recognized by his own family as the original of Mr. Bennet, and we do not know if he has yet got rid of the nickname."[17]

Fictions that are novel in that they are styled on "real life" rather than "romantic fiction," fictions that would be unthinkable under the "old *régime*" of romance, may read in fact—which is to say in our actual experience of them—as if they weren't novels, or fictions, at all. Lesser wits than Mr. Bennet will be no less recognizably rendered, with the result, Scott complains, that "their prosing is apt to become as tiresome in fiction as in real society."[18] That is to say, instead of experiencing Austen's fictions as artistic or aesthetic objects conventionally expected to afford pleasure, we may experience them with mixed feelings, the feelings of pleasure and displeasure with which we experience living. In a later discussion of ***Pride and Prejudice*** (a journal entry of 14 March 1826), Scott's appreciation of Austen's ability to achieve "truth" both of "description" and of "sentiment" leads him to regard the reality of the author's own life with just such felt ambivalence:

> That young lady had a talent for describing the involvement and feelings of characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early![19]

V: Austen's History of an Idea

To say that, unlike the ever-popular "Big Bow-wow strain" in fiction, Austen's fictions represented for the first time popularly recognizable "truth," is to ascribe a

very serious purpose to the novel Austen created and to set the realist novel even further apart from any notion of prose literature as pleasurable diversion, a notion typified, traditionally and to this day, in the forms of historical epic and romance.[20] It is to say that general knowledge may be abstracted from the fictive representation of particulars, that part of the "real life" early realist fiction represents is the experience of cognition. Yet ***Pride and Prejudice,*** Austen's tour-de-force of the life of the mind, was faulted by her for just that mental skillfulness, its cognitive flair. ***Pride and Prejudice,*** Austen suggests, may appear to present no obstacles to the mind's power of illumination, to cast no shadow where it reflects, to contain no sense of gravity at odds with the novel's levity—nothing which would stretch or extend the fiction by holding the mind in place. The sharp succession of thoughts the novel narrates may appear devoid of any particular weight, and that lack of substance or of seriousness is in fact the first impression the novel gives.[21] For how can we take seriously a novel which begins by speaking about universal knowledge as follows:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.[22]

Not only the claims made by Walter Scott about the special significance of Austen's novels—the distinct moment they constitute in the history of narrative fiction *because of their "truth"*—but the universal claim made contemporaneously by Hegel, that the relation of the abstract to the concrete in art embodies the relation of truth to history—both these claims, covering very different registers, make the opening of ***Pride and Prejudice*** a matter of some theoretical note. Why should a novel ostensibly about the gain of knowledge—that is, the recognition and overcoming of the errors of perception signified by the abstract nouns, "pride and prejudice"—begin by making light of knowledge as these first words of ***Pride and Prejudice*** famously do? Such a question may seem out of line with the apparently ironic tone of this opening pronouncement, which reads less like the beginning of an omniscient realist fiction than the preface to a domestic comedy based on the propositional philosophy of David Hume.[23] But it does address the peculiar imbalance of sense that this purposefully mundane reference to a "universally acknowledged" "truth"—*unlike* a universally acknowledged truth—effects. While truth provides the ground of knowledge, this statement destabilizes the concept of truth, producing not knowledge but the effort to attain it, which is to say, with Hegel, history. For the imbalance between concept ("truth") and reference ("a single man in possession of a good fortune") enacted in Austen's opening sentence provokes another kind of action, one that unfolds specifically in time. What this experience of uncertainty initiates—as reaction and as counterweight to it—is a specifically *narrative* activity of understanding, a second moment or movement of thought that entails with it the form of diachrony. Here diachrony is not a form presented to, but rather created by the comprehending mind, whose attempt to understand concretely the meaning of a particular "truth"[24] stated to be acknowledged universally extends dynamically to the following sentence and new paragraph in which, within characteristic Austenian "limits,"[25] a minor revolution in narrative understanding begins:

> However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

Remarkably and almost unnoticeably, universal knowledge begins to be broken down here by the very workings of representation: certain "feelings or views" are admitted as ignored by this universally acknowledged truth—those of "such a man . . . on his first entering a neighbourhood"—and the "truth" itself is said to be "fixed" only in the "minds of the surrounding families," families qualified in addition as having one or more unmarried daughters. In the space of one sentence a kind of mock or ironic maxim has given way to the particular exigencies of narration: persons, actions, and their situation in context, their coordination along the axes of time and place—the demands not of universal knowledge but of the construction of a particular narrative plot. This rapid-fire process of specification continues immediately in the next sentence, which is no longer even a properly narrative sentence but one taken literally out of context, a piece of quoted dialogue spoken at a specific moment to someone named Mr. Bennet and concerning a specific place called Netherfield Park: "'My dear Mr. Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield is let at last?' Mr. Bennet replied that he had not."

What is effected in this simple sequence of sentences is an anatomy, as clearly delineated as each new paragraph division, of the linguistic mental work that is the internal rule of fiction. If in reading ***Pride and Prejudice*** we read right by them, accepting such conceptual activity as given, that is because Austen had laid out concisely and deftly what we take blindly for granted in reading fiction: that fiction, like history, depends absolutely upon the representation of specifics, and that the relation between such specifics and any universal truth is as disputable and undependable as it is also absolutely necessary. In short, if there is a universal truth governing the writing of fiction, it is that fiction must be composed in concrete and specific rather than universal and abstract terms. Yet the specifics represented in novels would be linguistically indistinguishable from yesterday's news ("Dog Bites Man On Main St.," "Young Man Moves Into Netherfield") if narrative fic-

tion did not also represent the way in which particulars are conceived and known. The fiction of ***Pride and Prejudice*** does not begin from the premise that the reality it represents can be known objectively as long as its own narrative reality is ignored. Austen's narrator does not opt out of the fiction by beginning with a third-person account of the narrative setting as if such a setting were *not* a beginning, a necessary device of the fiction, but rather an entry *in medias res* reflecting an already surrounding reality. All narratives must name places and agents as if representing a historical object world—this is their fiction. The opening of ***Pride and Prejudice*** neither conceals nor points to that fact but makes different forms of prose language enact its proof. Beginning with a proposition in the form of a universal truth, a truth already so trivialized and thus ironized in content that it appears at once to pit truth against all novels, including the one now beginning, the narrative takes shape *as* narrative in the moment it relativizes that truth, translating universal knowledge into a type of concrete context. The instability caused by the first sentence of ***Pride and Prejudice*** seems to settle down into the course of narration by moving "truth," as it were, along with Bingley, into a neighborhood.

By the third sentence, the type becomes fully particular, the neighborhood neighbors on Netherfield, and the neighbors are specific individuals made even more individual by speaking in their own words. But before there is a Mr. Bennet or a Mrs. Bennet who can name him for the reader, there is a statement implying that the fiction in which Mr. and Mrs. Bennet will continue to say and do things has some claim, however "narrow" and "trivial," in Hegel's terms, to the universal. The universal truth stated at the opening of the novel invokes the imagining of a diachronic context in which its immediately uncertain meaning may eventually be understood. The plot of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** one might say, remains to confirm that universal truth by submitting it to the trial and error of experience, relating an apodictic statement to concrete reality by involving truth in history. Like Hegel's "truth in art," Austen's novel, then, would be the history of an idea its opening sentence states. But the history which should demonstrate that idea, through the representation of narrative particulars, is named for the nonrepresentational causes of conceptual mistakes.

Just as the first sentence of ***Pride and Prejudice*** at once states a truth and unsettles the claim of truth to universal validity, a true history of "pride and prejudice" would be more like an antihistory, a story of enlightenment never attained. Austen's continuing development of the representational context of the novel certainly suggests as much. The ensuing dialogue between the Bennets, a well-deserving favorite of the novel's devotees, is a touchstone of Austen at her conceptual best. Composing almost the entire remainder of chapter 1, its subject is the ostensible subject of all Austen's novels: marriage—the implied subject of this novel's opening maxim as well.[26] But in the course of the Bennets' dialogue it soon becomes apparent that its subject does not matter at all: it is not what is said about marriage, that most particular of universals, which matters here at the beginning of the novel (nor, arguably, anywhere else in Austen) but what is revealed about those who say it which sets the terms of the history of "pride and prejudice" to come. When Mrs. Bennet's praise of Mr. Bingley's bachelorhood and wealth ("What a fine thing for our girls!") inspires professions of literal-minded wonder from her husband ("How so? how can it affect them?"), and when her exclamations of exasperation ("My dear Mr. Bennet . . . how can you be so tiresome! You *know* that I am thinking of his marrying one of them") draw only a renewed exercise in disbelief ("Is that his design in settling here?" [3-4]), it is clear that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, whatever thoughts may occupy them, are not in the habit of thinking along the same lines. Playing the part of the empirical philosopher to his wife's less subtle turn of mind, Mr. Bennet feigns a naivete that only years of experience can teach. Rather than describing that temporal situation as the Bennets' narrator, however, Austen again lets their dialogue do the talking for her. When Mr. Bennet finally accedes to understanding his wife's meaning, which now, or at any other time, is that their daughters must be married, he states flatly: "They have none of them much to recommend them . . . they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" (5). Mrs. Bennet's protest—"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? . . . You have no compassion on my poor nerves"—invites in turn her husband's elegant and thoroughly devastating reply, a concise survey of the long history of a mismarriage that no moment or chapter of dialogue can correct: "You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least" (5).

Mr. Bennet is so skilled at talking past his wife and his wife so obtuse in talking at him that the idea of communication between them during this or any conversation of "these twenty years" appears a veritable ideal of human communion, an idea whose time has not previously and assuredly will never come. Indeed the uncrossing mental registers of their speech may explain the formal register in which it is undertaken, for Mrs. Bennet regularly addresses her husband as "Mr. Bennet" throughout the novel. The repetition of the proper noun, Bennet, the formal marker of the couple's alliance, may be Austen's means of narrating all that is shared by the couple, and of giving a new mental twist to the cliched sexual meaning of "a marriage in name alone." While the Bennets' daughters indicate their marriage has been consummated in the figurative physical

sense, the Bennets' dialogues indicate they will never be linked in any terms less tangible, that as far as their minds go the word "Bennet" is the only linguistic reference they share.

Still this conversation devoid of common understanding may seem a simple comic interlude; as readers of a comic dialogue from which we assume a spectatorial distance, we may laugh at it, as we are certainly meant to, but only until it ends. For after Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have spoken, the voice of the maxim returns, speaking this time, however, and for the very first time, as the novel's third-person narrator. The tenor of that voice is just as definitive as before, but rather than stating a universal truth it narrates some very particular truths about Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, and these historical truths now have the effect (that, again, can only be called revolutionary) of standing the original maxim—both its form and overtly ironic content—on its head. For if marriage may result in the wedding of two such disparate spirits as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet then to follow the maxim may be to embrace a veritable kiss of death. The narrator concludes the opening chapter by declaring succinctly and directly what the preceding dialogue has dramatized at some length:

> Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.
>
> (6)

Now the maxim, it may be objected, refers specifically to "a single man in possession of a good fortune," and surely if Mr. Bennet were so well-fortuned financially his wife's monomania for marrying their daughters to men of good fortune might not exist. Thus the marriage between the Bennets, which could be more accurately described as permanent spiritual divorce, a perfect disunion of dissimilar souls, or, to bastardize Shakespeare instead of John Donne, a marriage of such minds as are each other's true impediment—certainly the Bennets' marriage cannot be considered as an argument against the truth of the maxim, a constraint upon universality issuing from the realm of the concrete. Yet the reader who, having read further, thinks back to the maxim, will realize that the well-born and bred Mr. Bennet was indeed once a single man of good fortune. His mistake may have been to marry Mrs. Bennet but his single misfortune was to have only daughters, and thus to see his estate entailed to the insufferable Mr. Collins, the best argument made anywhere in fiction against the so-called natural right to property of the male. The first impression made by the maxim may be one of mere Austenian mock-seriousness, but when one realizes that in accordance with it Mrs. Bennet became Mrs. Bennet, it appears upon further inspection a proposition of entirely serious consequence, in the negative sense that this "truth universally acknowledged" might result in a life-long mistake.

The first persons to be represented in this novel, or rather, to present themselves in their own words, are cogent arguments *against* the truth that the novel proposes. Within a few paragraphs of its opening sentence, as the novel moves, by way of representation, from the form of the maxim, to first-person dialogue, and finally, to authorial narration, the gulf it reveals between abstract and representational language steadily grows. Yet marriage, the predicative referent of the maxim, also remains the motor of the story of this novel: not only does the unbearable Collins, for whom any mate will do, pursue (in a manner of speaking) that predicate, but Bingley also wants to marry Jane, and Darcy (remarkably) Elizabeth. From the obsequious Collins to the sternly self-assured Darcy, men of good fortune in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** as stated by the maxim and represented in the novel's story line, are "in want of a wife." How does the knot get tied in this novel? Since this act of predication is the central action of the novel, to ask this question is the same as asking how abstraction is translated into representation, how the maxim gets made, or tied, into plot.

Marriages in this novel are made when pride and prejudice no longer hold sway. What, then, precisely are pride and prejudice? First of all they are a quotation from a novel well known and admired by Austen, Fanny Burney's *Cecilia,* which closes with a kind of neatly self-canceling repetition of the terms. Pride and prejudice, it is concluded in that novel, are the source of woes and also of their overcoming: "If to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination."[27] Austen knew her audience would recognize the subtext of her title, but ***Pride and Prejudice*** is not like *Cecilia* precisely because in *Cecilia* pride and prejudice are easily identifiable, and, as the shaping motives of the novel's action, easily known. Here Austen's reference to an earlier text points to the differences rather than similarities of lexical significance that arise when abstract terms are engaged in a representational context. At the same time it points to the further possibility that within her own text these words may also have very different meanings, as, quite literally, in ***Pride and Prejudice*** they do.[28]

Prejudice, one can say to begin with, is a consequence of pride, a disposition for or against which results from the pride of being disposed in any manner at all. Prejudice indicates an object only in function of a subject who does or does not feel disposed toward it; thus it

serves more to reflect and define the self than any particular object to which it refers. Prejudice affirms, negatively, the identity of the prejudger: he or she is someone who thinks something about something else and thinks this without need of external proof. As such prejudice is, most obviously, an inverted form of self-affirmation, or, in other words, pride. But what can be said about pride, an abstract noun which need not take any object? One can be proud of something, as one can be prejudiced for or against something, but in addition one can simply be proud without there being a fixed reference point for one's pride at all. It is Darcy's pride which, in one of the most memorable passages of the novel, is said to transform him within no time from an object of "admiration" to one of "disgust" in the eyes of those gathered at the same ball at which he does in fact judge and reject Elizabeth, after a moment's inspection, as quite beneath him (10). And it is his own "pride" that Darcy himself will condemn as the narrow habit of mind from which Elizabeth, in rejecting him, had forcibly freed him (369). Similarly Elizabeth, so unlike Darcy in temperament, fortune, and circumstance, who would sooner laugh at herself and at Darcy's initial insult than indulge in any form of conceit, eventually attributes her misjudgment of Darcy to the "vanity" of having "prided" herself in her very ability to discern character truly (208). And it is Elizabeth who will finally commend Darcy for his pride once she believes she loves him, a pride she now perceives as well-merited and which she wishes her own sisters had been taught; a "pride" which in Darcy, as she ultimately persuades her father, is not "improper" at all (396). "Pride" is also appealed to by the professional eloper Wickham as the source to which the evil actions he imputes to Darcy "may be traced" (81). Indeed, the abstract notion of pride may be appealed to by just about anyone in this novel, and applied to just about anyone as well. It may be a good or bad thing in ostensibly good or bad people, or it may be a good or bad thing alternately in a single person, persons such as Darcy and Elizabeth themselves. If pride can be applied to anyone in the novel, it can serve any representational end; it is not a concept by which we can judge characters, for even such judgments may then become a source of pride. Like the novel's opening maxim, pride becomes a highly plastic bit of abstraction when imprinted with the particular, a highly malleable concept or verbal bit of clay rather than the tough bit of ivory into which, as Austen once remarked metaphorically, she carefully carved her fictions.[29]

If pride is a word emptied of specific determination in that it is filled with too many determinations, too many particular meanings—meanings that in different contexts serve different and often contradictory ends—then how is the end of knowledge, the overcoming of pride and prejudice, served in a novel named for pride and prejudice, words that hold too many meanings and thus cannot be said to hold true? How do prejudices become true perceptions in the novel, perceptions that take a shape which holds, as, hypothetically, the shape of marriage should hold instead of changing both shape and object with infinite plasticity? The fickle quality of perception in the novel is reflected not only—if most openly—in the tendency of Lydia and her mother to praise anything in a red coat that walks (Austen's wonderful analogue, from the female perspective, for that time-worn metonymy: anything in a skirt that moves), or in Darcy's unforgettably "mortifying," because unexpectedly "pleasing," second impression of Elizabeth, but also in Elizabeth's own response to Darcy's criticism of the "unvarying" confines of country society, a criticism applicable to Austen's fictions as well.[30] At that early stage of the novel it is Elizabeth who speaks wittily in favor of the inconstancy of human nature: "But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever" (43). Once again the conceits of Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 offer a critical gloss on the novel's steady stream of conceptual fictions: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediment. Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds." For something must indeed be *in*alterable, be unlike pride and prejudice in this novel, if Darcy is to marry Elizabeth and her feelings of disregard for him turn sensibly to their opposite. Something must be observable that cannot alter itself in the course of observation, that cannot be submitted to the abstractual alchemy of pride and prejudice, if pride and prejudice, the unreliable notions of the novel, are to be related to truth by representation, to name the history of how they are overcome.

The endless interplay of abstraction and representation in the novel make such a thing hard to fix, yet, as sure as the novel begins with a maxim, it concludes by way of the particular, suggesting what such a thing is. Furthermore, in order to be true not only to Austen's "truth" but to its consequences, the diachronic mental activity involved in understanding her unstable equation of the universal with the particular, such a thing must function as a referent both of mimetic representation and of verbal conceptualization. In addition to concretely plotted appearance it must take conversational form, providing the referent for a remark conceived as ironic *within* dialogue which, ironically, can be no irony for the author of that dialogue at all.

If Darcy, on second observation, notices the "beautiful expression of [Elizabeth's] dark eyes" (23), it is for the intelligence and liveliness reflected in them that he desires to know her better. It is that same liveliness that "bewitched" him when reflected in her retorts (52), the liveliness of any conversation entered into with Elizabeth, the life of language spoken with the inexplicable quickness and grace of an ironic wit. But for Elizabeth to desire Darcy she must see something fixed—some-

thing with which she can have no conversation, which cannot be made light, bright, and sparkling by the lively translating power of her mind. One such thing, most obviously, is Darcy's letter, a surprising inclusion in the novel in that it is inordinately long and takes up almost an entire chapter (vol. 2, chapter 12), itself the second longest chapter in the book (yet still not, according to Austen, the needed chapter "of sense"). Darcy's letter is of course made of language, but, like no stretch of language in the novel preceding it, it takes the form of monologue, the recounting of past occurrences that Wickham had already misrepresented in dialogue, a give and take of information and opinion in which Elizabeth had all too eagerly engaged. Dialogues may shape or alter one's thoughts, but there is nothing transformative one can say back to a written letter, nothing, in any case, that can change the writing on the page: that writing is fixed and its author beyond hearing, beyond the reach of our sentiments and beyond our power to change the sentiments which first gave rise to the words on the page. Darcy's letter does not bewitch Elizabeth but rather makes her think that, before reading it, "I never knew myself" (208), and her reading of that letter cannot bewitch Darcy as her conversation with him had done. The solitary writing and the solitary reading of that letter lead instead, as Elizabeth reflects negatively, to knowledge, just as another solitary moment in ***Pride and Prejudice*** does. But this is a moment of knowledge which makes Elizabeth know Darcy in addition to herself, a knowledge which in her own mind defines another as its object.

In volume 3, chapter 1, the longest chapter in the novel, Elizabeth makes her celebrated visit to Pemberley. For the first and only time she gets to see something that she may admire rather than reshape into something worth seeing by the power of her ironic perspective, make bright by the power of her wit. Much has been made, and should be made, of this visit to Darcy's estate, for it is only in seeing it that Elizabeth begins to imagine herself in possible connection to Darcy—a connection, however, which remains mediated by the tasteful beauty and order of the estate itself.[31] The narrator writes: "At that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something," continuing, "'And of this place,' thought she, 'I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own'" (245-46). Regardless of one's view of Elizabeth at this moment, the drift of her thoughts stands out markedly from the fiction. For it is a strange thing indeed to regret being a "stranger" to "rooms," to wish to be more "familiarly acquainted" with them, to be able to "rejoice in them as one's own" rather than rejoice in the expressed passion of, or wish to become more familiar with, their owner. Such thoughts appear even stranger when one considers that Elizabeth is *not* experiencing a naive displacement of feelings; she is freely viewing objects that please her in a way that Darcy's grave and apparently indifferent demeanor never pleased her, objects that, unlike Darcy's pride, condescending proposal, and disturbing letter, need not even be read, let alone responsively or dialogically transformed.

Elizabeth's imaginings about Pemberley leave Darcy quite out of the picture, until she sees Darcy at Pemberley *in* a picture. Walking in the family portrait gallery she is "arrested" by her recognition of Darcy in a painting, "with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her" (250). The reader may remember that Darcy is frequently described by the narrator as consciously averting Elizabeth's eyes lest she discern the light of admiration for her in his own. Here in the portrait the very liveliness of mind absent from Darcy's person is represented, and, the narrator observes:

> There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth's mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original, than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance . . . and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and *fixed his eyes upon herself,* she thought of his *regard* with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression.
>
> (250-51; emphasis added)

The "regard" referred to here is Darcy's half-unwilling, improperly expressed proposal of marriage, but, in a semantic irony of the narrative necessarily imperceptible to the mind of the character narrated, it is the painted regard of the arresting face in the portrait, "his eyes fixed upon herself," that Elizabeth now feels the warmth of, and for which she begins to feel particular attachment. "The canvas on which he was represented" represents Darcy better than he represents himself: it makes a truth about Darcy available to perception which his language and manners in conversation hide.[32] In a novel filled with dancing and dialogue, social forms performed in pairs, this meeting between Elizabeth and Darcy requires the absence of one of the parties; in a novel filled with constant motion and conversation, this representation is silent and still: it neither speaks, nor moves, nor can be spoken back to.

The truth that is mimetically fixed, that is inalterable in the portrait is one, however, that Elizabeth will not actually see in its subject. When Elizabeth finally gives voice to the change in her sentiments, Darcy, the narrator reports, "expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do. Had Elizabeth been able to encounter his eye," the narrator continues,

> she might have seen how well the expression of heartfelt delight, diffused over his face, became him; but,

> though she could not look, she could listen, and he told her of feelings, which, in proving of what importance she was to him, made his affection every moment more valuable.
>
> (366)

The living rather than represented look that Elizabeth cannot meet eye-to-eye is not an object of proof of importance, nor of pride, whether negative or positive, nor of prejudice. Represented by the narrative and read only by the reader, it is not part of the conversation of the novel, but an ironic conversational rendering of the abstract truth we perceive in it is, a truth concerning the cognitive necessity of representation and fixity of reference. When Jane asks her sister soon after how long she has loved Darcy, Elizabeth responds that she "must date it from [her] first seeing his grounds at Pemberley" (373). This statement, the narrator implies abruptly, was taken by Jane to have been meant ironically, or, in any event, not seriously. And indeed the narrator offers no retort to that perception on Jane's part, stating instead in the very next sentence: "Another intreaty that she [Elizabeth] would be serious, however, produced the desired effect; and she soon satisfied Jane by her solemn assurances of attachment" (373).[3] Elizabeth, it may be argued, was indeed utterly serious at that moment, as serious as at the precise historical moment occluded by its own mocking conversational reference, when she began to know and so to love represented what she could not perceive or love in life. Or if Elizabeth is *not* serious, being engaged once again in the dialogue of pride and prejudice and so deflecting a seriousness she knows she cannot fix in words by the brilliance of her ironic wit, then Austen, certainly, is. For Austen made the character of Elizabeth engaging not by objectively representing her person or nature but by giving her all the best lines of dialogue in the novel, lines which render Elizabeth's liveliness of mind in the mental medium of liveliness, words, the verbal power to create relations between the universal and the particular, the abstract and the concrete.

But it is Austen too who narrates a representational fiction in which words themselves are pure fictions, the insubstantial vehicles of pride and prejudice, abstract notions that make history because no single representation can make them known; and who sent Elizabeth to Pemberley to compose within that fiction, in the fixed form of a necessarily nonverbal representation, a particular moment of the recognition of a universal truth which no dialogue, no matter how lively, light, bright, and sparkling can render. The "truth" that is given referential meaning, that is fixed at the end of ***Pride and Prejudice*** but never fully represented within it, never rendered fully present or conceptualized as representable, is an idea that continues—after the end of the novel as *story*—to distinguish concrete from universal truths, history from an idea or ideology of history, from pride and from prejudice, Hegel's "needs" of the spirit from its teleological, even if dialectical, abstraction: it is a truth, after all, universally acknowledged, that a single man, in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

Notes

1. See in particular Michel Foucault's early pivotal equation of the "classical age" with a conceived transparency of "representation" in *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 77-80 (trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, *The Order of Things* [New York: Vintage, 1973], 63-66); see Jean-François Lyotard, "The Narrative Function and the Legitimation of Knowledge," and "Narratives of the Legitimation of Knowledge," in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), 27-37.

2. Within Theodor Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), for example, no conceptual formulation distinguishes the literary from any other form of artifact, nor does any specific consideration distinguish the reflections gathered in *Ästhetische Theorie* from his *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971). Whatever the medium of its appearance, art, as form of negation (precisely of reified historical contexts), presents for Adorno the concrete occasion for critical reflection in general. The theoretical consequences of this assimilation of the literary to the aesthetic are perhaps most tellingly represented in the essay, "Valéry Proust Museum" (*Prisms,* trans. Sam Weber and Shierry Weber [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984]) in which two modern authors whose sharply contrasting practices and conceptions of literature might have encouraged a discussion of the literary as such are used by Adorno to speak not about writing but about the fate of plastic artifacts displaced from their historical context, the negative enhancement of art by museums. What Adorno does not reflect on is that the fact of alienation rendered explicit by the artificial space of museums is one which remains in turn forever natural or innate to literature, in that the literary—copied, stored, disseminated, but rarely, and certainly never essentially displayed—includes that "space" of displacement within the alienated reality of its own medium, the fact of abstraction effected by language discussed further below.

3. A striking exception to this remains Adorno's insight that the inassimilable strangeness of Kafka's writing owes precisely to its literal quality, its presentation of the metaphorical, alien or negative as positive reality ("Notes on Kafka," in *Prisms* [note 2], 243-71).

4. For Adorno's counter-critique of philosophies that seek rather to represent language as the mere propadeutic to a truth transcending words, see his *The Jargon of Authenticity,* trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

5. On the hidden but no less "objective" "truth" of art and the "inconceivability of dialectic" without a concept of "objective truth," see especially *Noten zur Literatur* (note 2), 11, 19, 23, 25, 188-89, and "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms,* 9-34 (28-29 in particular).

6. Outstanding exceptions to this use and abuse of narrative in the service of nonliterary history are the critical investigations of historiographic conventions carried out in the works of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra. While White, by a turn upon Vico, identifies historical narratives with the functions of tropes, and thereby allies historical with literary theory, LaCapra has emphasized the literary and rhetorical dimensions of all referential (or "informational") histories and their reading. See White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), and *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978); LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Context, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983), and *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985). See also White, "Narrative in Historical Theory," *History and Theory* (23) 1984, for an excellent overview of the historians' debate on the status of narrative within historical writing.

7. See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (New York: Knopf, 1984), and Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), for cogent readings of the dynamics of narrative form as a motive force in, if not model for, the ordering of empirical experience. For both Brooks and Chambers the pragmatic potential of narrative to effect action through perception offers the most compelling ground for analyzing, rather that indicting, fiction.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 3 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 1:140. All translations from the German are my own; all further references to the *Aesthetics* will be given parenthetically in the text by page number.

9. I take my reference to realism here from Diderot's commemorative description of Richardson: "The world where we live is the place of his scene; the depth of his drama is true, his personages have all possible reality; his characters are taken from the midst of society; . . . he shows me the general flow of things that surround me." Diderot's important praise of Richardson's realism as "true" includes his celebrated comparison of the novel and history: "Oh Richardson! I would dare to say that the truest history is filled with lies, and that your novel is filled with truths . . . that often history is a bad novel; and that the novel, as you write it, is good history. Oh painter of nature, it is you who never lie!" (Diderot, "Eloge de Richardson," in *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. J. Assezat, 20 vols. [Paris: Garnier, 1875-1877], 5:213, 221; translation my own).

10. See Lorna Martens, *The Journal Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), for a comprehensive study of the rise and continuing development of the journal novel in modern continental literature. See also *Novel and Romance: 1700-1800,* ed. Ioan Williams (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). In *The Origin of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), Michael McKeon describes the change from romance to novel as a generic occurrence grounded in and representing a breakdown of the beliefs and legal ties of the traditional aristocracy. The early realist fiction indicated by the present study, however, is both slightly later than McKeon's (who, in concluding, touches on Richardson) and extends beyond England. In addition, the discussion of the interplay between novel and romance in the following pages does not use the concept of genre as a touchstone for an argument concerning social relations, although one can easily assume that changing social relations are very much involved in what Scott describes in cognitive and perceptual terms (see below) as "real life."

11. See, for example, Saintsbury's stirring praise of *Pride and Prejudice,* in a preface written in 1894, as "the most perfect, the most characteristic, the most eminently quintessential of its author's works"—whose heroine, more than any other in fiction, he would choose "to live with and to marry" (*Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 1870-1940, Vol. 2,* ed. B. C. Southam [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987], 215, 218).

12. *Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others,* ed. R. W. Chapman, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 2:299-300.

13. See in particular Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), for a psychological interpretation of irony as Austen's means of defending against the dangers of untoward passion. Andrew Wright, in *Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), especially

24-35, and Jan Fergus, in *Jane Austen: The Didactic Novel* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1983), provide more balanced views both of Austen's use of irony and the critical response to its function in her fiction. See Lionel Trilling, "*Mansfield Park,*" in *The Opposing Self* (New York: Viking, 1955), 206-30, for the seminal interpretation of that novel as a uniquely and unequivocally moral tale requiring Austen to pit irony "against irony itself" (224). For a fuller discussion of the issue and interpretation of irony in Austen see my *Imposition of Form: Studies in Narrative Representation and Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 141-87.

14. Walter Scott, Review of *Emma, Quarterly Review* (1816), in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 59-60. Scott's description of Austen's role in the historical development of the novel is echoed in Richard Whately's important review of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in *Quarterly Review* (1821) (Southam, 1968, 87-105). In *The Rambler* No. 4 (1750) Samuel Johnson had offered a similar assessment of the turn of narrative from "heroic romance." Writing after the publication of *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones,* Dr. Johnson was probably responding more to Fielding than to Richardson when he classified new realist fiction under the contrasting category of "the comedy of romance." Still, his view that realist narratives depend upon their authors' "accurate observation of the living world" foresees Scott's later appreciation of Austen. On the influence of Dr. Johnson's periodical writings on Austen, see Frank W. Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Predecessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 10-19.

15. Southam, 1968 (note 14), 62.

16. Southam, 1968, 61-65.

17. Southam, 1968, 64-65.

18. Southam, 1968, 68.

19. Southam, 1968, 106.

20. The purpose of realism to represent truth in fiction is underscored later by William Dean Howells (*Criticism and Fiction,* 1891) in his exclusive identification of the realist novel in England with Austen: "Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material, and Jane Austen was the first and the last of the English novelists to treat material with entire truthfulness. Because she did this, she remains the most artistic of the English novelists, and alone worthy to be matched with the great Scandinavian and Slavic and Latin artists" (Southam, 1987 [note 11], 203).

21. I use these words advisedly, as "First Impressions" was Austen's original title for the novel. Whether or not Austen borrowed the term from Richardson or Radcliffe, or from Hume's philosophy, it retains a specific importance with regard to Austen's own critical view of the immediate effect produced by the novel. The connection with Hume is helpfully developed by Tony Tanner in his Introduction to *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), especially 11-13.

22. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman, 5 vols. (1967; reprint, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1932), 2:3. All following quotations will be from this edition; all further references will be given parenthetically in the text by page number.

23. The line has been suggested to derive from a phrase of Addison's (*The Spectator* no. 413) with which, however, it shares only the words "universally acknowledged." See Bradbrook (note 14), 6.

24. Critics and admirers of the novel tend to characterize its unparalleled first sentence as "ironic," without, however, ever specifying precisely what or who the object of its irony is. The point seems to be to move on from the quizzical sentence quickly, which, in a sense, is what I am arguing the sentence itself causes us to want to do. No critic, to my knowledge, has raised the immediate and pragmatic question of what the sentence actually *means,* although all, I think, would universally acknowledge it cannot mean what it says.

25. While the present analysis clearly regards the common view of the limitations of Austen's fiction as a misjudgment based retrospectively on later third-person realist fiction—in which realism becomes equated with the range of representational language rather than the interrelation of representation and speculation in experience—a persuasive refutation of that view on mimetic and generic grounds (that is, drama *vs.* epic) is offered by Donald Greene, "The Myth of Limitation," in *Jane Austen Today,* ed. Joel Weinsheimer (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1975), 142-75. Greene argues that the "subject matter" we now require of realism (listed by Greene, citing Van Ghent, as "death, sex, hunger, war, guilt, God") is indeed represented in Austen's fictions, and that their presence must be imperceptible only to the most "literal-minded critic" (145, 153). Such literal-mindedness also accounts, Greene suggests, for the widely-held critical assumption that Austen's metaphor for her medium, "two inches wide of ivory," directly indicates her own limited purposes. The phrase is helpfully reinterpreted by Greene within its original epistolary context, an ironic and charitable comparison by Austen of her own novels

with the amateur efforts of the nephew to whom she writes (149-50).

26. It should be noted that as no other of Austen's novels contains more, or more "sparkling," conversation than *Pride and Prejudice,* in no other are the chapters so very short. After the third paragraph in which, unique in Austen's fiction, quoted dialogue rather than third-person narration serves to situate the novel's context, it is as if, for the most part, each chapter were itself but a line, a terse retort in a larger conversation the novel reports.

27. Fanny Burney, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782; reprint, London: Virago Press, 1986), 908.

28. The best discussion I have encountered of the novel's use of the terms occurs in Robert B. Heilman's excellent study, "*E pluribus unum*: Parts and Whole in *Pride and Prejudice,*" in *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays,* ed. John Halperin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), 123-43. Arguing that it is "the complex structure of definitions of pride that give both form and life to the story," Heilman compares the changing contextual significance of the term with the power of fiction to make us rethink abstraction: "Art forces us out of the simple omnibus concept of daily life into the conceptual discrimination on which truth depends" (138). By contrast, Julia Kavanagh, in *English Women of Letters* (1862), offered an early allegorical reading of the terms: "Pride assumes the shape of the handsome, haughty Mr. Darcy; and Elizabeth Bennet, the lively, spirited girl, is Prejudice" (see Southam, 1968 [note 14], 187). Just as *Sense and Sensibility* has been recognized critically (by Wright [note 13], 86; Kenneth L. Moler, *Jane Austen's Art of Illusion* [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1968], 61-73; and Ian Watt, "On *Sense and Sensibility,*" in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963], 48) to afford no direct correlation of its title with the Dashwood sisters, an allegorical identification of "pride" and "prejudice" with the characters of Darcy and Elizabeth must ignore Austen's conspicuously inconsistent use of the terms.

29. See letter to J. Edward Austen, 16 December 1816, in Chapman ([*Jane Austen's Letters,*] note 12), 469. See also note 25 of this essay.

30. "But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness" (23).

31. Here I both agree and take issue with Scott's famous statement that Elizabeth "does not perceive that she has done a foolish thing until she accidentally visits a very handsome seat and grounds belonging to her admirer" (Southam, 1968 [note 14], 65). While Scott's observation cannot be considered inaccurate, it clouds the crucial action of Elizabeth's visit, which, as the present analysis argues, takes place in a part of Pemberley from which the estate is not visible, that is, in front of Darcy's picture. Reginald Farrer misses the issue of the visit to Pemberley altogether when he ascribes Elizabeth's "real feeling" for Darcy, like Emma's for Knightly, to a "subconsciously" continuous "love," asserting that because Austen "fumbled" this "psychological situation" in *Pride and Prejudice,* she left "herself open to such a monstrous misreading as Sir Walter Scott's, who believed that Elizabeth was subdued to Darcy by the sight of Pemberley" (see "Jane Austen, *ob.* July 18, 1817," *Quarterly Review* [July, 1917], in Southam, 1987, 260). Saintsbury allowed that Elizabeth "would have married Darcy just as willingly without Pemberley as with it" (Southam, 1987, 218).

32. The opposition proposed in this analysis between the unresting verbal play of the novel and the nonverbal portrait, between perpetual conceptual error and referential recognition, stands in direct contrast to Reuben Brower's conclusion that "playfulness" in the novel gives way of itself to "sound judgments" (see "Light and Bright and Sparkling: Irony and Fiction in *Pride and Prejudice,*" in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Ian Watt [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963], 70). Brower astutely views the novel as "combining . . . the poetry of wit with the dramatic structure of fiction" (62). But noting that, given the irony which pervades the novel's dialogues, "variety or forward movement in the drama will almost surely be difficult," he solves the dilemma he indicates by locating dramatic recognition in the dialogues themselves, displacing the structural narrative problem he had identified by declaratively uniting dramatic movement with wit: "The poetry of wit in *Pride and Prejudice* is completely dramatic" (64, 70). Brower's appeal to Austen's "belief that some interpretations of behavior are more reasonable than others" does little to illuminate how Elizabeth's "new view of Darcy" is achieved by way of narration except to imply, by a rather circular logic, that it is assumed by the novel to be-

gin with: "The assumption that more reasonable interpretations of conduct are attainable provides for the movement toward a decisive change in relationships at the climax of the novel" (70-71).

33. Farrer contends that, contrary to her own words, and despite the important elision here of any authorial commentary, Elizabeth had indeed always loved Darcy. He takes the second reported entreaty as nonironic proof that Elizabeth's original response was "emphatically a joke" (Southam, 1987 [note 11], 260).

Tim Fulford (essay date September 2002)

SOURCE: Fulford, Tim. "Sighing for a Soldier: Jane Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57, no. 2 (September 2002): 153-78.

[*In the following essay, Fulford discusses Austen's treatment of military themes in* Pride and Prejudice. *In Fulford's view, the novel's implicit valorization of overseas military action reveals Austen's fundamental belief in British imperial power.*]

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Susan C. Greenfield (essay date spring 2006)

SOURCE: Greenfield, Susan C. "The Absent-Minded Heroine: Or, Elizabeth Bennet Has a Thought." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 3 (spring 2006): 337-50.

[*In the following essay, Greenfield considers the philosophical implications of physical absence in Jane Austen's* Pride and Prejudice. *Greenfield posits that Elizabeth's decision to marry Darcy coincides with the loss of her intellectual autonomy.*]

What should be made of the way Elizabeth Bennet falls in love with Mr. Darcy in his absence? For even if one fondly believes that Elizabeth is attracted to Darcy from the start, it is not until midway through the novel that she begins to know that she is. In the first half of the novel, Elizabeth answers Darcy's proposal by calling him "the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."[1] It is only in the subsequent months that her "sentiments" undergo "so material a change" that she decides the exact opposite (366). And yet throughout this period of change, Darcy is rarely before her. After he proposes in March, Elizabeth does not see him again until July, when he appears while she is viewing Pemberley; the next morning Darcy waits on Elizabeth at her inn for "above half an hour" (263); Elizabeth goes to Pemberley the following day for a visit "that did not continue long" (270); and Darcy sub-

sequently visits the inn, arriving just as Elizabeth learns of Lydia's elopement and leaving almost immediately thereafter. Even by a generous estimate, Elizabeth has been with him for maybe three hours. Nevertheless, when Elizabeth next sees Darcy in September she is sure of her attachment. She is so, we are meant to understand, because Darcy's absence has ignited new thoughts—because, thanks to his body's disappearance, her own mind is enlarged.

That ***Pride and Prejudice*** is about the unreliability of physical appearances or of "First Impressions" hardly needs belaboring. That it also aligns absence with productive thought is the subject of this article. In what follows, I argue that Elizabeth is confused in Darcy's presence and thoughtful about him (and much else) in his absence, and that this contrast reflects one of the most basic tensions of early modern epistemology. Elizabeth's confusion suggests that human perception of the material world is necessarily uncertain; thus, when Elizabeth actually sees the object of Darcy she routinely misunderstands him. But her thoughtfulness suggests that the absence—whether of a physical object (like Darcy) or of certainty itself—can be intellectually fruitful and rewarding. Thus, it is precisely when Darcy is missing that Elizabeth is most mindful. Critics have long recognized Austen's interest in epistemology. Susan Morgan writes that all of Austen's novels concern the "relation between the mind and its objects," and Tony Tanner describes ***Pride and Prejudice*** as a dramatization of the "whole problem of knowledge."[2] My goal is to extend this conversation by considering the particular—and the particularly gendered—relationship between material absence and the mind both in ***Pride and Prejudice*** and in the broader philosophical and novelistic traditions to which the text alludes.[3]

To clarify, let me offer a few choice examples from Austen's novel. When Elizabeth visits Pemberley, for instance, she does so only after being repeatedly "assured of [Darcy's] absence" from it (256, 241, 246). Nevertheless he suddenly and unexpectedly appears on the lawn. The two greet each other awkwardly, after which Darcy retreats into the house and Elizabeth becomes "[in]sensible" of the surroundings:

> [A]nd, though she . . . seemed to direct her eyes to such objects as they [her aunt and uncle] pointed out, she distinguished no part of the scene. Her thoughts were all fixed on that one spot of Pemberley House, whichever it might be, where Mr. Darcy then was. She longed to know what at that moment was passing in his mind. . . . At length, however, the remarks of her companions on her absence of mind roused her.
>
> (253)

Narratively, Elizabeth's mind fills the space that Darcy exits. "Objects" fade before her "eyes" as she "fix[es]" on the immaterial and indeterminable "spot" in Pemberley House into which he has vanished. Her ignorance about Darcy's whereabouts and her "long[ing] to know what . . . was passing" in his unseen "mind" bring Elizabeth's own mind into textual relief. The less she physically "distinguish[es]" of him, the more pensive she becomes. Her "companions" remark on Elizabeth's "absence of mind" because she seems mentally detached from the present "scene." But Elizabeth might just as profitably be called *absent-minded* in that absence fuels her "thoughts."

As the novel's famous opening makes clear, most of Elizabeth's neighbors suffer from the contrasting and deluded belief that they can know the object world. The "truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" is "fixed" only in the "minds of the surrounding families." That such a man physically exists is hardly certain. For, as Austen continues, even should an eligible bachelor (like Mr. Bingley) actually enter the neighborhood, "little" can be "known" of his true "feelings or views" (3). On the one hand, a single man raises basic epistemological problems for any person who tries to perceive him.[4]

On the other hand, though, Austen insists that women—especially single ones—are particularly disadvantaged. It is, after all, because they rarely have a "good fortune" that women are far more likely to "want" rich men than the other way around.[5] Families may see a man like Mr. Bingley as the "rightful property of . . . one . . . of their daughters" (3). But "rightful property" is exactly what daughters both lack and need to become for a willing husband. Like countless novels before and after it, ***Pride and Prejudice*** is structured around women's inability to own objects and around their own objectification. And this, I argue, genders epistemological problems. However difficult it is to know the material world, ***Pride and Prejudice*** shows that it is more so for women who possess neither worldly goods nor full rights to their own bodies. For a heroine like Elizabeth Bennet, the things outside her are literally less available—and in this way more absent—than they are for a landed hero like Mr. Darcy. Such absence, the novel suggests, places greater restrictions on woman's knowledge.[6]

As consolation, Elizabeth acquires both the freedom of interpretation, and, more dubiously, the provocation to fall in love. The narrative advantage of uncertainty is that it creates the need for thought. Or, to put it oppositely, those who are certain they know things may have little cause to think about them. This helps explain why the dispossessed heroine is such a fixture of the early novel: she epitomizes the doubt that renders a character's mind complex.[7] But their dispossession also helps explain why so many heroines—including, of course, Elizabeth Bennet—are designed to think about men. As

objects that women depend upon but never possess, men are ever absent and—at least in many novels—thus likely to occupy the female mind.

In terms of philosophical history, Elizabeth's problems of knowledge are less gender-specific than they are reflective of epistemological skepticism. In the eighteenth century skepticism propelled the very emergence of epistemology as a topic and led Immanuel Kant to declare that "there always remains this scandal for philosophy and human reason in general: . . . that we have to accept merely on *faith* the existence of things outside us (even though they provide us with all the material we have for cognitions)."[8] The skeptical link between absence and uncertainty is especially important for this article. From a skeptical perspective absence does not simply refer to the removal of a previously present object (as when Darcy disappears from Elizabeth's view). It also evokes the difficulty of comprehending any object—whether present or not—when the mind's idea of that object is merely a representation and never the thing itself. In this way, objects are always absent in the mind and the mind is bound to be uncertain about them—bound to be in doubt.

Precisely because of its oft-quoted optimism about human knowledge, John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is especially revealing about absence and uncertainty. On the one hand, Locke celebrates the mind's ready reception of the physical world. The mind is a place like "white paper," "wax," an "empty cabinet," a "storehouse," or a "presence-room," that is "imprinted" or "furnished" with the "materials" of ideas "by external things."[9] On the other hand, though, the mind's materials can decompose, just as "print" on paper "wears out" like the moldered "inscriptions" on old "tombs," or a seal "will be *obscure*" when wax is too hard or too soft.[10]

Indeed, the Lockean mind is ultimately divided from external objects, however full its own "storehouse," because its ideas share the same representational failures as language. Because they refer to but never are the things they name, words have "naturally no signification."[11] So too, an idea impressed on the mind by an external body is only "a sign or representation of the thing it considers"; an idea is not the "thing" itself, which is, after all, never literally "present to the understanding." As Charles Landesman explains, "Locke thought it obvious that ideas *are* and bodies *are not* present" to the mind (emphasis added).[12] Thus, external objects are always absent in the mind, whose cumulative furnishings mark empty spots. The problem is exacerbated when an external object is itself absent from view—when, though it may exist elsewhere, an object is missing from the present landscape. Locke explains that "if I saw a . . . *man*, . . . one minute since, and am now alone, I cannot be certain, that the same man exists now. . . . [A]nd much less can I be certain of the existence of men, that I never saw" (*Essay* [*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*], 4.11.9). How different from the neighbors in ***Pride and Prejudice*** who believe universally accepted truths about unseen bachelors!

As an empiricist, convinced that all knowledge is founded on personal experience, Locke disparaged this kind of universal acknowledgment. The "*giving up our assent to the common received opinions,* either of our friends, or party; neighbourhood or country" keeps "more people" in "ignorance, or error" than any other "*measure of probability.*" But Locke also recognized that to privilege personal experience required the rejection of most general truth claims. For if "*general knowledge*" can lie "only in our own thoughts," then "our knowledge goes not beyond particulars."[13]

Nobody impugned the logic of deriving general truths from particular observations more memorably than David Hume. As Frederick Copleston puts it, Hume argued that "we are confined to the world of perceptions and enjoy no access to a world of objects existing independently of these perceptions."[14] Hume's much-noted riddle of induction specifically discredits generalizations made about the future. Even if we have persuasive evidence about a past object or event, Hume writes, it is illogical to extend "this experience . . . to future times, and to other objects" because "the course of nature may change."[15]

Hume also suggested that the mind is itself a particular object about which the mind has no certainty. In the Appendix of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) he instructs philosophers to be "reconcil'd to the principle" that "with regard to the mind, . . . *we have no notion of it, distinct from particular perceptions.*"[16] Nor can the mind escape the riddle of induction. Because the mind's perceptions may change its future is independent of its past and unpredictable. As Hume famously puts it, "the mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures." But we have neither the "most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, [nor] of the materials, of which it is compos'd."[17] In Locke, the mind is a storehouse of absent referents, but for Hume the "place" of the mind is itself absent, its "materials" too "distant" for human "notion."

As I have suggested of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** the early modern novel also associates problems of absence with problems of knowledge. In novel studies, there is a long tradition of attention to the latter. Ian Watt originally defined the genre's "formal realism" as, in part, a response to "Nominalist skepticism about language"; but Watt later adjusted "realism" to include the narrative separation of mental or "inner life" from the "outer

world" of "physical objects." Among Watt's many revisionists, Michael McKeon is especially useful here. He argues that the novel registers an "epistemological crisis . . . in attitudes toward how to tell the truth in narrative." The same crisis, McKeon adds, creates the early modern mind: "Henceforth . . . knowing something will consist in having it 'in mind,' and knowing it well will require that we refine the capacity of our ideas for the accurate, inner representation of external objects."[18]

I would stress that novel protagonists, both male and female, are routinely incapable of such refinement. Consider, for instance, the famous moment when Robinson Crusoe is "exceedingly surprized" to see the "print of a man's naked foot on the shore" of his Caribbean island. Though the print leaves an indelible "impression" in the sand, it is only a sign of a now absent object. The more Crusoe thinks about the print's missing referent the less he grasps the material world. Crusoe returns to his fortification "not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on"; he confounds absence and presence, "mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man"; and his ideas so supersede reality that he cannot begin to "describe [in] how many various shapes affrighted imagination represented things to me."[19]

Whereas Crusoe suffers from his uncertainty about an absent object, a half century later Tristram Shandy and his uncle Toby suffer when the absence of an object appears too certain. For they suffer when those around them should—but do not—doubt that they have been either partially or fully castrated. Thus the wide-ranging gossip about Toby's wounded groin overpowers Tristram's claim that "nothing was ever better" than "my uncle['s] . . . fitness for the marriage state" (596-7). Similarly, when the sash crashes as little Tristram urinates out the window, Susannah screams that "[n]othing is left" (369). Tristram says the accident was "nothing," but "all the world" believes the worst (419). As his puns suggest, for Tristram even nothing is indeterminable and proves nothing about itself.

At least Crusoe and Tristram own property, which—though no cure for the absence of objects in the mind—offers some modicum of power in the object world. The consolation is clear when Crusoe "march[es]" around the island with a "secret kind of pleasure . . . to think that this was all my own" (113-4). The footprint interrupts this security, but soon enough Friday arrives and reestablishes Crusoe's mastery by setting Crusoe's "foot upon his head."[20] Even Tristram—who fears for his own head—is (thanks to the untimely death of his older brother) "heir-apparent to the Shandy" (332) family. Uncle Toby is not so lucky. As a younger son, he is "born to nothing" (279), his wounded groin and miniature fortifications fitting symbols of male landlessness.

Female characters generally have it worse because, in addition to being "born to nothing," they can be owned by men. For the heroine who both lacks—and is treated as—property, absence is a constitutive condition and the uncertainty accompanying it can be intense. Think of Clarissa Harlowe. She inherits but never commands her grandfather's estate, and first her family and then Lovelace seek possession of her body. The crucial scene where Lovelace abducts her from her father's garden indicates the epistemological hazard of such deficiency. Here, Lovelace is able to seize Clarissa and (as if mimicking her landlessness) to lift her off the land by confusing her about external objects. Though Clarissa's family is absent, Lovelace convinces her otherwise: "Now behind me, now before me, now on this side, now on that, turned I my affrighted face . . . expecting a furious brother here, armed servants there, an enraged sister screaming and a father armed with terror in his countenance." Lacking both knowledge about materiality and material control, Clarissa doubly loses her ground. "I ran," she says, "yet knew not that I ran; my fears at the same time that they took all power of thinking from me adding wings to my feet."[21]

In one sense, the scene closely recalls Crusoe's uncertainty when he ran from the footprint, "not feeling . . . the ground I went on," and "fancying every stump at a distance to be a man" (162). But once he acquires Friday as well as other subjects and slaughters the natives, Crusoe regains his "undoubted right of dominion" (240-1) on the island. The same can never be true for Clarissa after her flight. Rather, her right of dominion contracts as Lovelace's expands, culminating in the rape that completes her dispossession. It is a testament to the uncertainty from which it descends that the rape is famously unrepresented in the novel. As if epitomizing the failures of perception that led Clarissa to the moment, the rape simply is not there.

Elizabeth Bennet also runs—or nearly does, and the oft-quoted scene where this occurs provides a fit return to ***Pride and Prejudice.*** When Jane is sick at Netherfield and their father cannot spare the carriage, Elizabeth walks there "alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ancles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise" (32). Though she flees no danger (and, in fact, happily glows despite Jane's illness) Elizabeth resembles both Crusoe and Clarissa in barely touching down. Her greater affinity, however, is with the latter. Elizabeth makes enough contact with the ground to have "weary ancles" and "dirty stockings." But this is hardly the kind of impact Crusoe has when he overcomes the footprint by claiming "dominion" of the island. Rather than marking the land she cannot own, Elizabeth, like Clarissa, shares the mark (and the mud)

of valuable property. No wonder Darcy is so smitten when she enters Bingley's home.

From its opening chapter, ***Pride and Prejudice*** coordinates women's lack of property with their lack of knowledge, as if one absence informs the other. Mr. Bingley's arrival in the neighborhood is symptomatic. Since men control both their own—and their female relatives'—bodily movements, the Bennet women can meet Mr. Bingley only if Mr. Bennet visits first and arranges their introduction.[22] That Mr. Bennet visits without telling them and teases his wife by pretending otherwise suggests the magnitude of women's uncertainty. However little Mr. Bennet knows about this particular "single man in possession of a good fortune," Mrs. Bennet is physically bound to know less.

Elizabeth's misunderstanding of Darcy repeats the basic paradigm. Though both she and Darcy initially misperceive and dislike each other, Darcy quickly knows better. A few pages after Elizabeth hears him declare her "not handsome enough to tempt *me*" (12), Darcy "discover[s]" that her "uncommonly intelligent" eyes, her "light and pleasing" figure, and her "easy playfulness" are indeed tempting. "Wish[ing] to know more of her"—and using her outer appearance as his gauge—Darcy begins to discern her inner character. While Elizabeth remains "perfectly unaware" of his attraction and continues to misperceive him, he accurately appraises her personal worth (23-4).

And yet such accuracy is of virtually no narrative interest, for the mind the novel clearly prefers is the unknowing one. The only time Austen uses free indirect discourse to recount Darcy's perspective, for instance, is when he is confused. Thus, we learn that he is "mortif[ied]" to recognize the beauty of Elizabeth's eyes and that her walk to Netherfield leaves him torn between attraction and "doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so far alone" (23, 33). But as soon as Darcy falls entirely in love—as soon as what he perceives of Elizabeth's body begins to correspond with her delightful character—all passages from his consciousness vanish, as if only misperception qualifies for narrative thought.

Elizabeth, of course, perfectly meets this skeptical standard, and she does so, in part, because she is misled by language. This is hardly surprising given that news, gossip, secrets, disagreements, misunderstandings, and lies saturate her social world. Indeed the detachment of language and meaning is so pervasive that Mr. Collins can ridiculously claim to be "run away with by my feelings" when proposing to Elizabeth and then can dismiss her sincere rejection of him as "merely words of course" (105, 108). As with other epistemological problems, however, women are particularly susceptible to linguistic imprecision. It is telling, for instance, that Elizabeth first emerges as the novel's heroine only after overhearing Darcy's insult. Though for Darcy the comment ultimately has no signification, as Locke would say, Elizabeth long believes it an accurate account of his view. Along with other female characters, she is also easy prey for lies. Thus, while Mrs. Bennet is deceived by her husband and Jane suffers from false reports about Bingley's indifference, Elizabeth is readily seduced by Wickham's distortion of Darcy's history, much like Georgiana Darcy and Lydia are seduced by Wickham's lies about loving them. Elizabeth's gravest mistakes occur when she takes language too literally—when she assumes words are really true.

At other times, though, Elizabeth not only recognizes but also makes a virtue of language's misdirection. She may overestimate Darcy's insult, but she also repeats the story with such incongruously "great spirit" that—publicly at least—Darcy's words become "ridiculous." Indeed, it is her "deligh[t]" in the "ridiculous" that makes Elizabeth so delightful (12). Laughing "whenever [she] can" at "[f]ollies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies" (57), she at least finds "absurdities" amusing (152). Austen's celebrated irony takes linguistic advantage of such moments. In that it concerns the divorce between language and reality, irony invokes—but also exploits—the skeptical difficulty of representing the external world. Words are ironic when their patent nonsense, ridiculousness, or inconsistencies become significant, when the gap between what is said and what is real is where meaning itself inheres. To enjoy irony, as Elizabeth often does, is to make comic sense of the absence of literal truth. Or, to put it another way, the absence in irony leads the capable mind to new thought.[23]

Elizabeth becomes most thoughtful in the novel's second half when she is faced not simply with the inevitable and general absence of literalism, but also with the particular and literal absence of Darcy. Here the peculiar benefits of uncertainty become especially apparent. Could Elizabeth simply grasp Darcy as an external object she would have little need to think about him. Her detachment from Darcy is advantageous in alerting her to her lack of knowledge, which ironically elevates her mind by forcing it to work.

The elevation begins after Elizabeth rejects Darcy's first proposal and he disappears. Having routinely misunderstood him in his presence, Elizabeth is now left with only signs—first Darcy's letter, then his Pemberley estate, and finally, her aunt's second-hand account of his help with Lydia. As she interprets one piece of evidence and then another, Elizabeth is almost always alone. Her isolation suggests both the general subjectivity of any interpretive act and Elizabeth's particular and growing capacity to resist what Locke calls the "ignorance, or error" of "*common received opinions*" (which,

in this case, involves the neighborhood's disdain for Darcy and admiration of Wickham).[24]

That the process reflects both her epistemological limits and her mental growth becomes clear when she reads Darcy's letter and experiences a "contrariety of emotion" and "perturbed state of mind" (204, 205). As when she visited Jane at Netherfield, Elizabeth walks restlessly as she reads. But whereas the earlier scene described her feet jumping over stiles and puddles—here it is her "thoughts that could rest on nothing" (205). The object world recedes as Elizabeth reads and rereads "every line" of Darcy's account of Wickham's perfidy, her own "thoughts" becoming a "line" to be reread and reinterpreted (205, 208).[25] Hume describes a mental theater where perceptions "pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations."[26] Similarly, Elizabeth "see[s] [Wickham] instantly before her," but "[h]ow differently did everything now appear." His solicitude now cast as impropriety, Elizabeth watches as "[e]very lingering struggle in his favour grew fainter and fainter" (206, 207).

In recognizing the "variety" (209) and instability of thought, Elizabeth makes her most extraordinary and "humiliating" discovery. When she famously declares "Till this moment I never knew myself" (208), her mind becomes its own uncertain object—uncertain because it can change without warning and uncertain because it can be unknown. Arguing that the mind's perception of itself is as dubious and disconnected as any other perception, Hume insists "*we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions*" (*Treatise* [*A Treatise of Human Nature*], 677). Elizabeth Bennet may be more optimistic (she never knew herself but now she thinks she does). Nevertheless, she learns that her own thoughts can be as deceptive and inaccessible as Wickham and Darcy, that, like the external reality they so easily misinterpret, thoughts can misread themselves. Thus, Elizabeth concludes that although she had "prided" herself on her "discernment" of Darcy, she was actually so "offended by" his "neglect" that she drove "reason away." She now sees herself as "blind, partial, prejudiced, [and] absurd" because what she thought she was thinking was not what she really thought—or at least not entirely (208). If such a formulation prefigures the Freudian unconscious it does so because Austen makes the mind ironic. As with the linguistic absurdities Elizabeth so enjoys, there is a difference between what the mind articulates and what it really means.[27]

When, a few months later, Elizabeth agrees to visit Pemberley in Darcy's absence, she arrives knowing enough of her own "ignorance" (208) to be free for new perceptions. Her notorious attraction to Darcy's "large, handsome" and clearly phallic property ("standing well on rising ground" [245]) suggests that even in a non-referential world his material power is reasonably certain. But Elizabeth's ability to know his character from it is not. Still, Pemberley does have an advantage all of Elizabeth's previous information lacked. Until now she has depended either on direct perceptions of Darcy or on testimonies about him (supplied by Wickham, her neighbors, and Darcy in his letter). With its varied grounds, "trees," "rooms," "furniture," and, of course, portraits, Pemberley is the first space to provide objects that represent him in his absence (246). Together they constitute what Ian Hacking would call "the evidence provided by *things*"—the distinctly modern concept at the heart of probability theory.[28]

Elizabeth also receives new testimony, this time from Darcy's housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, who has "known him ever since he was four years old." Convinced that she speaks "the truth, and what every body will say that knows him," Mrs. Reynolds remembers Darcy as "the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted, boy in the world." Now, she claims, he is "the best landlord, and the best master," and the best brother "that ever lived." In another context Elizabeth might, like her uncle Mr. Gardiner, be "highly amused" by this "excessive"—arguably even ridiculous—praise; but here (as she once did with Wickham) Elizabeth listens trustingly (248-50).

Earlier, Elizabeth had seen miniatures of both Wickham and Darcy. Now she ascends to the gallery where she sees the "finer, larger picture" (247) of only Darcy (perhaps painted by the artist to whom Mrs. Reynolds's name alludes).[29] The servant's words repeat almost verbatim in her stream of consciousness: "As a brother, a landlord, a master, [Elizabeth] considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship!" The experience is both empirical and subjective. Mrs. Reynolds knows her master but she is biased; the portrait, in which Elizabeth sees "a striking resemblance of Mr. Darcy," is more than five years old (250, 200).

Ultimately, the material reality—both of the portrait and of its absent referent—proves less important than Elizabeth's passing thoughts. "There was certainly at this moment, in [her] mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original, than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance." Replacing the "original" Darcy with her own idea of him, Elizabeth Bennet makes a man. She thinks of Darcy's "regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before," and, as if *she* were the painter, "soften[s] its impropriety of expression" (250-1). That such command depends on Darcy's absence is made clear when Elizabeth subsequently leaves the house and meets him on the lawn. Unlike with her inspection of the portrait, now she "scarcely

dared lift her eyes to his face" (251). The detachment typifies Elizabeth's material deficiency in Darcy's presence. Darcy often looks at her; she rarely does the same.[30]

The next night Elizabeth's "thoughts were at Pemberley," and she lies "awake two whole hours, endeavouring" to decipher her feelings for Darcy (265). Her confusion is resolved once she becomes convinced she cannot have him. Lydia elopes with Wickham, Darcy is present when Elizabeth hears the news, and "never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be in vain" (278). "When it was no longer likely they should meet" (311), her love for Darcy is the one thing Elizabeth knows. In ***Pride and Prejudice*** absence makes the heart grow fonder in particularly gendered terms.[31] Darcy first falls in love with Elizabeth when watching her body. But for Elizabeth, who cannot appraise objects as Darcy does, male absence is a prerequisite for love. As if confirming the paradigm, Darcy responds to Lydia's elopement by telling Elizabeth "I am afraid you have long been desiring my absence" (278). Elizabeth may not literally desire Darcy's absence at this moment (though at others she does [268]), but she must think about his absence to desire him. For a woman like Elizabeth (and also Jane) to love is to fixate on a missing man; to love is the consummation of missing that man.

Incidentally, other female characters develop alternative approaches to male absence. After marrying Mr. Collins, for instance, Charlotte wisely cultivates his absence by choosing an unattractive room as her parlor so as to discourage his attendance (168). Lydia, on the other hand, depends upon male presence. Whereas Elizabeth philosophically accepts her apparent loss of Darcy, Lydia can so little tolerate the idea of the officers leaving the neighborhood that she literally follows them to Brighton, from where she follows Wickham to London.

In one extraordinary passage preceding Lydia's departure for Brighton, there is a full paragraph rendered from her mind:

> She saw with the creative eye of fancy, the streets of that gay bathing place covered with officers. She saw herself the object of attention, to tens and to scores of them at present unknown. She saw all the glories of the camp; its tents stretched forth in beauteous uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to complete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at least six officers at once.
>
> (232)

The vivid physical detail (the camp "dazzling with scarlet," tents "stretched forth in beauteous . . . lines," crowds of the "young and the gay") is unusual for Austen and speaks to the material basis of Lydia's near ruin. Lydia's mistake is to imagine that her visions can become "realities" (232). In a world where women are "object[s]," Lydia truly believes that—like the master of a harem—she will sit "beneath a tent," and control "scores" of "unknown" men.[32]

Not only does Elizabeth have no such illusions, but it is also finally thanks to Lydia's pursuit of Wickham and to her own continued separation from Darcy that she completes the mental work of loving him. For Elizabeth secures her final evidence of Darcy's virtue when she learns about his success in arranging Lydia's marriage.[33] As earlier, the information arrives in the form of a testimonial letter—now from Mrs. Gardiner, who has herself only second-hand access to the details of Darcy's rescue. That report is enough for Elizabeth who, upon reading the letter, overcomes her "vague and unsettled . . . uncertainty" about Darcy and concludes that what had seemed "an exertion of goodness [in him] too great to be probable" had "proved" to the "greatest extent to be true!" (326).

But even this truth about Darcy's "goodness" raises epistemological problems—this time about continuity and change. For Hume, past experience has no bearing on the future for the "course of nature may change" (*Enquiry* [*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*], 4.2.21). Similarly, we might ask whether Darcy's heroism marks the emergence of his fixed and essential goodness (which Elizabeth simply needed to discover) or whether time has altered him. Mrs. Reynolds would claim the former. "I have always observed, that they who are good-natured when children, are good-natured, when they grow up; and he was always the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted, boy in the world" (249). Yet Darcy later confesses to Elizabeth:

> I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my temper. . . . I was spoilt by my parents, . . . allowed, encouraged . . . to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world.
>
> (369)

For Mrs. Reynolds, Darcy has the same, coherent good-nature that he demonstrated when "four years old" (248). But Darcy insists that he was selfish "from eight to eight and twenty" and that Elizabeth has reformed him: "such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth!" (369).[34] Perhaps Mrs. Reynolds and Darcy are both right. Darcy may have always had some goodness and still have needed to improve. And Mrs. Reynolds's account of her master's history (in his "family circle") may be just as true for her as Darcy's account is true for him. What their conflicting percep-

tions preclude, however, is the possibility of reaching an absolute truth about Darcy (or indeed anyone) at any time—past, present or future.

Elizabeth's romantic victory is to decide that such truth is irrelevant when one can be absent-minded. Affirming what Susan Morgan calls Austen's "optimistic skepticism," the heroine finally assumes that it is not the mind's certainty about either the external world or internal thoughts that matters.[35] Happiness is born in imaginative selection. Thus, at the conclusion of the novel, when she and Darcy disagree about the spirit in which he wrote his letter, Elizabeth tells him to "[t]hink no more of the letter. . . . You must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure" (368-9). By the end of the nineteenth century, Freud will describe forgetting as a form of repression and neurosis. But for Elizabeth, to forget is to relish uncertainty and incompleteness and to enjoy mental health.[36]

To put it another way, Elizabeth achieves the "pleasure" of loving Darcy by ridding her mind of certain memories—she achieves it via absence. Darcy rejects Elizabeth's forgetfulness, telling her "with *me*, it is not so." But then again, as a man Darcy has never much needed to console himself for—or with—absence. He declares that the "contentment arising" for Elizabeth from her retrospections "is not of philosophy, but what is much better, of ignorance" (369). And perhaps he has a point. For if, as I have argued, Elizabeth's experience of absence generates her intellectual triumph—if the dispossessed heroine epitomizes the uncertainty that renders a protagonist's mind complex—then her final "pleasure" in obliterating memories is a kind of defeat.[37] Elizabeth enlarged her mind in Darcy's absence. Now that she is again in his presence, she willfully absents her own thoughts. Though they are "merely words" (108), of course, what for Darcy requires "ignorance" and for Elizabeth "philosophy" we might just as well call "wifehood."

Notes

1. Jane Austen, *The Novels of Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 5 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966-9), 2: 193. Hereafter *Pride and Prejudice* is cited parenthetically in the text.

2. Susan Morgan, *In The Meantime: Character and Perception in Jane Austen's Fiction* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 4. Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 105. For specific discussions of epistemological uncertainty in *Pride and Prejudice* see Martha Satz, "An Epistemological Understanding of *Pride and Prejudice*: Humility and Objectivity," in *Jane Austen: New Perspectives*, ed. Janet Todd (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983), 171-86; Tara Ghoshal Wallace, *Jane Austen and Narrative Authority* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 45-58; and Felicia Bonaparte, "Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*," *Studies in the Novel* 37 (2005): 141-61. On Austen's response to the politically progressive implications of—and the stigma attached to—the word "philosophy" in the wake of the French Revolution see Claudia L. Johnson's superb *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 10-14, 78.

3. I have written elsewhere about absence and the creation of the unconscious in Austen's *Emma*. See my *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance, Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2002), 145-68. I make a related argument about absence and the mind in "Money or Mind? *Cecilia*, the Novel, and the Real Madness of Selfhood," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 33 (2004): 49-70.

4. The syntax suggests that even the single man may not know his own "feelings or views." For excellent discussions of the epistemological problems reflected in the opening lines see Tanner, *Jane Austen*, 110-11 and Claudia Brodsky Lacour, "Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Hegel's 'Truth in Art': Concept, Reference, History," *ELH* 59 (1992): 607-10.

5. Lady Catherine De Bourgh and her daughter are unusual in having independent fortunes.

6. Mary Wollstonecraft specifically uses the term "absence of mind" to describe women's ignorance in a world that commodifies their bodies and lets their "mind[s] . . . lie fallow"; *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York and London: Norton, 1988), 192.

7. On the popularity of "dispossession in the [eighteenth-century] rhetoric of authorship"—especially of female authorship—see Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1994), xxi. On how eighteenth-century epistemological problems influenced the development of the romantic mind see M. H. Abrams *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), 57-69; and James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 3-10.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason: Unified Edition,* trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1996), Bxl, note. On how skepticism influenced the emergence of epistemology see Charles Landesman, *Skepticism: The Central Issues* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 70. Also see David Bates, "Idols and Insight: An Enlightenment Topography of Knowledge," *Representations* 73 (2001): 17. Though space prohibits its elaboration, eighteenth-century skepticism anticipates both Marxist and Freudian accounts of human detachment from external objects. See, for instance, Richard Terdiman on the "*de*-valorization of the object in a world [of mass production] in which objects are counted by the trillions" and on "the power of psychical presentations . . . to displace the reality of the material world"; *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), 52, 258.

9. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Roger Woolhouse (London: Penguin, 1997), 1.2.15, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.10.2. Locke suggests that certain "simple ideas" or sensory impressions can be fully and entirely known; see, for instance, 2.2.25. For more on Locke's distinction between "simple" and "complex ideas" see Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy,* 9 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 5:79-107.

10. Locke, *Essay* [*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*], 2.10.5 and 2.29.3. Also see Locke's famous image of the mind as a dark closet (2.11.17). Laurence Sterne offers a hilarious parody of Locke's wax image in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,* ed. Graham Petrie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 107-8.

11. Locke, *Essay,* 3.9.5. Michel Foucault offers one of the best-known accounts of the early modern crisis in representation that separated things and words; see *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 34-44.

12. Locke, *Essay,* 4.21.4; Landesman, *Skepticism,* 24. As Locke writes elsewhere in the *Essay,* "[t]here is nothing like our ideas, existing in the bodies themselves" (2.8.15).

13. Locke, *Essay,* 4.20.17, 4.6.13, and 4.6.16; also see 4.15.6. On probability in Locke see Bates, "Idols and Insight," 14. On how the problem of generalizing from particulars informed the early modern emergence of probability theory see Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction and Statistical Inference* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975). On how the same problem informed the "history of the modern fact" see Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998).

14. Copleston, *History of Philosophy,* 293; also see 291-9. My reading of Hume is much influenced by Copleston; Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability*; Landesman, *Skepticism*; and Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact.*

15. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 4.2.16, 4.2.21; for Hume's famous comments on whether or not the sun will rise see 4.1.2.

16. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. Ernest C. Mossner (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 677.

17. Hume, *Treatise* [*A Treatise of Human Nature*], 301.

18. On formal realism as a response to "Nominalist skepticism about language" see Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1957), 27-30. Watt describes realism in more skeptical terms in "Flat-Footed and Fly-Blown: The Realities of Realism," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (2000): 157-58. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), 20, 83. Georg Lukács's work remains one of the most lyrical and valuable accounts of the novel's skepticism about human knowledge: "the objectivity of the novel is the mature man's knowledge that meaning can never quite penetrate reality"; *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature,* trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 88; also see 60-1, 70-1, 75. Catherine Gallagher describes the novel as an "alternative" to referential truth telling (*Nobody's Story,* xvi).

19. Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,* ed. Angus Ross (New York: Penguin, 1983), 162. John Richetti writes that the footprint makes "Crusoe's interior life" appear "to him as mysterious and chaotic as its external provocations"; *The English Novel in History, 1700-1780* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 68.

20. Friday puts Crusoe's foot on his head twice (*Robinson Crusoe,* 207, 209).

21. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady,* ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 380.

22. Later, Charlotte Lucas says that because Jane cannot control how often or under what circumstances Bingley will see her she must "make the most of every half hour in which she can command his attention" (22).

23. Marvin Mudrick's discussion of Austen's use—and Elizabeth's appreciation—of irony remains valuable; *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), 1-4, 94-5, 120-22.

24. Locke, *Essay,* 4.20.17.

25. I am indebted to Jennifer Luongo for some of these observations about Elizabeth's reading.

26. Hume, *Treatise,* 301. For a fuller discussion of Hume's relevance for Austen see Tanner, *Jane Austen,* 108-10, 139-40.

27. Hume arguably anticipates the Freudian unconscious, but Locke explicitly states that it is "hard to conceive, that anything should think, and not be conscious of it" (*Essay,* 2.1.11; also see 2.1.19).

28. Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability,* 32.

29. On the name's "jokey allusion to Sir Joshua Reynolds" see Vivien Jones, ed., *Pride and Prejudice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 332n.

30. See, for instance, 51, 263, 335, 366.

31. In *Persuasion,* Anne Elliot memorably tells Captain Harville "[a]ll the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone"; *The Novels of Jane Austen, Persuasion,* 5: 235.

32. Lydia generally sees men as commodities. When she visits Meryton, her "eyes" wander "in quest" either of the "officers" or of a "very smart bonnet . . . or a really new muslin in a shop window" (72).

33. In keeping with his privileged access to knowledge and material power, only Darcy knows where to find Wickham and he alone satisfies Wickham's financial demands. Darcy also blames himself that "Wickham's worthlessness had not been . . . well known" (321).

34. In an oft-quoted passage Elizabeth anticipates her own transformation when she says that people "alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever" (43). The uncertainty about whether Elizabeth has uncovered the "real" Darcy or whether he has changed is reflected in critical discussions; for instance, Tanner argues that *Pride and Prejudice* is concerned with "[j]ust what constitutes a person's 'real character'" (*Jane Austen,* 115), whereas Johnson emphasizes the progressive implications of Darcy's improvement (*Jane Austen,* 83-4).

35. Morgan, *In the Meantime,* 10; similarly, Bonaparte argues that "Austen seeks an answer not beyond but within . . . skepticism" by recognizing that "knowledge and understanding are partial, imperfect, and indistinct" ("Conjecturing Possibilities," 152).

36. In his early work on hysteria, co-authored with Josef Breuer, Freud writes that "*[h]ysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*" that they are "genuinely unable to recollect"; "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication" [1893], in *Studies on Hysteria,* ed. Irvin D. Yalom, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 7, 3; for the first use of "repressed" in the psychoanalytic sense see 10. For other accounts of memory in *Pride and Prejudice* see Nicholas Dames, who argues that *Pride and Prejudice* reflects a "modern nostalgic consciousness . . . in which the old is overthrown"; "Austen's Nostalgics," *Representations* 73 (2001): 129; Margaret Anne Doody suggests that the novel shows that "[w]ithout some intelligent check on memory, neither freedom nor love is possible"; "'A Good Memory is Unpardonable': Self, Love, and the Irrational Irritation of Memory," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14 (2001): 94.

37. Forgetting is clearly a problem in earlier passages. The Bingley sisters' "memories," for instance, are "more deeply impressed" with the respectability of their family than with the "circumstance . . . that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade" (15). Also, after receiving Darcy's letter, Elizabeth realizes how much she has "endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook" of the "impropriety of her father's behavior as a husband" (236).

Michael J. Stasio and Kathryn Duncan (essay date summer 2007)

SOURCE: Stasio, Michael J., and Kathryn Duncan. "An Evolutionary Approach to Jane Austen: Prehistoric Preferences in *Pride and Prejudice*." *Studies in the Novel* 39, no. 2 (summer 2007): 133-46.

[*In the following essay, Stasio and Duncan assess representations of marriage and gender in* Pride and Prejudice.]

While not all scholars of the period agree, some have observed a paradigm shift regarding marriage and gender during the eighteenth century. Thomas Laqueur co-

gently argues that the two-sex model came into being during this time period, and Lawrence Stone traces the dominance of companionate marriage to the eighteenth century. Anthony Fletcher demonstrates the shift from a medically and theologically based subordination of women to a more secular ideology, while Susan Kingsley Kent claims that notions of inherent gender differences arose out of natural rights ideology. She writes that by the end of the century, women were understood to be passionless and distinct from men biologically. Certainly the most popular and perhaps most important genre of the period, the novel, brings these issues to the forefront with its tendency to focus on mate choice. This near obsession with mate selection and the above paradigm shifts indicate a culture that valued and emphasized companionate marriage both in fact and fiction. In life and print, therefore, we find mating behavior best explained by the genetically influenced method of mate selection that humans adopted in the Pleistocene era, the subject of evolutionary psychology. The rise of the novel, then, represents an expression not only of new ideologies of gender and marriage but also of universal desire explained by evolutionary psychology; nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the most canonical of domestic novels, Jane Austen's ***Pride and Prejudice.***

Unlike neuropsychology or clinical psychology, evolutionary psychology is not a specialized subfield in psychology; rather it represents the viewpoint that functional aspects of the mind such as consciousness and emotion have evolved by natural selection, that is, in a way that best insures reproductive success. Evolutionary theorists attempt to explain why such adaptations may have evolved. For example, starting with D. M. Buss in 1989, cross-cultural research consistently has shown that women value economic resources in a potential mate more than men do. The evolutionary perspective thus seeks to explain why such a gender difference in mate preferences would have evolved.

The key element in evolutionary psychology—the assertion that human sexual mechanisms exist because of evolution by natural selection—is rooted in Charles Darwin's 1871 theory of sexual selection. Sexual selection was proposed as a type of natural selection in which traits that were genetically passed on were those that offered the organism an amount of reproductive advantage that outweighed the potential costs of having the trait. One often cited example of a trait shaped through sexual selection is a peacock's tail. The peacock's long tail and colorful plumage make the bird more noticeable to predators and slow him down when trying to escape threat. However, the characteristics of the tail do solve a very important ecological problem: attracting mates. Thus, while peacocks with very colorful tails will be more vulnerable to predators than birds with less colorful plumage, they will also find mates more frequently and produce more offspring, which is the goal in evolution: passing one's genes on to the next generation. The fact that peahens are unadorned compared to peacocks supports the notion that sexual selection acts upon the sexes unequally.

What variable may explain how sexual selection acts differentially upon the sexes? R. Trivers argues that the amount of parental investment each sex devotes to an individual offspring and the potential cost of this investment to the parent and other offspring are the key variables in sexual selection in all species. Parental investment is defined as any behavior that increases the likelihood that an individual offspring will survive—and thus reproduce. In humans, as in other mammals, women and men differ in the minimum amounts of parental investment that they must provide for their offspring. Parental investment is necessarily higher for women than for men since women's parental investment involves gestation and lactation at the very least. As the more investing sex, women are necessarily more selective in choosing a mate. While many men also invest in their offspring, their required minimum investment can be only a fraction of that for women. Therefore, women should show mate selection preferences that increase their reproductive success, such as preferences for men who are willing and able to invest economic resources (and ideally emotional commitment). Men also should show mate selection preferences that lead to reproductive success, such as preferences for access to large numbers of fertile women. Differences exist between long-term and short-term mating strategies, but since Austen is interested in the lifelong commitment of marriage, that is our emphasis as well.

A major evolutionary theory of mate selection is Sexual Strategies Theory, proposed by Buss and D. P. Schmitt in 1993 and later elaborated upon by Buss in 1998. A main tenet of this theory holds that mating is strategic, directed toward the goal of successful survival of offspring whether people are conscious of this or not, and that mate preferences exist as solutions to reproductive problems faced by our human ancestors. For example, it would have been reproductively advantageous for ancestral women and men to recognize and avoid mating with people who suffered from diseases or pathogens. Sexual Strategies Theory suggests that those ancestors with evolved preferences or desires for health cues in a mate—such as clear eyes and skin signaling the absence of disease—were more likely to find healthy mates and produce offspring who would survive. According to the sexy son hypothesis, our ancestors also adopted preferences for attractive partners in order to produce more attractive offspring who would be at a reproductive advantage when mating in the future.

Sexual selection has two processes: intrasexual (same-sex) competition and mate choice. When members of the same sex compete with each other, the "victors" are

said to increase their preferential access to mates and thus increase the likelihood that their genes will survive. Whatever qualities were important in securing victory in this competition would be selected by evolution; for example, athletic ability, fierce displays of aggression, social skills, or biting humor may deter a potential rival depending on the environment. Another important evolutionary point holds that the more investing sex (women) chooses more selectively while the less investing sex (men) engages in more intrasexual competition. However, if there is an absence of men (or acceptable men), then women will engage in more intrasexual competition. As Anne Campbell has explored, it is also possible that women engage in less obvious intrasexual competition since female strategies are less aggressive than male strategies.

A number of counter-arguments to any analysis involving evolutionary psychology exist, the first being the social construction of ideology. However, laws and ideologies support evolutionary psychology along with other dominant social needs so that social construction and biology work in concert, not opposition. As Brian Boyd explains, "That our minds reflect evolution's design does not mean that all is nature and not nurture, that all is heredity and not environment. In any sophisticated biological thinking these oppositions have been thoroughly discredited" (4). Marriage, for instance, serves the dictates of evolutionary psychology, patriarchy, and the economy, to name a few ideological and biological determinants (see Buss [*Evolutionary Psychology*] 135). Certainly, the actions of the characters in ***Pride and Prejudice*** can be explained via social concerns and the laws of Austen's era, but these laws and ideology partially owe their being to the inherent principles of evolutionary psychology. In fact, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides's influential work asserts that psychology is the middle link between biology and culture. Their view is that biology has shaped our evolved psychological mechanisms and that this psychology has in turn shaped our culture given the available environmental cues. The authors propose three main assumptions about evolutionary psychology. First, universal human nature originates primarily in our evolved psychological mechanisms (e.g., desire for a healthy partner) and not in cultural expressions of behavior. Second, these psychological mechanisms are adaptations designed by natural selection. Finally, the evolved psychology of the mind reflects adaptations to life experienced by our hunter-gatherer ancestors during the Pleistocene period dating from about two million years ago (5). We mainly explore the authors' first premise in this work. We accept the notion of evolved psychological mechanisms and propose that Austen's era is a particularly useful time period in which to examine psychological mechanisms related to sexuality as well as their cultural expression.[1]

Another objection is that evolutionary psychology can appear as a kind of essentialism, boiling people—or literary characters—down to biological determinism. In fact, though, evolutionary psychology is less deterministic than Freud's theories. Evolutionary psychology consists of preparedness; humans are prepared to make choices, though not at the conscious level, that best ensure that they will reproduce successfully. However, there is still the issue of choice; our evolved psychological dispositions are the primary shapers of culture, but individual choice is inherent in this process. Natural selection would not have designed a human cerebral cortex capable of higher cognitive functions such as thinking and decision-making unless these adaptations conferred reproductive advantages. Therefore, the process by which evolved dispositions create culture must necessarily involve choices among available environmental cues. As Tooby and Cosmides note, the observation that environmental contexts differ around the world helps to explain between-group variability in culture: while preferences for facial symmetry (as a cue to good health) appear to be universally consistent, other preferences thought to be universal may in fact show cultural variation. For example, most data show that men prefer women with a low waist-to-hip ratio (as a cue to reproduction), but one exception is the Hadza, an indigenous group of hunter-gatherers in Tanzania, who prefer women with higher waist-to-hip ratios (Marlow and Wetsman ["How Universal Are Preferences for Female Waist-to-Hip Ratios"] 219). Buss argues that since 1930, women and men have come to value physical attractiveness to a greater degree because attractive models are frequently depicted across a wide range of media (*Evolutionary* [*Evolutionary Psychology*] 148). This is consistent with our argument that evolved psychological mechanisms can shape culture and still produce between-group differences.

In *Evolution and Literary Theory,* Joseph Carroll believes resistance to biologically based approaches to literature often originates from a politically "intellectual prejudice" (27). Carroll accuses poststructuralists of ignoring biology and "reality" out of a political desire to affect social change. In other words, the admission that differences result from biology, not social construction, lays the groundwork for continued discrimination based on such differences. Carroll sees poststructuralism and evolutionary psychology as irreconcilable, arguing in *Literary Darwinism,* for example, against any feminist interpretation of Austen because such a reading is colored by postmodern, radical bias.[2] We disagree. Carroll is correct in saying that

> [o]ften, but not always, they [authors] align themselves with some particular set of species-typical norms, under the rubric of "human nature," and they use these norms as a means of adopting a critical perspective on the conventions of their own cultures. By appealing to elemental dispositions that answer to their own idio-

> syncratic psychological organization, they can adopt a critical perspective on species-typical norms, or their own cultures, or both.
>
> (131)

A close examination of Austen's perspective shows that Austen ignores some of the inherent laws and norms of both evolutionary psychology and her culture in a way that opens a feminist reading of her work. For example, according to evolutionary psychology, the best-case scenario for a man is not only a long-term partner who will care for his children but also the opportunity for adultery, that is the spreading further of his genes. Matt Ridley argues, "we are designed for a system of monogamy plagued by adultery" (176). And while the ideology of marriage in Regency England was monogamy, many men enjoyed Ridley's description of the evolutionary psychology ideal. In Austen, though, they do not as she creates a space that upon closer examination often empowers her female characters.

While evolutionary psychology is a powerful explanation of human mate selection, we do not wish to apply it as a heuristic. It is not a mere substitute for a Freudian or Lacanian reading of human behavior. Evolutionary psychology provides insight into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because social conditions proved ripe for its ideas to dominate the culture and literature. Stone argues that scientific advances such as the creation of the smallpox vaccine made the eighteenth-century English feel active in determining their fate as they had not before; they no longer felt totally at the mercy of God's will, which extended into how they governed their families: "This sense of control over the environment, and particularly over animal breeding, inevitably led men to choose their wives as one would choose a brood mare, with a great care for their personal genetic inheritance, and to train their children with the same patience and attention as they had long devoted to their horses, dogs or hawks" (234). As personal choice came to the fore, so did the biological basis of selection. What Stone's argument lacks, though, is the female perspective that evolutionary psychology and Austen elucidate.

Evolutionary psychology posits universal, gender-specific traits that each sex would find attractive in the other. Certainly, some of the more general traits apply in a discussion of Austen. Attractive male prospects are capable of supporting and protecting a family. Though Austen is infamous for lack of physical descriptions, she introduces Bingley as "good looking and gentlemanlike" and Darcy as grabbing "the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien" (7), fulfilling the sexy son hypothesis. Desirable female potential mates ideally would be young, healthy, and fertile. But we need to ground our argument in the historically relevant qualities Austen and her audience would have found most appealing. David and Nanelle Barash observe that men and women universally look for "kindness and intelligence" in a mate so that "[h]ere again, Jane Austen provides a textbook case of sexual selection in action, as her protagonists reveal their intellects—while stimulating the readers'—via their verbal adroitness" (55). True, but Austen's contemporary readers had a specific context for Austen's witty word play and emphasis on manners. As David Monaghan states, "Being a very formal society, eighteenth-century England placed tremendous emphasis on the moral implications of the individual's polite performance, as is indicated by Edmund Burke's assertion that 'Manners are of more importance than laws. . . . According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them'" (2-3). So while her Pleistocene ancestors probably valued male physical strength more than politeness, Austen recognizes that manners and wit in her tamer eighteenth century are effective weapons for social dominance and evidence of moral superiority. For example, while Mr. Bennet revels in his wit, his barbs are too strongly pointed for our ultimate admiration. His bad manners serve as a warning that Mr. Bennet ultimately is a failed, weak patriarch, beholden to another man to sustain his family's reputation, and hence a poor mate choice. Similarly, Darcy at first appears a poor mate choice to Elizabeth because of his rudeness; it is only when he demonstrates manners and a commensurate generosity that Elizabeth falls in love with and chooses to be with him.

Though in ***Northanger Abbey*** Henry Tilney tells Catherine that "man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal" (95), in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** Austen explores female choice in mate selection.[3] Obviously, Austen values choice as our heroine rejects two proposals and chooses a mate that no one else would have chosen for her. Karen Newman writes:

> In ***Pride and Prejudice,*** everything about Elizabeth—her poverty, her inferior social position, the behaviour of her family, her initial preferences for Wickham, and her refusal of Darcy's first offer of marriage—all these things ideologically should lead if not to death, at best to genteel poverty and spinsterhood. Instead, Austen had her marry despite her violations of these accepted norms of female behaviour.
>
> (205)

Austen rewards Elizabeth and, to a lesser extent, Charlotte for their active attempts to choose mates. At the same time, Austen recognizes her social context. Elizabeth cannot choose Colonel Fitzwilliam, nor he her, because of their financial situations. She also must wait for Darcy to reintroduce his marriage proposal. And the ever patient Jane, who embodies the contemporary fe-

male ideal of passivity in the novel, must pine endlessly for Bingley's return. Note, though, that much as we may wish Jane well in the novel, she is not our heroine, nor is she Austen's ideal. More importantly, evolutionary psychology contends that women in all cultures show more discrimination in mate choice, which is true for all of the mature female characters in the novel. (Lydia and Georgianna are the obvious exceptions, but they are both adolescents duped by Wickham.) Mr. Collins, in a typical pattern of male mating behavior, is willing to marry any of the attractive Bennet daughters, which sadly excludes Mary, but none of the attractive daughters is willing to marry him.

This gendered discretion in choice appears in spite of the number of single women in the novel and the commensurate intrasexual competition: Caroline Bingley rightfully sees Elizabeth as a rival and lies to Jane by claiming that Georgiana is proposed as a match for Bingley, and, of course, Lady Catherine argues that her daughter is betrothed to Darcy (see Gilbert and Gubar [*The Madwoman in the Attic*] 126). One intrasexual competitive tactic specified by evolutionary theory and used by women in ***Pride and Prejudice*** is derogation of competitors, notably used by Caroline Bingley when she first derogates Jane for her lack of social connections and her incomplete knowledge of London streets. Caroline also derogates Elizabeth a number of times, most pointedly when "in the imprudence of anger, [she] took the first opportunity of saying, with sneering civility, 'Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the——shire militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to *your* family'" (174). Lady Catherine behaves much the same as a kind of substitute competitor for her daughter, telling Elizabeth, "But *your* arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him [Darcy] forget what he owes to himself and to all his family" (231). And like Caroline, she points to Elizabeth's poor social connections, asking, "Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?" (233), in reference to Lydia and Wickham's hastily arranged marriage. But in spite of the competition for few desirable mates, even Charlotte Lucas who claims, "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (16) carefully considers her mate choice.

Charlotte, of course, marries Mr. Collins purely out of mercenary self-interest, denying any romantic feelings at all. The narrator is blunt: Charlotte accepts Mr. Collins "solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment," labeling marriage the "pleasantest preservative from want" (83). Cultural exigencies and evolutionary psychology work together to explain Charlotte's pragmatic choice, with the shortage of men (and Charlotte's age) forcing her into making a less than perfect but in some ways desirable choice. David Geary would call Charlotte's strategy an example of bounded rationality, a rational choice that best serves her evolutionarily within a given ecological context. Rational does not mean optimal but weighing "cost-benefit tradeoffs" and accepting "good enough" as a way to increase her chances at reproduction (13). Austen makes clear that Charlotte's is not the worst fate for women in the novel. She has the comfort of a home and the adaptability necessary to live with a fool for a husband. As Elizabeth observes when seeing their home, "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten" (105). Austen commented in a letter that "single Women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favor of Matrimony" (qtd. in Sulloway [*Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood*] 17). Given the negative attitude toward spinsterhood in the period and Austen's own comments, marriage, even to Mr. Collins, appears preferable to being single (see Sulloway 23). And one need only think of Fanny Price's family in ***Mansfield Park*** to see that Austen by no means punishes Charlotte for her choice of mate. Choosing security over love is preferable to a life of love and poverty.

Elizabeth, of course, is faced with the same choice of mate in Mr. Collins and chooses differently, turning down his proposal in spite of no alternative offers. Evolutionary psychology—as well as good taste and the ideology of companionate marriage—offers an explanation. In choosing a mate who will offer social and financial support, women, as the more investing sex, must consider a man's long-term stability—both as a husband and as a father. Austen's novels almost obsessively discuss the need for marriage between those who are like-minded, and they demonstrate the problems that result with the incompatible and impecunious mate. The Bennets are the obvious example in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** with Mr. Bennet's rude treatment of his wife and lax parenting resulting in near disaster for the family. Upon Lydia's elopement, Elizabeth "had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage" as that of her parents (155). She even warns her father before Lydia embarks for Brighton saying, "Our importance, our respectability in the world, must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character" (151). Mr. Bennet's neglect of his daughters, Austen makes clear, results from his lack of respect and love for Mrs. Bennet, whom he married for her "youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give," temporary qualities that led to "an end to all real affection for her." In a different situation from that created by Austen, this basis of attraction would work well for a male, who would simply move on to another attractive young partner. With the Bennets, we most

clearly see Austen's refusal to give her male characters any leeway for their poor mate selection. Mr. Bennet is allowed no possibility of escape, no solace in a mistress, which Austen obliquely mentions: "Mr. Bennet was not of a disposition to seek comfort for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on, in any of those pleasures which too often console the unfortunate for their folly or their vice" (155). His only refuge lies in cutting remarks that his wife rarely comprehends—since "the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character" (4)—and his library, "not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife" (155). After watching Mr. Bennet's disdain for his wife and the consequent emotional and patriarchal neglect of his daughters, Elizabeth wisely rejects Darcy's first proposal since it expresses a similar vein of disdain. She recognizes she would be placing herself in the same position as her mother, thereby creating a similarly uncomfortable position for her future children. As the more investing sex, Elizabeth will not do this (see [*The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England*] Stone 457).

The men of Austen's culture could choose more freely than the women, but, in line with evolutionary psychology, the men in the novel perform for the women, engaging in competition to draw female attention to themselves, like peacocks with their tail feathers. Here, instead of male cardinals, we have redcoats using their manners and wit to impress. Austen pointedly notes Wickham's efforts to appear "agreeable" and "amiable" so that when he enters the gathering at Mrs. Philips's, he "was the happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned. . . . With such rivals for the notice of the fair, as Mr. Wickham and the officers, Mr. Collins seemed likely to sink into insignificance; to the young ladies he certainly was nothing" (52). Unlike Bingley and Darcy, however, Wickham has no property and must, like the female characters, rely solely upon his person and social skills to impress. This is true also of Colonel Fitzwilliam as a younger son whom Austen, with language reminiscent of how she initially presents Wickham, describes as pleasant and agreeable, "in person and address most truly a gentleman" (113). In fact, Wickham and other men in the novel who have no property, in line with evolutionary psychology, are not chosen by women as appropriate long-term mates. Wickham, like Charlotte Lucas, attempts to marry for money and security only to find himself rejected. Fitzwilliam makes clear that he may not choose a mate based upon personal preference but must pay attention to financial security through marriage. In an attempt to let Elizabeth know he finds her attractive but unsuitable as a mate because of her lack of fortune, Colonel Fitzwilliam reminds her, "Younger sons cannot marry where they like. . . . Our habits of expence make us too dependant [sic], and there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money" (121; also, see Gilbert and Gubar 167). Elizabeth, therefore, never views Colonel Fitzwilliam as a potential mate and is quick to control her feelings for Wickham upon Mrs. Gardiner's warning "not [to] involve yourself, or endeavour to involve him in an affection which the want of fortune would make so very imprudent" (96).

Of course, this is not true of the other men in the novel who use their property to draw the attention of women. While Mr. Collins fails to gain notice in the intrasexual competition of the drawing room, he is able to attract a wife since he does have material qualities that are desirable in a mate. He eagerly displays this to Elizabeth upon her visit, "as if wishing to make her feel what she had lost in refusing him" (104). When Lady Catherine soon extends an invitation to dine, Mr. Collins feels the thrill of "letting them see her civility towards himself and his wife," which "was exactly what he had wished for" (106). However, Mr. Collins—property, wife, and all—begins and ends the novel as the butt of many jokes because of his poor manners. Austen makes clear his inferiority to Darcy when he ignores Elizabeth's advice that he would be committing an "impertinent freedom" (66) by approaching Darcy at the Netherfield ball. Darcy, of course, responds with "distant civility" and dismisses Mr. Collins with "a slight bow," emphasizing, as Elizabeth acknowledges, Mr. Darcy as being "superior in consequence" (67). Additionally, Mr. Collins's social and financial dependence upon a woman (Lady Catherine De Bourgh) makes him much less attractive as a potential mate to women in the novel. Data from evolutionary psychology support this claim: women consistently place higher value on independence and social dominance in a prospective mate than do men.

Here is the problem for Bingley. One could argue that it is Jane who is temporarily punished for her inability to attract a mate properly. After all, Charlotte Lucas in reference to Jane proclaims, "In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better shew *more* affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on" (15). Darcy excuses his interference in Bingley's relationship with Jane by arguing that "the serenity of your sister's countenance and air was such, as might have given even the most acute observer, a conviction that, however amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be touched" (130). However, the real problem here is not Jane but Bingley. After all, Elizabeth is rewarded with the best marriage of the novel in spite of telling Darcy that he is the last man on earth she would marry, clearly a stronger statement than merely appearing calm as Jane does. No, it is Bingley who fails to reach the

eventual heroic status of Darcy due to his timidity. Bingley's willingness to be persuaded so easily to give up Jane puts him in some ways on the same plane with Mr. Collins, lacking independence, of will in this case, and social dominance; for though Mr. Bingley's manners are the most agreeable at parties, it is Darcy who commands the most attention.

But even with the competitive advantages of wealth and influence, Darcy must learn to perform—improve his manners—in spite of his protestations to Elizabeth that "[w]e neither of us perform to strangers" (117); and he does perform better when Elizabeth arrives at Pemberley. Elizabeth recognizes, "Never, even in the company of his dear friends at Netherfield, or his dignified relations at Rosings, had she seen him so desirous to please, so free from self-consequence, or unbending reserve as now" (170-171). As Sir Walter Scott joked, it is upon seeing Pemberley that Elizabeth falls in love with Darcy; perhaps, though, the joke is correct and explained by evolutionary psychology: not only does Elizabeth see Darcy's estate, but Darcy recognizes that he must work to attract her as a mate.[4] Much of this "work" involves generosity in welcoming Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle to share the estate during their visit. Clearly, Darcy is sending the signal to Elizabeth that he is willing to share his possessions with her as well as exhibit proper manners by treating them all graciously.

Elizabeth first rejects Darcy because of the issue of generosity. Buss's influential 1989 cross-cultural study clearly showed that women value generosity in a mate more than do men. Men must not only be able to invest in a partner but must also be willing to invest. In ***Pride and Prejudice,*** it is not enough for Darcy to be wealthy; he also must be willing (or perceived as willing) to share some of these resources with a mate. At first, Darcy is not generous with either money or, perhaps more importantly, his public praise of Elizabeth. On one of their first meetings, Darcy says out loud of Elizabeth, "she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*" (9). As the novel progresses, Darcy is more generous to Elizabeth in terms of both public praise for her "fine" eyes and eventually in the payment of Wickham's debt as part of the deal for his marriage to Lydia. Later, when Elizabeth thanks him for his actions on behalf of her family, Darcy replies, "I thought only of *you*" (239). Since Darcy shows no indication that he is willing to be generous to Elizabeth prior to his first proposal, he is at first less attractive as a mate to Elizabeth. However, as Darcy's generosity increases towards Elizabeth, her attraction to him increases—in line with evolutionary predictions.

In fact, it is Darcy's letter in which he describes his actions to protect Georgianna, then Elizabeth's observations of his protective kindness toward his sister, that first convey Darcy's generous nature to Elizabeth and begin to warm her toward accepting his second offer. And, obviously, Darcy acts as protective patriarch toward Lydia in ways that Mr. Bennet could not. Elizabeth recognizes that Darcy's love for her is essential to long-term mating, and his actions toward his sister—and her own sister—convince her that Darcy will protect not only her but also their future children.

And what attracts Darcy to the financially strapped Elizabeth straddled with an unfortunate family? Her eyes. While poetry may call the eyes windows to the soul, evolutionary psychology, as we noted, postulates that men are attracted to women who appear healthy and able to bear and nurture children. One such sign of health is the eyes. Evolutionary theorists remind us that in early ancestral environments, cloudy or dull eyes may have been a signal of disease or bad genes. The first compliment Darcy pays to Elizabeth, though it is to Caroline Bingley, is on "the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow" (19). While Darcy questions the propriety of Elizabeth's walk to check on Jane, he simultaneously admires "the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion" (23) and tells Caroline that Elizabeth's eyes "were brightened by the exercise" (25). Elizabeth exudes health, whereas Anne De Bourgh, a more suitable match by society's standards, does not (see Wiltshire ["Jane Austen, Health, and the Body"] 125). According to Fraiman, Austen is suggesting "a decline in aristocratic welfare . . . by the sickly Miss De Bourgh. It may well be the enfeeblement of his own class that encourages Darcy to look below him for a wife with greater stamina" (174). Mr. Collins, of course, being far less discerning than Darcy, sees the beauty of Miss De Bourgh as relying entirely on "features which marks the young woman of distinguished birth" (46). In this way, evolutionary psychology and Austen are not conservative at all, displacing the aristocratic Anne De Bourgh in favor of the middle-class healthy and seemingly fertile Elizabeth. Stone contends, "It was generally agreed that the ideal was a pale, languid, and fainting belle, and that 'an air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty'" (446), making Darcy's choice of Elizabeth much more in line with the principles of evolutionary psychology than the fashion of the time. Though crudely put, perhaps Mrs. Bennet is on target when she proclaims to Jane, "I was sure you could not be so beautiful for nothing!" upon hearing about her daughter's engagement (227).

On its surface, ***Pride and Prejudice*** may appear conservative, but if one believes that the overriding, nonconscious purpose in humans' lives—both male and female—is to pass our genes forward, then the seemingly conservative marriage ending in fact liberates. Elizabeth's chances of successfully producing and nurturing

a family are excellent thanks to a secure marriage to a loyal, caring, and rich husband. Austen's novels create the stability necessary for women to succeed in the evolutionary game, whereas she rejects the male strategy of multiple partners. Seemingly constraining monogamy becomes liberation for the heroines when we read Austen vis a vis evolutionary psychology.

Notes

1. One might logically wonder about the underlying biology that makes the relationship between psychology and culture possible: can preferences for particular mate qualities be transmitted genetically from generation to generation? The short answer seems to be no; mate preferences themselves are unlikely to be directly inherited from one's parents. Evolutionary psychologists argue that the kind of specialized social reasoning involved in mate choice suggests that the mind acts not as a general problem-solving machine, but rather consists of domain-specific modules that facilitate the expression of cognitive adaptations. Cummins argues that what is genetically "innate" is best understood as a biological preparedness for learning evolutionary-relevant cognitive functions, such as social reasoning in mate choice, that develop through interaction with the environment. Thus, biology "puts strong constraints on what types of knowledge or skills can or will be learned, but . . . the environment plays a very large role in how and whether biological predispositions get expressed" (240-241). This notion is entirely compatible with our basic argument that changes in eighteenth-century culture regarding companionate marriage interacted with biologically-prepared adaptations of the mind to influence the human psychology of mate choice.
2. Critics, of course, do not agree on Austen's status as conservative or feminist, as noted by Langland in her useful survey, "*Pride and Prejudice*: Jane Austen and Her Readers." Butler and Fraiman point out the conservatism of Austen's work, while Sulloway sees a feminist intent similar to Wollstonecraft's (15). Duckworth suggests that Austen tends to be all things to all people: conservative, feminist, Romantic, Augustan, etc.
3. We would not go so far as Barash and Barash who claim that "[n]early always, Austen's women are in the driver's seat (and never more so than when they adroitly lead a man to think that *he* is)" (41).
4. Butler says Pemberley represents a turning point not because of its material wealth but because it shows real taste and a lack of pomposity while providing the good opinion of Darcy's housekeeper. Burlin argues much the same, claiming that the pictures at Pemberley affect Elizabeth and that the chapter is an aesthetic argument in Darcy's favor. See also Polhemus.

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Special Commissioned Essay on Jane Austen

Julia Epstein

This special entry, written by Julia Epstein, presents an overview and analysis of Austen's life and career. For information on Austen's complete career, see *NCLC*, Volume 1; for information on *Pride and Prejudice*, see *NCLC*, Volume 13; for information on *Emma*, see *NCLC*, Volume 19; for information on *Persuasion*, see *NCLC*, Volume 33; for information on *Northanger Abbey*, see *NCLC*, Volume 51; for information on *Sense and Sensibility*, see *NCLC*, Volume 81; and for information on *Mansfield Park*, see *NCLC*, Volume 95

INTRODUCTION

One of England's most celebrated authors, Austen ranks among the most widely studied and read authors in the English language, as well as in translations in thirty-five other languages. Though Austen is sometimes criticized by modern scholars as lacking innovation, her novels offer an often humorous and subtle critique of English society. Austen has been lauded for her intricate plots and dynamic characters, and noted for the sense of morality with which she infuses the aristocratic settings of her work.

CRITICISM

Julia Epstein (essay date 2003)

SOURCE: Epstein, Julia. "An Overview of the Life and Career of Jane Austen." In *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, vol. 119, edited by Jessica Bomarito, Edna Hedblad, and Russel Whitaker. Farmington Hills, Mich.: The Gale Group, 2003.

[*In the following essay, Epstein discusses the major aspects of Austen's life and career, focusing on biographical, textual, and critical avenues of exploration into the author's enduring popularity.*]

CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology offers an overview of Austen's life and career.. The topics presented here are discussed in greater detail in the critical essay that follows.

1775: Jane Austen is born on 16 December at Steventon, Hampshire, near Basingstoke, to the Reverend George Austen, Rector of Steventon (1731-1805) and Cassandra Leigh Austen (1739-1827), who had married in 1764. The Austens lived in Deane, Hampshire, where their first three children were born, then moved to Steventon and had five more children. Jane is the seventh of eight children: James (1765-1819), George (1766-1838), Edward (1768-1852), Henry (1771-1850),

Cassandra Elizabeth (1773-1845), Francis [Frank] (1774-1865), and Charles John (1779-1852). The Austens were Tories in the country village of Steventon, and associated with the local gentry. George Austen earned a respectable but not large income of £600 a year from the Deane and Steventon livings, which he supplemented by taking in boarding pupils from neighboring families from 1773 until 1796. Before 1773, the family experienced financial problems that were eased by a loan from Mrs. Austen's wealthy brother, James Leigh Perrot (1735-1817).

Richard Brinsley Sheridan's play, *The Rivals,* one of the most enduring late eighteenth-century comic dramas, and one that Jane Austen came to know well, is performed in London. The actress Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) makes her theatrical debut at the Drury Lane Theatre.

1777: Philadelphia Austen Hancock (George Austen's sister) and her daughter Eliza travel on the European continent, then settle in Paris in 1779.

1778: The Franco-American Alliance is formed. Britain declares war on France.

Frances Burney's *Evelina* is published, as well as Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Lessons for Children.* Two key Enlightenment thinkers and writers in Europe—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Swiss philosopher and political theorist, and François Arouet (Voltaire), French philosopher and polymath—die.

1779: James Austen (age fourteen), the eldest Austen child, enters St. John's College, Oxford, on a "Founder's Kin" scholarship, as his father had done before him.

1780: The Gordon Riots occur in London in June. This action begins as an anti-Catholic demonstration and develops into ten days of rioting; 700 people die; 450 arrests are made, which result in twenty-five executions.

1781: Austen cousin Eliza Hancock marries Jean-François Capot de Feuillide (1750-1794) in France. Her husband is a captain in the Queen's Regiment of Dragoons and calls himself the Comte de Feuillide.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* are published. Friedrich Schiller's play *The Robbers* is performed.

1782: The Austens perform the first of their home theatricals, encouraged by James Austen. Amateur theatricals at Steventon became a tradition and were performed in the dining room or the nearby barn. Eliza de Feuillide influenced these activities.

1783: Jane and Cassandra Austen are sent to school with their cousin Jane Cooper (age twelve), to be taught by Ann Cawley (Mrs. Cooper's aunt) at a boarding school at Oxford in the spring. In the summer the school moves to Southampton. The girls are brought home after an infectious disease (probably typhus) breaks out. After the girls return home, Jane Cooper's mother contracts the illness and dies in October.

Edward Austen, the third son, is adopted by Thomas Knight II (1735-1794) and his wife Catherine, née Knatchbull, (1753-1812) of Godsmersham, Kent, about eight miles southwest of Canterbury.

The Reverend George Lefroy (1745-1806) and his wife Anne, née Brydges, (1749-1804) take up residence at Ashe, next to Steventon, when Lefroy becomes rector, and the Lefroys become close friends of the Austens. "Madam Lefroy" becomes a trusted advisor to Jane Austen.

William Pitt (1759-1806) becomes Prime Minister.

Britain recognizes American independence when the Peace of Versailles ends the war.

1784: Eliza de Feuillide accompanies her husband to France.

William Pitt is reelected Prime Minister and passes the India Act, establishing political control over British territories in India.

Samuel Johnson, English essayist, dictionary-maker, poet, and playwright, and Denis Diderot, a leader of the French Enlightenment *philosophes,* die.

1785-87: Jane and Cassandra Austen and Jane Cooper attend the Abbey House School in Reading, Berkshire, where they board.

1786: Austen probably begins to write her juvenilia sometime in 1786 or 1787.

Edward Austen goes on the Grand Tour to Switzerland and Italy, then spends a year in Dresden financed by his adoptive parents, the Knights. He returns in 1788.

Frank Austen (almost twelve) enters the Royal Naval Academy, Portsmouth. His experience figures prominently in the portrayal of Fanny Price's naval brother in *Mansfield Park.*

James Austen (age twenty-one) leaves to spend a year in France and may also have traveled to Spain and Holland.

Jane and Cassandra Austen leave the Abbey School in Reading and return home to Steventon in December.

Eliza de Feuillide returns from France to London where her son, Hastings, is born. He is named for Warren Hastings.

1787: James Austen returns from Europe and is ordained deacon at Oxford.

A major public campaign to abolish the slave trade begins in Britain. The Somerset case in 1772 had effectively outlawed slavery in England when Lord Mansfield (1705-1793), lord chief justice, ruled that slaves could not be sold abroad by their masters.

1787-90: These dates are speculative, but the following juvenile writings from *Volume the First* probably date from this period: "Frederic and Elfrida," "Jack and Alice," "Edgar and Emma," "Henry and Eliza," "Mr. Harley," "Sir William Mountague," "Mr. Clifford," "The Beautifull Cassandra," "Amelia Webster," "The Visit," and "The Mystery."

1788: Henry Austen (age seventeen) enters St. John's College, Oxford, as his father and his older brother James had done.

Eliza de Feuillide and Philadelphia Hancock return to France.

Edward Austen returns from Europe and takes up permanent residence with the Knight family at Godsmersham.

In December, Frank Austen finishes his studies in Portsmouth and sails for the East Indies on board HMS *Perseverance.*

King George III has his first attack of "madness," creating a Regency crisis.

In May, there is a motion in Parliament to abolish the slave trade.

1789: James Austen begins to publish a weekly magazine at Oxford, *The Loiterer.* His brother Henry participates in this venture, and the two of them are the primary writers.

James Austen is ordained as a priest at Oxford.

George Austen lets Deane parsonage to the recently widowed Martha Craven Lloyd (1728-1805) and her daughters, Martha (1765-1843) and Mary (1771-1843), who soon become close friends with Jane and Cassandra Austen.

King George III recovers and the Regency crisis ends. The Bastille falls in Paris on 14 July and the Declaration of the Rights of Man is signed, beginning the French Revolution.

1790: Jane Austen writes *Love and Freindship* [*sic*], the key piece in *Volume the Second* of her juvenile writings.

James and Henry Austen cease publication of the magazine *The Loiterer* when James leaves Oxford to become curate at Overton near Steventon.

Philadelphia Hancock and Eliza de Feuillide return to England from revolutionary France.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* are published. Burke's *Reflections* inaugurates a war of ideas.

1791: Charles Austen (age twelve and the youngest Austen son) enters the Royal Naval Academy at Portsmouth, which his brother Frank attended.

Jane Austen writes *The History of England.*

James Austen becomes vicar of Sherborne, St. John, Hampshire, just north of Basingstoke.

Edward Austen marries Elizabeth Bridges (1773-1808) of Goodnestone Park, about seven miles east of Canterbury, and they live at Rowling House nearby.

Frank Austen remains in the East Indies, but changes ships and becomes midshipman on HMS *Minerva.*

1791-92: The dates are speculative, but Jane Austen probably composes "A Collection of Letters" and the play *Sir Charles Grandison* (based on Samuel Richardson's 1751 novel of the same title) in these years.

1792: Jane Austen writes "Lesley Castle," "The Three Sisters," "Evelyn," and "Catharine," all from *Volume the Second.*

Philadelphia Hancock dies of breast cancer on February 26.

James Austen marries Anne Mathew (1759-1795), granddaughter of the Duke of Ancaster.

Jane Austen attends her first balls (she is sixteen).

Cassandra Austen becomes engaged to marry the Reverend Thomas Fowle (1765-1797), of the Fowle family of Kintbury. Tom's father Thomas Fowle and George Austen had been friends since their undergraduate days at Oxford, and a third Lloyd daughter, Elizabeth, is married to Tom's brother, the Reverend Fulwar Craven Fowle.

Britain experiences the beginnings of increasingly repressive legislation against "Jacobins," including a proclamation against seditious writings.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* appears.

1793: Most of Jane Austen's juvenile writings, *Volume the First, Volume the Second,* and *Volume the Third,* have been composed and are fair-copied.[1]

The collected "Scraps" are possibly composed or revised—including "The Female Philosopher," "The First Act of a Comedy," "A Letter from a Young Lady," "A Tour through Wales," and "A Tale," all in *Volume the Second.*

Edward Austen's first child and Jane Austen's oldest niece, Fanny, is born at Rowling.

Henry Austen becomes a lieutenant in the Oxfordshire Militia.

James Austen's first child, Anna, is born at Deane.

Jane Austen writes the final pieces collected as the *Juvenilia* and dedicates them to her second niece Anna as "Detached Pieces": "A Fragment," "A Beautiful Description of the Different Effects of Sensibility on Different Minds," and "The Generous Curate." She also writes "Ode to Pity." These pieces, which appear in *Volume the First,* complete the writings collected as the juvenilia.

After six years, Frank Austen returns from the East Indies.

King Louis XVI of France is tried and guillotined in Paris on 21 January. France declares war on Holland and Great Britain in January and on Spain in February. The Terror ensues in France, the Committee of Public Safety under Robespierre comes to power, Jean-Paul Marat is murdered, and in October Queen Marie Antoinette is executed.

Sedition trials in England and Scotland lead to harsh sentences and exile to Botany Bay, Australia.

1793-95: This is probably the period during which Jane Austen writes the untitled epistolary novel published as *Lady Susan* by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh as an appendix to the 1871 edition of his *A Memoir of Jane Austen.*

1794: Jane Austen possibly begins to write *Elinor and Marianne,* the epistolary first version of *Sense and Sensibility.*

Eliza de Feuillide's husband is found guilty of attempting to bribe a witness during the trial of an aristocratic friend charged with conspiracy against the French republic, and he is guillotined in Paris on February 22.

Charles Austen (fifteen) leaves the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth and serves as midshipman to Captain Thomas Williams (1761-1841), husband of his cousin Jane Cooper, on HMS *Daedelus.*

Thomas Knight II, Edward Austen's adoptive father, dies and leaves his large estates to his widow, to be inherited by Edward after her death.

The law of *habeas corpus* is suspended in 1794 with the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act and again in 1798, prompted by increased anxiety among the aristocratic classes.[2]

Georges-Jacques Danton (April) and Maximilien-François-Marie-Isadore de Robespierre (July) are executed. The Terror ends in France and is followed by the Directorate.

1795: Jane Austen probably composes most of *Elinor and Marianne.*

The Reverend Thomas Fowle, Cassandra Austen's betrothed, becomes involved with the West Indian campaign when he joins Lord Craven as his private chaplain.

James Austen's wife Anne dies, and Jane Austen's niece Anna, still a toddler, comes to live with the Austens at Steventon.

Tom Lefroy visits his uncle George Lefroy at Ashe Rectory on his way from Ireland to study law in London. His and Jane Austen's mutual attraction is serious enough that his family sends him away to forestall an inconvenient commitment. Lefroy later settled in Ireland, married and had a family, and became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.

The Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable Practices Act pass after George III's coach is attacked on the way to Parliament.[3]

Napoleon Bonaparte becomes commander of the French armed forces.

1796: Austen's surviving letters begin on 9 January. She completes *Elinor and Marianne* and begins*First Impressions,* an early version of *Pride and Prejudice,* and she probably also works on *Sir Charles Grandison.*

Charles Austen is involved in a battle when three French ships are intercepted in British waters.

1797: James Austen marries Mary Lloyd, his second wife, and his young daughter Anna returns from Steventon to live with her father and step-mother at Deane.

Edward Austen's adoptive mother, Mrs. Knight, moves to Canterbury and makes Edward the immediate inheritor of the Knight properties in Kent and Hampshire. Edward and his family move to Godsmersham in Kent.

First Impressions, the first version of *Pride and Prejudice,* is offered to London publisher Thomas Cadell by George Austen and declined by return of post. Austen works on *Sense and Sensibility,* the new title for *Elinor and Marianne.*

Mrs. Austen, Jane, and Cassandra stay with Mrs. Austen's brother and his wife, James and Jane Leigh-Perrot, in Jane Austen's first known visit to Bath.

Henry Austen marries his cousin, the widow Eliza de Feuillide, in London.

1798: Jane Austen is courted by Samuel Blackall, whom she discourages.

Austen completes *Sense and Sensibility* and begins *Susan,* which was published posthumously and given the title *Northanger Abbey* by Henry Austen.

The mechanization of paper manufacture reduces printing costs. Iron printing presses are introduced.

Mrs. Inchbald's version of *Lovers' Vows* (August von Kotzebue's *Natural Son*) is performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden, and published in London. This is the play whose attempted staging forms a key episode in *Mansfield Park.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes *Fears in Solitude, France, an Ode,* and *Frost at Midnight.* Thomas Malthus's *Principles of Population,* Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman,* and William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* appear. Wordsworth begins to write *The Prelude.* Mary Hays's *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of the Women,* and Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy are published.

1799: Jane Austen visits Bath with her mother and Edward and his wife. *Susan* is probably completed by the end of the year. The family also visits the Leighs at Adlestrop, the Coopers at Harpsden, another of Mrs. Austen's cousins in Surrey, and then spends the rest of the year in Steventon.

Mrs. Leigh-Perrot, Jane Austen's aunt, is accused of stealing a one-pound card of lace from a shop in Bath and is sent to Ilchester Gaol. This episode is a family embarrassment. Such a theft (over twelve pence) was considered grand larceny and would have been punishable by death or deportation to Australia.

1800: George Austen retires from his position as Rector of Steventon and leaves his eldest son, James, in charge.

Food shortages spark nationwide food riots.

1801: The Austens move to Bath. At some point between 1801 and 1804 Jane Austen may have had a romance, but no firm evidence survives.

Henry Austen gives up his commission in the Oxfordshire Militia and becomes a banker and army agent in London.

William Pitt resigns as Prime Minister when King George III refuses to agree to Catholic Emancipation, and Henry Addington becomes Prime Minister.

1802: Harris Bigg-Wither (1781-1833) proposes marriage to Jane Austen. She accepts in the evening, then declines the next morning.

Sometime late in 1802 or early in 1803, Jane Austen revises and makes a fair copy of *Susan.*

The Peace of Amiens is signed with France on 25 March, concluding the war. Napoleon Bonaparte is made First Consul for life.

The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act spearheads safety regulation and reform in British factories.

1803: Richard Crosby and Co. purchases the copyright to *Susan* for £10 through a business associate of Henry Austen, but they do not publish it despite a promise to do so by 1804.

Henry and Eliza Austen travel to France to try to reclaim some of the Comte de Feuillide's property, and they narrowly escape detainment. Napoleon had broken the Peace of Amiens, and the war with France resumes in May.

Frank and Charles Austen return to active naval service. Frank is stationed at Ramsgate and given the charge of organizing the coastal defense forces (the "Sea Fencibles").

Battles resume between France and England, beginning the Napoleonic wars.

1804: Jane Austen begins writing *The Watsons* this year, but never completes it.

Frank Austen returns to sea as captain of HMS *Leopard,* flagship of Rear Admiral Thomas Louis, and is stationed off Boulogne as part of the blockade of Napoleon's fleet.

Charles Austen is promoted to command HMS *Indian* and sent to patrol the Atlantic coast of America to prevent American trade with France. Charles remains headquartered in Bermuda until around 1810.

Anne Brydges Lefroy dies after a riding accident on 16 December, Jane Austen's birthday.

Napoleon Bonaparte becomes Emperor in France in May.

Spain declares war on England.

1805: George Austen dies on 21 January in Bath. Jane Austen abandons *The Watsons* and makes a fair copy of *Lady Susan,* adding the narrated conclusion.

Frank Austen is commanding HMS *Canopus* in the Mediterranean and participates in the chase of Admiral Villeneuve's fleet to the West Indies and back. Frank is sent to Malta.

Martha Craven Lloyd dies at Ibthorpe, and her daughter Martha Lloyd comes to live permanently with the Austens.

Jane Austen composes "Lines *Supposed* to Have Been Sent to an Uncivil Dressmaker."

1806: Frank Austen marries Mary Gibson at Ramsgate, Kent in July and arranges to set up house with his mother, his sisters, and Martha Lloyd.

Jane Austen writes "Lines to Martha Lloyd" and verses on the marriage of her brother Frank Austen.

1807: Frank Austen is put in command of HMS *St. Albans,* with duties to travel to South Africa, China, and the East Indies. In June, he departs for the Cape of Good Hope.

Jane Austen writes "On Sir Home Popham's Sentence, April, 1807" and possibly composes "Verses to Rhyme with 'Rose.'"

Charles Austen marries Fanny Palmer (1790-1814) in Bermuda.

The slave trade is abolished in Britain.[4] France invades Spain and Portugal.

1808: Edward Austen's wife, Elizabeth, dies in October at Godsmersham. Later that month, Edward offers his mother and sisters a choice of houses, and they choose Chawton Cottage in Hampshire.

Jane Austen writes "To Miss Bigg with Some Pockethandkerchiefs" and, on the anniversary of Anne Brydges Lefroy's death, "To the Memory of Mrs. Lefroy."

1809: Jane Austen uses a pseudonym to Richard Crosby to inquire about the status of *Susan* and to offer to send a second copy. Crosby responds that he has no current plans to publish the work, but will not give up the copyright unless it is purchased from him.

Mrs. Austen, Cassandra, and Jane settle with Martha Lloyd at Chawton Cottage on 7 July.

Jane Austen writes a verse letter to celebrate the birth of Frank Austen's first son. She also makes some revisions to *Volume the Third* and begins to revise *Sense and Sensibility,* a process that continues into the next year.

1810: Jane Austen continues to revise *Sense and Sensibility,* and it is accepted for publication on commission late this year or early in 1811 by Thomas Egerton.

Frank Austen returns from China.

Jane Austen possibly composes "Mock Panegyric on a Young Friend."

George III suffers a mental breakdown.

1811: Jane Austen stays with Henry and Eliza Austen in London to correct the proofs of *Sense and Sensibility.*

Jane Austen writes a number of poems: "Lines on Maria Beckford," "On the Weald of Kent Canal Bill," "I am in a Dilemma," "On a Headache," "Mr. Gell and Miss Gill."

Charles Austen returns to England with his wife, Fanny, and two children, and the family sees him for the first time in seven years and meets his family. He is given command of the guardship HMS *Namur,* and he and his family live on board, off Sheerness.

Jane Austen makes substantial revisions to *First Impressions* and retitles it *Pride and Prejudice,* and she begins work on *Mansfield Park.* Thomas Egerton publishes *Sense and Sensibility* in November in three volumes for the price of fifteen shillings; the title page says "By a Lady," and about 750 copies are printed. None of Jane Austen's works appears under her name during her lifetime.

The Regency Act appoints the Prince of Wales to the Regency. (He rules as Regent until 1820, when George III dies, and then becomes George IV.)

Luddites (organized machine-breakers) stage actions in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. Machine-breaking becomes punishable by death.

Nationwide food riots break out in response to economic depression.

1812: Edward Austen's adoptive mother, Mrs. Knight, dies on 14 October, and Edward officially takes the name Knight.

Jane Austen possibly composes "A Middle-Aged Flirt."

Jane Austen sells Thomas Egerton the copyright to *Pride and Prejudice* for £110. She corrects the proofs in December 1812 and January 1813.

England is at war with America (the War of 1812). Napoleon invades Russia in June and retreats from Moscow in October.

The main streets of London are lit by gas.

1813: *Pride and Prejudice* is published on 28 January, with a title page that says "By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility*." About one thousand copies are printed, at eighteen shillings a copy. *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* receive second printings in October. When the first edition of *Sense and Sensibility* sells out, Jane Austen receives £140 in profit.

Jane Austen stays with Henry Austen in London through his wife Eliza's final illness and death in April.

Jane Austen completes *Mansfield Park.*

In November, Jane Austen returns to London to stay with Henry Austen. During this visit, they probably negotiate the publication terms for *Mansfield Park* with Thomas Egerton, who agrees to publish it on commission.

Robert Southey is made Poet Laureate. The following works appear: Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine, or Adventures of Chirubina,* George Gordon, Lord Byron's *Bride of Abydos* and *The Giaour,* Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse,* Sir Walter Scott's *Rokeby,* Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Queen Mab,* and Robert Southey's *Life of Nelson.*

1814: In January, Jane Austen begins work on *Emma.* Austen corrects the proofs in February, and *Mansfield Park* is published in May in an edition of around twelve hundred copies at eighteen shillings each. The first edition of *Mansfield Park* sells out by November, and Jane Austen receives a profit of between £310 and £350. She and Henry try to arrange a second edition, but Thomas Egerton refuses to issue one.

Charles Austen's wife, Fanny, dies on 6 September on board HMS *Namur* after the birth of their fourth child.

England and its allies invade France and enter Paris on 31 March. Paris falls; Napoleon Bonaparte abdicates in April and is exiled to Elba.

The first steam press is used to print *The Times.* Steam locomotives become increasingly efficient.

The Treaty of Ghent ends the Anglo-American war in December (though the Battle of New Orleans occurs in January 1815).

Frances Burney's *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties,* George Gordon, Lord Byron's *Ode to Napoleon, Lara,* and *Corsair,* Henry Francis Cary's complete translation of Dante's*Divine Comedy,* Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage,* Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley,* Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Refutation of Deism,* Robert Southey's *Roderick,* and William Wordsworth's *The Excursion* are published.

1815: Jane Austen completes *Emma* at the end of March and begins to write *Persuasion* (titled posthumously by Henry Austen).

Jane Austen copies out "Lines of Lord Byron, in the Character of Buonaparté" (Byron's "Napoleon's Farewell").

Jane and Henry Austen negotiate the publication of *Emma* with publisher John Murray, who receives a positive reader's report by the end of September.

Jane Austen spends most of the end of the year in London with Henry, who becomes seriously ill. He is out of danger within a month, but she remains to nurse him.

Jane Austen is invited to visit the Prince Regent (later George IV) at Carlton House in November. She is asked to dedicate her next novel to him, and although Austen has misgivings, she agrees. The response comes from the Reverend James Stanier Clarke (1765-1834), the regent's chaplain and librarian, and in subsequent correspondence he urges Jane Austen to compose a novel about a clergyman. This suggestion is the basis for her comic *Plan of a Novel, according to Hints from Various Quarters,* written in 1816, possibly with the help of her niece Fanny Knight.

John Murray offers £450 for the copyright of *Emma* if copyrights for *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* are included in the package. Henry and Jane Austen refuse this offer, and Murray declines to raise it. However, he agrees to publish an edition of 2,000 copies of *Emma* on commission, along with a second edition of 750 copies of *Mansfield Park.* Jane Austen corrects proofs for *Emma* and makes revisions for the second edition of *Mansfield Park. Emma* appears at the end of December (with the title page marked 1816) in an edition priced at twenty-one shillings. It is dedicated to the Prince Regent, and a special presentation set is sent to Carleton House prior to the novel's general publication.

Raison et Sensibilité (*Sense and Sensibility*) is published in France, the first foreign translation of an Austen novel.

The landlords carry the Corn Law Act; the price of bread rises in consequence and causes hardship for the poor.[5] Napoleon Bonaparte escapes from Elba and begins the Hundred Days (from March to June), restarting the war. After the Battle of Waterloo of 18 June, Napoleon surrenders (15 July), the war ends, and he goes into exile on St. Helena. King Louis XVIII is restored to the throne in France and a "holy Alliance" of Europe's monarchs forms when the Congress of Vienna establishes the Quadruple Alliance between Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia.

1816: Jane Austen revises *Susan* after Henry buys back the rights from Crosby and Co. She changes the title to *Catharine,* writes the "Advertisement, by the Authoress," and intends to seek another publisher. A second, revised edition of *Mansfield Park* is issued. *Le Parc de Mansfield* (*Mansfield Park*) and *La Nouvelle Emma* (*Emma*) are published in France.

Charles Austen's ship, HMS *Phoenix,* is wrecked off the coast of Asia Minor in a hurricane. Charles and his crew survive.

Henry Austen's bank collapses in March. Several family members suffer major losses, including Edward Knight (£20,000) and uncle James Perrot (£10,000).

Jane Austen's health begins to weaken, and she goes with Cassandra to take the waters at Cheltenham.

Jane Austen completes the first draft of *Persuasion* on 18 July and revises the ending by 6 August.

By October, *Emma* has sold 1,248 copies, with a theoretical profit of £221. However, the second edition of *Mansfield Park* is creating losses that offset the profit, so she receives only £38 for *Emma* during her lifetime. In any event, the first edition did not sell out: 539 copies were remaindered in 1821, as well as 498 copies of *Mansfield Park.*

In December, Henry Austen is ordained deacon and takes the curacy of Chawton. He becomes a priest in 1817.

The Spa Fields riot occurs in December amidst the beginnings of economic depression and discontent.[6]

Richard Brinsley Sheridan dies and George Gordon, Lord Byron, leaves England. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel, Kubla Khan, Pains of Sleep,* and *Stateman's Manual* appear.

1817: Jane Austen begins to write *Sanditon,* titled posthumously by the family; she seems to have meant the title to be *The Brothers.* She stops work around mid-March because of illness, and *Sanditon* remains unfinished. She makes her will in April, leaving everything to her sister, Cassandra, except for a legacy of £50 to her brother Henry and another of the same amount to his French housekeeper, Madame Bigeon.

Jane and Cassandra Austen move to Winchester on 24 May to obtain better medical care for Jane. Jane Austen writes her last work, "Venta," some verses on the Winchester Races and St. Swithin.

Jane Austen dies on 18 July in the early morning. On 22 July, she is publicly identified in the Hampshire Courier obituary as the author of her novels. She is buried in the north aisle of Winchester Cathedral on 24 July.

When Jane Austen's will is proved in September and funeral costs (£239) and other payments deducted, Cassandra is left with £561.2.0. At the time of her death, Austen's earnings from her novels amount to about £630. Posthumous profits, which include selling the five remaining copyrights to publisher Richard Bentley, place her total earnings from her work at about £1,625.

In December, *Northanger Abbey,* a revision of *Susan,* is published by Murray with *Persuasion* in a four-volume set. Included is a "Biographical Notice of the Author" by Henry Austen. Henry probably gave these novels their titles, and negotiated this publication on a commission basis on Cassandra Austen's behalf. The copies number 1,750 and are sold at twenty-four shillings each. By the start of 1821, Cassandra had netted a profit of £519, at which time 283 copies were remaindered.

Pride and Prejudice sells out in its second edition, and Thomas Egerton publishes a third edition.

Habeas Corpus is suspended in March, and the Seditious Meetings Bill is enacted. Princess Charlotte dies.

Posthumous Dates

1827: Jane Austen's mother, Cassandra Leigh Austen, dies at age 88.

1833: A collected edition of Jane Austen's novels is published with a "Biographical Notice" by her brother Henry Austen.

1845: Jane Austen's sister, Cassandra Elizabeth Austen, dies.

1848: Francis Austen appointed Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indian Station.

1852: Admiral Charles John Austen, Jane Austen's youngest brother, is made Commander-in-Chief of the East India state.

1863: Sir Francis Austen, Jane's Austen's other naval brother, is made Admiral of the Fleet.

1866: The first publication of Jane Austen's verses "To the Memory of Mrs. Lefroy."

1870: James Edward Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen's nephew, publishes *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (it appears on 16 December 1869 but is dated 1870). A second, expanded edition of the *Memoir* is published, and this edition includes *Lady Susan, The Watsons,* and a cancelled chapter of *Persuasion.* Austen-Leigh's work is the basis for all subsequent biographies, and it sparked increased interest in Jane Austen.

1884: Jane Austen's great-nephew, Edward, Lord Brabourne, son of Lady Knatchbull (née Fanny Austen-Knight) publishes *Letters of Jane Austen.*

1895: Publication of *Charades, Written a Hundred Years Ago by Jane Austen and Her Family.*

1902: Constance Hill's *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* is published, with additional biographical information.

1906: *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers,* by Frank Austen's grandson and great-granddaughter, is published with new family information, family prints, the poem "Venta," and letters to Frank.

1913: *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters,* by William Austen-Leigh, James Edward's son, and his nephew Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, is published. This has come to be a primary source record.

1920: *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen,* by Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, James Edward's daughter, is published.

1922: *Volume the Second,* a collection of the juvenilia appears under the title *Love and Freindship* [*sic*].

1923: *The Novels of Jane Austen,* the Oxford edition of the novels, is published under the editorship of R. W. Chapman. This is the first scholarly edition and remains the standard edition. The second edition is issued in 1926 and the third in 1932-1934, with many subsequent reprintings.

1925: The unfinished *Sanditon* is published. *Lady Susan* is reprinted. R. W. Chapman edits both.

1926: Chapman re-edits the original manuscript ending of *Persuasion,* correcting the ending transcription from the 1871 *Memoir.* Chapman also edits *Plan of a Novel, according to Hints from Various Quarters* and Austen's "Opinions of *Mansfield Park* and Opinions of *Emma* accompany this printing."*Two Poems by Jane Austen* ("Mr. Gill and Miss Gell" and "On a Headache") is published.

1927: R. W. Chapman's edition of *The Watsons* is published.

1932: R. W. Chapman publishes *Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others.* This volume includes new letters.

1933: *Volume the First* of the juvenilia is published.

1940: W. M. Roth edits Jane Austen's *Three Evening Prayers.*

1942: R. A. Austen-Leigh publishes *Austen Papers 1704-1856,* a collection of previously unpublished material.

1951: *Volume the Third* of the juvenilia is published.

1952: Caroline Mary Craven Austen (1805-1880), James' daughter, publishes *My Aunt Jane Austen: A Memoir.*

1954: R. W. Chapman publishes *Jane Austen's Minor Works,* which includes all three volumes of the juvenilia and some other previously unpublished pieces of writing. This volume is reprinted in 1965 and further revised in 1969.

1975: B. C. Southam edits *The MS of Sanditon.*

1977: The manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison* is discovered. Scholar B. C. Southam publishes it as *Jane Austen's "Sir Charles Grandison"* in 1980. The handwriting in the manuscript is Jane Austen's. Family tradition had ascribed the authorship to Austen's niece Anna, but scholars believe that Austen herself wrote it.

1995: Deirdre Le Faye publishes a new edition of *Jane Austen's Letters* with further additions.

1996: David Selwyn edits *Jane Austen: Collected Poems and Verse of the Austen Family.*

Notes

1. A "fair copy" is a neatly recopied manuscript. This is what would have been sent to the printers for publication.
2. *Habeus corpus* is a law that requires a person to be brought before a judge or court to investigate a restraint of the person's freedom, and was used as a protection against illegal imprisonment.

3. These acts represented the response of the government of William Pitt to the mob attack on George III, and derived from efforts to suppress dissidents and to restrict political discussion.
4. Slavery itself was not abolished until 1833.
5. The Corn Law Act restricted imports and thus shored up the price of wheat; the bill was supported by landowners.
6. In this uprising, rioters attempted to seize the Bank of England and the Tower of England but were dispersed. Marilyn Butler suggest that this event may be the subject of a brief reference in *Northanger Abbey,* in which Henry Tilney mentions a riotous mob trying to seize the Tower. See Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Revolutionaries, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981): 106.

About Jane Austen

Born: 16 December 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire, England.

Marital Status: Single

Education: Jane Austen's only formal schooling consisted of a year in 1783 with Mrs. Cawley at Oxford and Southampton, and two years in 1785-87 at the Abbey School in Reading.

Died: 18 July 1817 in Winchester, Kent, England, at age forty-two.

Jane Austen has been described in multiple ways: as a spinster recluse; as a satirical and biting wit; as a shy and retiring woman of prim moral views; and as a paragon of femininity who never complained and had a kind word for everyone. Yet after her death, a kind of beatification process took place, and over time Jane Austen has become a cultural icon and the patroness of English fiction. The Austen family zealously guarded her memory and her image. Her sister Cassandra and niece Fanny Austen destroyed many of her letters, her brother Henry wrote a eulogy that praises his sister as brilliant and long-suffering, and her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh published his influential *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870, in which he described her as a sheltered, unruffled woman whose life was uncommonly uneventful. It has, therefore, been difficult for scholars and biographers to meet the real Jane Austen.

Was she merely an observer of others, without an inner life? Was she a resentful, repressed woman who used her sharp pen to skewer a society that had injured her? Was she the cheerful and tolerant favorite aunt described by her descendants? Was she ignorant of everything that happened in politics, or did she follow the activities of her military brothers Francis and Charles and her Francophile cousin Eliza Hancock de Feuillide with an educated grasp of history and social change? Few writers have been perceived in such varied and contradictory ways.

There is one central fact that we can glean from the existing letters, published books, and memoirs by the Austen family members, and from the archival record of the period in which Austen lived. While Jane Austen was a member of the landed gentry, she was never without financial anxieties. She was a country gentlewoman without economic security. The gentry class suffered enormous changes during Austen's lifetime, which profoundly affected her material circumstances. Her father, George Austen, was the local rector and took in boarding students; his income was merely adequate. Austen eventually earned enough from her writing to supplement their income and to leave something for Cassandra and her mother, but after her father's death in 1805, the women depended for the rest of their lives on the generosity of the Austen brothers. Jane Austen spent her childhood surrounded by an already large family that was expanded by her father's boarding pupils—enough of them to amount to a boys' school.[1] One of Austen's biographers, Claire Tomalin, describes the young Jane as "a tough and unsentimental child, drawn to rude, anarchic imaginings and black jokes."[2] George Austen had an ample library, and the children were great readers. They attended church regularly, where their father presided. They kept chickens, a dairy, and a vegetable garden, baked bread and brewed beer, milked cows and churned cream for butter, made preserves, raked hay, played in the barn, and generally enjoyed a country existence.

The second Austen son, George, suffered from ill health and seizures from a young age; he may have had cerebral palsy. George lived most of his life with his Uncle Thomas in Monk Sherburne, another Hampshire village. Thomas, his mother's younger brother, had similar disabilities. He only occasionally returned to Steventon as a young boy. Although there is little mention of George in the Austen archival record, he may have been deaf or lacked language, because there is some evidence that Jane Austen knew sign language.

Living with the crowd of assorted siblings and boarding schoolboys, Jane Austen was perhaps especially comfortable with boys. But she often enjoyed the company of her cousin Eliza Hancock, later Comtesse de Feuillide and ultimately the wife of Jane's brother Henry. Eliza was an important worldly influence, who instructed Jane Austen at a young age how to handle complex social situations with all sorts of people.

The Austen brothers were schooled at home with other boys until they were about twelve. But Jane Austen and

her sister Cassandra were sent away to school at a younger age, perhaps to make room for additional paying pupils. Jane was seven in the spring of 1783, when she was sent to a school in Oxford run by a Mrs. Cawley. She joined her cousin Jane Cooper, who was eleven years old. Mrs. Cawley ran her school from her home, which was the usual practice and one of the few respectable ways a woman could make a living in late eighteenth-century England. Many accounts of such schools are depressing, and many girls were wretched in them.[3] Although we know little of what went on at Mrs. Cawley's, Jane Austen later wrote scathingly of schoolmistresses. And we do know that in the summer of 1783, Mrs. Cawley decided to move her school to Southampton without informing the girls' families.

As a port, Southampton was home to various military encampments, and the soldiers and sailors stationed there apparently brought an infectious disease (probably typhus) that soon spread through the town. Many of the schoolgirls became ill, including the Austen cousins. Mrs. Cawley did not inform their parents, but Jane Cooper had the sense to write to her mother in Bath, and Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Austen immediately retrieved their daughters. Jane Austen was by then dangerously ill, and her mother had to nurse her back to health before taking her home. The other girls also recovered, but Mrs. Cooper caught the fever and died in Bath. Jane Cooper began to spend a good deal of her time in Steventon and became part of the Austen family.

Austen's aunt Philadelphia Walter, her father's sister and mother of Eliza Hancock de Feuillide, provides the first physical description we have of Jane, from the summer of 1788. She was "whimsical and affected," Aunt Phila wrote in a letter to her daughter Eliza, and "not at all pretty" but "very prim." Jane was then twelve years old, and was often contrasted with her more "sensible" sister Cassandra.

Jane was about twelve when she began to write her bitingly satirical first experiments with social comedy. Her later novels develope a subtle irony; but in her juvenile writings, Austen boldly unmasked polite society with characters who are openly rude, or adulterous, or downright murderous. And she makes great fun of most of them.

In a letter sent from Chawton to her niece Anna Austen on 9 September 1814, Jane Austen made one of her memorable comments about writing novels. Anna was an aspiring novelist, and had sent several manuscripts to her published aunt for a critique.

> You are now collecting your People delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life; 3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on—& I hope you will write a great deal more, & make full use of them while they are so favourably arranged.[4]

Indeed, in addition to describing the circumstances of much of Austen's own fiction, which focuses on details of social interaction and the daily conspiracies of polite society, this passage also seems to describe the world in which Jane Austen lived, the world of country village English gentry.

Austen was always conscious of her choice of literary subject matter. In an equally famous letter to her sister Cassandra on 4 February 1813, she described an evening during which the family read aloud—a common form of household entertainment—her ***Pride and Prejudice.*** As an authorial description of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** the phrase "light, and bright, and sparkling" is apt and modest and rightly memorable.

> Upon the whole, however, I am quite vain enough and well satisfied enough. The work is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or anything that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style.[5]

Yet the rest of the passage is also significant. She was not unaware, either of the political or military upheaval in early nineteenth-century Europe or of the literary activities that surrounded her own writing. Rather, Jane Austen reveals her deliberate decision to focus her literary skills on the ways in which the social world impinges upon and dictates how people live with one another.

So to answer Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, who wrote fifty years after his aunt's death that "Of events, her life was singularly barren: few changes and no great crisis ever broke the smooth current of its course," we need to ask how this could possibly have been the case. Austen's life spanned the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic wars and the War of 1812, and the depths of European involvement in the slave trade. She witnessed the rise of middle-class culture as the ancient English landed aristocracy slowly declined. Two of her brothers served in the British navy and traveled around the world. Another brother was a banker. Her sister's betrothed died of yellow fever during a voyage to the West Indies. Her cousin married a Frenchman who was guillotined during the Terror in France. Austen's was not a barren life. Even in some of her earliest writings, such as ***Catharine, or the Bower*** and, in an odd way, ***The History of England,*** Jane Austen conveys dismay at characters that cultivate a blithe ignorance of the history and politics that shape their worlds.

Austen's daily life involved only the circuit of visits and household duties that she experienced in the villages of the English countryside, and that is where she

found her creative home. The West Indies and India appear briefly, but political concerns remain subtle and offstage in Austen's fiction. International events are great catalysts in the novels, however, because the economic system at the center of Austen's English gentry depended on inherited wealth and land and on an entangling colonial system that was the British Empire—and supported the social lives of Austen's characters. Austen's brothers—naval officers, clergymen, and bankers—visited the world and returned home with news. And Austen understood the political and economic structure on which she built her fictional society.

Austen herself lived the only life approved for women of her time, learning household skills such as sewing, gardening, and kitchen work, and developing the feminine talents of drawing, needlework, playing the piano, speaking French, and writing letters. From an early age, she found her creative outlet in composing stories and sharing them with her family.

We do not know exactly when Jane Austen began to write her stories, but by her early teens, she supplied stories and plays for her family to read aloud and perform. She copied many pages of her juvenile writings into three carefully kept notebooks. Most of this work is satirical and reveals her prodigious use of her father's extensive library at Steventon. She was familiar with the poetry, drama, and fiction of her day, and she often used her stories to lampoon the popular excesses of sentimentality or Gothicism. The Austens performed amateur theatricals at home, a common entertainment at the time (and more than somewhat morally suspect, as Austen illustrated in a crucial sequence in ***Mansfield Park***).

Jane Austen did not travel beyond the several counties in southern England where she had family members, and she spent relatively little time in London. Yet her brothers and her cousin Eliza brought home tales of a larger world, and she took a great interest in their exploits abroad. So she had reason to be acquainted with India and the European continent as well as with the West Indies and Asia. She chose not to include any direct depictions of these outside worlds in her novels, but many of Austen's characters—from Thomas Bertram of ***Mansfield Park*** to Captain Wentworth of ***Persuasion***—come and go from the circumscribed worlds of Austen's country villages to the greater world of colonial plantations and the slave economy and military exploits. The emotional action of Austen's novels takes place inside the houses of rural country gentlefolk, but it is clear that Jane Austen knew what went on outside those houses in some detail, and understood as well how the country life of her characters reflected the society in which they lived.

Jane Austen's knowledge of family life was vast. Several members of her extended family, such as her cousin Jane Cooper and her brother James' sister-in-law, Martha Lloyd, spent time living with them. Her brothers married and provided her with many nieces and nephews, and she frequently visited neighboring families. The Knights, a wealthy, childless couple, adopted her brother Edward. He took their name and inherited their estates, and he provided Jane and Cassandra Austen and their mother with some further domestic and economic security earlier you say they depended and some knowledge of life in a large country manor. Her brother Henry was reputed to be Austen's favorite and helped her with her publishing activities. Henry married Austen cousin Eliza de Feuillide in 1797, three years after her husband, the Comte de Feuillide, was guillotined. Henry Austen tried a variety of careers and suffered some financial difficulties.

Most of Jane Austen's life was spent either at home or visiting among her numerous family members and neighboring acquaintances, a life that was, by all accounts, profoundly social for a woman who also clearly enjoyed her solitude. She moved around a good deal—from Steventon to Bath to Chawton—and changed lodgings many times.

Austen's knowledge of how human beings interact in complex and delicate social situations, her deep understanding of individual and social psychology, and a lapidary prose style that captures emotional nuances, give us timeless novels that continue to entertain us even as they hold up mirrors to our own contemporary society.

Jane Austen died on 18 July 1817 in Winchester, attended by her beloved sister, Cassandra. She had suffered for months with fevers and weakness, was sometimes irritable, and was often too unwell to sit up in bed. Her skin was pale and mottled, "black & white and every wrong colour" and as she wrote to her niece Fanny, "I must not depend upon ever being blooming again."[6] ***Sanditon,*** which she was unable to complete, concerns illness and invalidism, and perhaps her condition led her to this subject matter. When her health forced her to stop writing, she turned to prayers and poetry.

Jane Austen's final literary production was a dictated set of comic verses about the Winchester horse races. She also wrote letters about the devoted attention of her family. Her brothers visited, and of Cassandra she wrote, "Words must fail me in any attempt to describe what a nurse she has been to me."[7] Cassandra described her final hours to their niece Fanny, ending with this description: "She gave me the idea of a beautiful statue, & even now in her coffin, there is such a sweet serene air over her countenance as is quite pleasant to contemplate."[8] Scholars have concluded, using what evidence there is, that Jane Austen died from Addison's disease,

a condition that could have caused the progressive debility she experienced. We will never have a complete diagnosis, and we can only imagine what works of literature she might have contributed to the canon of English letters had she lived longer.

Notes

1. The Austen family followed the common practice of the time of boarding their infants with local cottagers until they were weaned.
2. Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 31.
3. Perhaps the best-known literary depiction of such a girls' school is the oppressive Lowood School in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* although Lowood is a charitable institution run by the Church and a much bigger establishment than Mrs. Cawley's small home school. In *Emma,* however, Jane Austen depicts Mrs. Goddard's school as a relatively benign institution, and this is probably much closer to her own experience than the horrors of Brontë's Lowood.
4. *Jane Austen's Letters,* ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 275.
5. Ibid., p. 203.
6. Ibid., pp. 335-36.
7. Ibid., p. 340.
8. Ibid., p. 345.

Jane Austen at Work

Getting Established

As a child, Jane Austen seems to have been relatively unsentimental, humorous, and teasing, perhaps because the boys' school run by her father provided an environment of rowdiness and high jinks. She began writing down her ideas on scraps of paper almost as soon as she could write, and she wrote sketches for her own amusement, and soon for the amusement of her parents, siblings, and extended family members. The first pieces we have were probably composed between 1787 and 1793, when she was twelve to eighteen. Few of the juvenile writings are dated, so the dates scholars have assigned are derived from the little evidence that exists and the recollections of family members.

Austen fair copied her juvenile writings into three carefully tended notebooks consisting of twenty-seven pieces of varying lengths and levels of polish. These quarto notebooks were likely gifts; we know that her father gave her the one she used for ***Volume the Second.*** She took these productions seriously, including tables of contents, page numbers, and dedications—all the details of a published book. She transcribed these pieces over fifteen or twenty years, and continued to make revisions as late as 1809. But because the original manuscripts from which she made the copies have not survived, we cannot follow the evolution of her craft. Clearly, however, these early pieces were important to her.

Brian Southam offers the following dating of the juvenile writings[1]:

1787-1790 (***Volume the First***)
"Frederic and Elfrida"
"Jack and Alice"
"Edgar and Emma"
"Henry and Eliza"
"Mr. Harley"
"Sir William Mountague"
"Mr. Clifford"
"The beautifull Cassandra"
"Amelia Webster"
"The Visit"
"The Mystery"

1790 (***Volume the Second***)
Love and Freindship

1791 (***Volume the Second***)
The History of England
"Collection of Letters"

1792
"Lesley Castle" (***Second***)
"The Three Sisters"' (***First***)
"Evelyn" (***Third***)
"Catharine" (***Third***)

1793
"Scraps" (***Second***)
"Detached Pieces" (***First***)
"Ode to Pity" (***First***)

In ***Volume the First,*** the handwriting is childish and the compositions appear to be the earliest of Austen's literary efforts, even though the one date they carry is 1793. The contents of ***Volume the Third*** are dated 1792. ***Volume the First*** resides in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, ***Volume the Third*** is in the British Museum, and ***Volume the Second*** has a private owner. The publisher Chatto & Windus first published ***Love and Freindship*** [*sic*] in 1922 with an introduction by English writer G. K. Chesterton.

Family lore maintains that Austen composed these lighthearted and often hilarious early writings simply as family amusements to be read aloud. Many of the pieces are dedicated to family members, and no doubt the evening readings produced much mirth. Still, Austen must have taken this composition seriously, given the copies she made and the revisions she continued to make.

In addition to humor, her juvenile writings display a characteristic toughness. Austen shows little or no mercy to her satirical targets. She goes beyond simple literary parody to skewer some notable excesses in human behavior, and she already gives evidence of her keen eye and no-nonsense approach to social interactions. She has little patience for arrogance, self-absorption, vanity, or hypocrisy. She spots human weaknesses from a great distance, and she targets them in her character portraits. Even the pieces that seem purely silly ridicule superficiality and self-importance. Still, mischievousness prevails in Austen's early work.[2]

Some of these qualities appear in Austen's later fiction. Several of her characters have exaggerated personality traits. There is Mrs. Allen's obsession with clothes in ***Northanger Abbey***; Mr. Palmer's rudeness to his wife in ***Sense and Sensibility***; and Mr. Woodhouse's concern with health in ***Emma,*** reinforcing his portrayal as a fussbudget. However, in her mature fiction, while such characters have a ruling passion or trait, their personalities function in a larger social context, and Austen presents them with real affection and a deep knowledge of the human heart, whereas in the juvenilia, one-dimensional characters are simple puppets for Austen's burlesque effects. As the pieces become more sophisticated, they offer outlines of Austen's later themes and literary techniques. Her characters evolve into complex individuals who interact in more elaborate ways with the society in which they live, and who grow and change in the course of those interactions.

Techniques

Austen's extensive reading prepared the way for her writing career. Her father apparently placed no restrictions on the books she read as a child. As her biographer Claire Tomalin puts it, "if she was allowed to read Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* as a child, which gives detailed accounts of maternal drunkenness and paternal adultery, and lays out the correct attitude to adopt towards a father's mistress and illegitimate half-brothers, Mr. Austen cannot have kept much from her."[3] Henry Austen remembers his sister as a precocious reader, but he also emphasizes her piety, and he focuses on her reading of Samuel Johnson's essays, William Cowper's poetry, and sermons.[4] But Austen also enjoyed Henry Fielding's comedy *Tom Thumb* and his ribald novel *Tom Jones,* Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* and *Tristram Shandy* (an experimental comic novel based in part on the philosophy of John Locke), and the fiction of Charlotte Lennox, Frances Burney d'Arblay, and Charlotte Smith.[5] The family read plays together, and Austen would have been especially familiar with Shakespeare's plays, which are mentioned throughout her own novels: Edmund Bertram and Henry Crawford discuss Shakespeare in ***Mansfield Park***; Catherine Morland mentions Shakespeare in ***Northanger Abbey***; and the Dashwood sisters read *Hamlet* with Willoughby in ***Sense and Sensibility.*** She was familiar with Johnson's philosophical novel *Rasselas* and his essays, and she read James Boswell's work. The *Bible,* the *Book of Common Prayer,* and Milton's poetry were, of course, important elements of Austen's formation and education.

We know that Austen's favorite novel was Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison,* published in 1753 and 1754. The novel is a seven-volume work about a paragon of gentlemanliness, the woman he falls in love with after rescuing her from a kidnapping and possible rape, an Italian lady to whom Sir Charles has pledged himself and from whom it takes him many volumes to get honorably extricated, and their families and friends. Austen's only attempt at playwriting was a dramatic version of this story, a manuscript preserved by the Austen family for years but not discovered until the late 1970s, when it was edited and published by Austen scholar Brian Southam.[6]

Given Austen's novelistic preoccupations, some of the features of the plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* are particularly intriguing.[7] For example, Sir Charles's outspoken younger sister Charlotte rails against marriage as a form of imprisonment. When in the end Charlotte agrees to marry, she misbehaves at her own wedding, will not let her new husband sit beside her in the carriage afterwards, and teases him so relentlessly that he smashes her harpsichord. This novel is full of discussions about women's roles and social place. The marriage between Harriet Byron and Sir Charles exemplifies an ideal for which Austen's heroines also strive: a marriage partnership that represents not only romantic love but a highly developed and respectful friendship between a man and a woman.

Austen's reading gave her philosophical insights, subject matter, and social attitudes to mine for her own work and a firm grasp of novelistic techniques. Her early writings were fictions in the form of letters. Letters also figure prominently in her novels: Darcy writes letters and the characters discuss letter-writing as an activity in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** and a letter-writing scene provides the climax of Austen's final completed novel, ***Persuasion.*** Letters were a form of writing practiced by women, and worked easily as a narrative technique that introduced women's voices into fiction. As her craft evolved, Austen developed the early epistolary versions of ***Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility,*** and ***Pride and Prejudice*** into third-person narratives with her trademark omniscient and ironic voice as the controlling narrative authority.

Austen wrote many of her early pieces and the first versions of ***Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility,*** and ***Pride and Prejudice*** in epistolary form—a frequent

mode of presenting novels in the eighteenth century, and Richardson's particular technique. She uses the mishaps of letters gone astray not only to create plot complications, but to poke fun at the crises and confusions that result. In **"Lesley Castle,"** one letter begins: "I have but just received your letter, which being directed to Sussex while I was at Bristol was obliged to be forwarded to me here, & from some unaccountable Delay, has but this instant reached me—."[8] Austen often made fun of herself, and of authorship in general. Her hilariously concise history of England, called ***The History of England from the reign of Henry the 4th to the death of Charles the 1st,*** is prefaced with an epigraph that reads: "By a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian." A note follows this epigraph and promises: "N.B. There will be very few Dates in this History."[9]

Jane Austen used a narrative method that has often been misunderstood, in part because of her own self-deprecating references. In December 1816, she wrote to her nephew James Edward Austen about his writings, which she refers to in a bantering tone as "strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of Variety & Glow" in contrast to her own productions, "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour."[10] She seemed to see herself as a miniaturist, writing occasional, offhand portraits. In fact, she used a technique of concentration, placing her characters in close proximity and in complex social situations, and then watching them interact and work out their relationships through revealing mechanisms of social negotiation. The "little bit" of ivory tells a bigger tale.

Jane Austen's own writing process itself could have been a scene in one of her novels. Her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh's memoir of his aunt describes the loss of privacy for writing that Austen suffered when the family left Steventon and moved to Chawton. At Chawton Cottage, she had to write in the public sitting room. Because she didn't want servants or visitors to know that she was writing, she wrote on small scraps that could be quickly hidden under a piece of blotting paper if someone entered the room. As Austen-Leigh tells it, the door to the sitting room creaked when it opened or closed, and Austen did not wish it to be repaired because it signaled to her that she needed to spirit away her writing.

Jane Austen's irony and the brilliant thematic structure of her carefully wrought stories are legendary. Her brilliance begins at the level of the individual sentence. Almost any randomly selected sentence from one of her six major novels is a model of prose style. Her syntax is clever and elaborate, with flowing punctuation and lengthy, connected clauses; yet her sentences are never muddled or confusing. To parse them grammatically, or to analyze their vocabulary or their punctuation, might tax most readers; but each sentence satisfies because its complexity never gets in the way of its easy good sense. Austen's syntax is entangled, her points of view and manipulation of perspective are elaborately contrived, but the complexities of her prose flatter as well as speak to her readers' intelligence.

Austen was one of the first and most innovative practitioners of a narrative style known as *style indirect libre,* or free indirect style. While her fame derives largely from her straightforward, canny reportage of ordinary details and personal quirks, she also excels at painting a scene by combining one character's voice or point of view with the perspective of an omniscient narrating voice that speaks from outside the action. Sometimes these voices belong to multiple characters, as in the *tour de force* of indirect style that describes the strawberry sequence at the Donwell Abbey picnic in *Emma.*

> The whole party was assembled, excepting Frank Churchill, who was expected every moment from Richmond; and Mrs. Elton, in all her appartus of happiness, her large bonnet and her basket, was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking—strawberries, and only strawberries, only now be thought or spoken of.—"The best fruit in England—every body's favourite—always wholesome.—These the finest beds and finest sorts.—Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them.—Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing—only objection to gathering strawberries the stooping—glaring sun—tired to death—could bear it no longer—must go and sit in the shade."[11]

This passage comes largely from the perspective of vain Mrs. Elton, who has positioned herself as the hostess at Donwell; but it also contrives to deliver a group or community voice that moves from lively pleasure to lethargy in the course of this deliberately disjointed, galloping paragraph. It is not altogether clear who is speaking, and the indeterminacy of the phrases forms part of how they convey a communal sense of the initially delightful and then irritating activity of picking strawberries. The passage is both stylized and almost stream-of-consciousness in its flow.[12]

Austen's prose style welcomes and pleases her readers because she cultivates a rich relationship between the narrator and the reader. The narrator speaks directly to us, and with us consents to view the novel's characters from a certain perspective. Austen's narrative voice assumes that she is speaking to a sensible audience who

understands and agrees with her right-minded standards of behavior and morality. There is an amused, critical irony that embraces the reader in the inner circle of those who have insight and perspicacity, those who know and can judge.

Austen nearly independently invented a new and revolutionary form of the English novel. The novel played an increasingly important role in popular literature during the century that preceded Austen, and her work owes a debt to Samuel Richardson and Frances Burney in particular. But she combined the external observations of eighteenth-century adventure fiction (the picaresque novels of Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett) with the interior analyses of women's moral fiction of the period (the psychological novels of Ann Radcliffe and Burney) to achieve a quiet but startlingly influential innovation in the genre of the novel.

Women's domestic experience was circumscribed by gender roles and expectations, and women's lives centered primarily on family activities. Yet women also needed to use their domestic choices to fit themselves into the larger social and economic structures into which they were born. Austen took this confluence of private limitation and public necessity and wove it into some of the most psychologically insightful, socially astute, and complex literature we have in the English language. Given her inauspicious and utterly normal surroundings, one might ask how this was possible.

Austen's narrative voice is her most powerful and influential invention. Writing with distance and judgment, her narrators manage to be didactic and aloof, conversational and charming and, above all, ironic. They testify to the technical prowess and craftsmanship of Austen's mature prose. While her subject matter seems small—the subtle ways in which people interact and form judgments of one another, the nuances of space and language at a public gathering, the meanings of gestures and silences—she painted an overarching and highly moral portrait of social life.

As a stylist, Austen is best known for her use of irony, and this technique already emerges in sharp form in her juvenile writings. Austen's juvenile work frequently turns to wicked satire. One of her favorite targets was the vogue for sentimentality. When Emma learns that Edgar is away at college in **"Edgar and Emma,"** she retires to her room, where she "continued in tears the remainder of her Life."[13] In ***Love and Freindship*** [*sic*], the friends Sophia and Laura shriek and faint, swoon and run mad, a circumstance that leads to some judicious advice.

> Beware of swoons . . . A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; it is an excerise to the Body & if not too violent, is I dare say conducive to health in its consequences.—Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint—.[14]

To understand the finely honed production of Austen's irony, we should look closely at a couple of her mature sentences, because it is at the level of the sentence *that* Austen's narrative voice succeeds. Here is the famous opening sentence (and paragraph) of ***Pride and Prejudice***: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."[15] This sentence opens the novel with a proposition that the novel's plot proves: Charles Bingley has moved into the neighborhood of the Bennets, who have five unmarried daughters and an entailed estate, and Mrs. Bennet, with every other mother in the area, plans to ensnare him as a marriage partner for one of her girls, preferably the eldest. And in the end, after many vicissitudes and misunderstandings and illnesses and humiliations, the marriage is certain.

But plot foreshadowing is the least of this sentence's importance. It sets up the comical yet deadly serious dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet about the necessity of paying a visit to the new neighbors, and thus initiates the tone of the whole novel: the nature of the Bennet marriage and thus the question of marriage generally and so the social necessities and economic maneuverings that are requirements in this society. The sentence embodies an idea that is both practical and philosophical; it is an opinion both on economics and on social structure. This sentence, critic Julia Prewitt Brown observes, starts a chain reaction because it "reverberates throughout the entire first chapter, indeed the entire novel, and derives its brilliance from that reverberation."[16] The sentence is meaningful in a straightforward way and yet quite outrageous in its implications.

Brown mentions another classically and somewhat cruelly ironic sentence from ***Emma.*** This sentence also opens a chapter, and it also stands alone as a paragraph: "Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of."[17] What occasions this ironic blast is one of the most awkward circumstances into which Emma Woodhouse contrives to trap herself. Emma encourages her friend Harriet Smith to consider Mr. Elton. Mr. Elton misinterprets her manipulations as a sign that Emma herself is well-disposed towards him. Emma is mortified, Harriet is humiliated, and Mr. Elton recovers from his disappointment by affiancing himself to Miss Hawkins and returning to town to tout her merits.

Mrs. Elton, née Hawkins, becomes one of Austen's best satirical targets for self-importance and social obliviousness. The sentence from ***Emma*** introduces the embarrassing fact that Miss Hawkins becomes an instant celebrity in Highbury, where everyone suddenly thinks well of her. The operative phrase "interesting situations" in the sentence makes it at once a humorous and a significant statement. The word "interesting" had more

complex meanings in Austen's time than it does now, when it represents merely the opposite of dull or boring. Then, it meant something more like "intriguing" or "provocative." But however we understand the word, it seems staggeringly cruel to call someone's dying "interesting." (We might note that Mrs. Churchill is not spoken well of in ***Emma*** until after her offstage death.) Death, of course, is just what we least expect in a comedy of manners, where what we look for is a wedding. Austen subtly made marriage analogous to death in this neat sentence and illuminated another element of her fiction: It investigates the larger scope of human nature.

Saying as little as possible to convey the crux of a situation or a character constitutes another of Austen's ironic techniques. Her lovers' confessions of love and proposals of marriage perfectly illustrate her economy of language. Whole books lead up to these moments, of course, after a range of obstacles and discomfiting circumstances and embarrassments. At the climactic proposal scene in ***Emma,*** for example, even though the narrator provides two pages of indirect discourse on the agitations of Emma's mind when she realizes that she herself is the object of Mr. Knightley's affections, the moment of truth is delivered only in these lines: "She spoke then, on being so entreated.—What did she say?—Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does."[18] The scene continues with the tactic of indirect speech, a clipped series of confessions and revelations between the lovers who are to be husband and wife.

Jane Austen also pioneered the use of *style indirect libre* to convey what her characters are thinking without quoting them directly. Austen often used this technique, especially during the climactic scenes when her lovers finally unburden themselves to one another and recapitulate the various musings, miscommunications, and circumstances that have led to plot entanglements and at last to an understanding of mutual love. The revelations between Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot in ***Persuasion*** that follow much misreading, self-doubt, and emotional upheaval are preceded by indirect discourse during a concert scene that involves Wentworth's anxious jealousy of Anne's cousin Mr. Elliot, who ends the scene by interrupting them.[19] This conversation has nothing really to do with the concert, but conveys the subtlety and edginess of the unspoken history and feelings between the interlocutors.

When the most important words are spoken in an Austen novel, the reader rarely gets to hear them. The second proposal scene between Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in ***Pride and Prejudice*** also uses indirect speech. When it comes to the central moment, the narrator tells us that Darcy "expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do."[20] And after the exchange between Knightley and Emma in ***Emma,*** the narrator offers a now famous Austenian observation.

> Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom does it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material.[21]

This sentence tells us a great deal about Austen's novelistic technique. Even as her narrators choreograph their plots around a thicket of misunderstandings and missed opportunities, the characters mature and learn to give one another and themselves the benefit of the doubt.

Subject to Revision

Jane Austen's brother Henry, in a "Biographical Notice of the Author," his preface to his posthumous edition of his sister's first and last novels, ***Northanger Abbey*** and ***Persuasion,*** presented the first public glimpse of his sister's working process as a writer. He stated that she became interested in literature and in her own language abilities at an early age in her father's library. Her novels were polished and sent out for publication from Chawton, but she began many of them, he noted, in earlier periods of her life. In Henry Austen's portrait, Jane Austen appears as a meticulous editor of her own work. "For though in composition she was equally rapid and correct," he wrote, "yet an invincible distrust of her own judgement induced her to withhold her works from the public, till time and many perusals had satisfied her that the charm of recent composition was resolved."[22]

As Henry Austen remarked in his "Biographical Notice," Jane Austen read and reread, corrected and revised her work until she was satisfied that she had said what she wanted to say. Thus she began to write what would become her major works at a young age, and she spent many years rereading, revising, and correcting the manuscripts. The origins of the first three of Jane Austen's six great novels overlap with the writing of the juvenile works.

Austen may have begun her first completed novel, ***Lady Susan,*** as early as 1793 or 1794. We have a fair-copy manuscript with few corrections from 1805, so scholars have had to speculate from other evidence.[23] She began to write ***First Impressions,*** later called ***Pride and Prejudice,*** in 1796, when she was just twenty-one, and she completed the first version in 1797. Her family enjoyed it right away. Her father offered it to a publisher, but it was rejected sight unseen. By 1800, Jane Austen had completed a novel she titled ***Susan,*** and she had revised a third book called ***Elinor and Marianne,*** written before ***First Impressions.*** These works were the first versions of ***Northanger Abbey*** and ***Sense and Sensibility.*** All three were originally composed in epistolary form.

Austen prepared ***Susan*** for publication in 1802 or 1803, and sold it to a publisher in 1803 for £10, but it was not published, and in 1809 she arranged to buy back the

copyright for the same amount. After her death it was published as ***Northanger Abbey.*** In 1803, Austen also worked on a novel fragment called ***The Watsons***; the manuscript is written on paper watermarked 1803 and was probably composed in Bath. Austen's father died in 1805, and scholars assume that she abandoned this work in her bereavement. Her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh proposed another hypothesis for the abandonment of this promising manuscript: that the Watson family has the most obscure social status of any of Austen's principal families, and that she thought better of such a subject. Whatever the reason, ***The Watsons*** remains a promising story, if darker than much of her other work, and it is a loss to literature that Austen chose not to complete it.

When the Austen women moved to Chawton Cottage in July of 1809, Jane was thirty-three. Chawton afforded little privacy for writing, but it was here that Austen composed her great mature novels. The first of Austen's completed major novels to be published was ***Sense and Sensibility*** in November 1811. It was followed in January 1813, by ***Pride and Prejudice. Mansfield Park*** appeared in May of 1814, and ***Emma*** in December 1815, the year that Austen began ***Persuasion.*** She began to lose her health in 1816, but by July of that year she had completed a first draft and a revised version of ***Persuasion,*** and in January of 1817 she began her last novel, the unfinished ***Sanditon. Northanger Abbey*** (the first of the six major novels in date of composition) and ***Persuasion*** were published together, with a biographical note by Henry Austen, in December of 1818, five months after Jane Austen died in Winchester on 18 July at the age of forty-two.

Critical Reception

Contrary to popular views that Austen was an amateur who did not take her work seriously, she thought a great deal about remuneration for her writings. Her first effort to publish was in November 1797. Her father, the Reverend George Austen, offered ***First Impressions,*** later to become ***Pride and Prejudice,*** to Cadell and Davies in November, offering to take on the costs and the risk himself. He compared the book in length and subject matter to Frances Burney's *Evelina,* but the publisher declined to read it.

The literary marketplace was no longer completely inhospitable to women by Austen's time, but it was difficult to enter. A century earlier, Aphra Behn became the first Englishwoman to support herself by her pen—at the cost of her reputation. Fame for a woman automatically meant infamy, which explains Jane Austen's typical decision to publish her work anonymously. Women could neither own property nor sign personal contracts.[24] She required a male relation to negotiate on her behalf, and her brother Henry performed this service for her.

There were several publishing options in England. Authors could sell subscriptions to their books, printing only the number for which they had prearranged sales. An author could negotiate a one-time sale of the copyright, the method Austen chose for ***Susan*** (whose copyright she bought back six years after selling it) and ***Pride and Prejudice.*** The copyright, then as now, was a license to print a book, and was understood to represent property. The House of Lords had eliminated perpetual copyright in 1774, the year before Austen's birth, but publishers still paid blanket fees for a limited copyright ownership of fourteen or twenty-eight years. A copyright sale assured an author of money regardless of the book's sales. However, if the book sold well, its author was not entitled to its profits. There were also various forms of profit sharing.

The method that Austen chose for ***Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park,*** and ***Emma*** was to publish on commission. For the author, commission publication entailed underwriting the cost of paper, printing, and advertising, and the publisher distributed the copies and kept the accounts. In practice, the publisher usually fronted the costs of printing and took reimbursements from the profits. The publisher got a ten percent commission on each copy sold, and if things went well, the author made a profit. There was greater risk to commission publication, but also a greater chance of monetary rewards. Of Austen's novels published on commission, only the second edition of ***Mansfield Park*** lost money.[25]

Austen kept careful records of her literary earnings. Writing to her brother Frank on 15 September 1813, she added a postscript.

> You will be glad to hear that every Copy of S. & S. is sold & that it has brought me £140—besides the Copyright, if that should ever be of any value.—I have now therefore written myself into £250.—which only makes me long for more.[26]

In a letter to Martha Lloyd dated 29 November 1812, Austen informed her close friend that Thomas Egerton had paid £110 for ***Pride and Prejudice.*** "I would rather have had £150," she writes, "but we could not both be pleased, & I am not at all surprised that he should not chuse to hazard so much."[27] Interestingly, because publications and copyrights represented property and income potential, they also became associated with the notion of authority.[28]

It was not until after her death that any of Jane Austen's novels appeared with her name attached to them, so the reviews that were published during her lifetime never mentioned her by name.

Notes

1. Southam discusses his criteria for this dating in B. C. Southam, *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

2. Frances Beer provides a useful introduction to Austen's juvenile writings in the "Introduction" to *The Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë,* ed. Frances Beer (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 9-19.

3. Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 67.

4. Henry Austen added a "Biographical Notice of the Author" to his posthumous edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion,* and R. W. Chapman keeps this Notice in *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 3-9.

5. For accounts of Austen's reading, see the chapter "Reading and Response" in Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (1939; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 41-83 and Margaret Anne Doody, "Jane Austen's Reading," in J. David Grey, A. Walton Litz, and Brian Southam, eds. *The Jane Austen Companion* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 347-63.

6. *Jane Austen's "Sir Charles Grandison,"* transcribed and edited by Brian Southam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

7. Austen wrote her own version of this story. See Ibid.

8. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 119.

9. Ibid., 138.

10. *Jane Austen's Letters,* new ed., ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 323.

11. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 358-59.

12. For a useful discussion of Austen's language use, see Norman Page, *The Language of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). For a study of the satiric uses of indirect style before Austen, see Claude Rawson, *Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper* (London, 1985).

13. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 33.

14. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 102.

15. Ibid., p. 3.

16. Julia Prewitt Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels: Social Change and Literary Form* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 26.

17. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 181. Cited and discussed by Julia Prewitt Brown, op. cit., p. 26.

18. Ibid., p. 431.

19. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 190.

20. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). p. 366.

21. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 431.

22. Henry Austen, "Biographical Notice of the Author," in *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 4.

23. See B. C. Southam, *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

24. Some property strictures applied differently to married and to single women. For a complete discussion, see Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). A widow could inherit and manage property after her husband's death, and individual family arrangements could override property laws by explicitly stipulating alternative inheritance rules for an estate. This explains Lady Catherine de Bourgh's powerful position in *Pride and Prejudice.* She owns the Rosings living and thus has the authority to give it to Mr. Collins. She also makes the telling remark to Charlotte, on the subject of the Longbourne estate, "I see no occasion for entailing estates away from the female line.—It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family" (*The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 164). It should be mentioned in this context that Lady Catherine de Bourgh's title derives from her father rather than from her husband, who was of a lower rank.

25. Jan Fergus offers a useful discussion of publishing practices in "Conditions of Authorship for Women," in *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 1-27.

26. *Jane Austen's Letters,* new ed., ed. Deidre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 217.

27. Ibid., p. 197.

28. For discussions of publishing income and its relation to authorship and authority, see Jan Fergus and Janice Farrar Thaddeus, "Women, Publishers, and Money, 1790-1820," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 17 (1987), pp. 198-207.

Jane Austen's Era

Jane Austen's England

In the late eighteenth century, England and Wales comprised fifty-two counties, called *shires* until the time of William the Conqueror. Jane Austen's novels, as her life, took place in the counties north and south of London. She came from Hampshire, abbreviated as Hants., southwest of London. Industrial development centered in the north, with heavy manufacturing beginning to grow in Birmingham, cotton factories in Manchester, and coal mining in Newcastle. Bath, west of London, was the social center of fashionable England, and figures prominently in Austen's life and art. Portsmouth, a featured location in ***Mansfield Park*** and the place where Austen's naval brothers received their early training, was a naval base on the southern coast of England. And London, on the river Thames, was the metropolis.

Change was the predominant characteristic of England during Jane Austen's brief life. Austen was a paramount chronicler of that change in its social manifestations for a particular class: country landowners who were being displaced by the rising mercantile classes. While Austen was discreet about the difficult subject of money, in her life as in her novels, she was acutely aware of wealth: who had it, how it was earned, and what happened when there was not enough of it. The relationship between people whose wealth derived from land ownership and those whose wealth derived from commercial interests evolved in confusing ways during Austen's life, and she was fully aware of this evolution. As social historian Raymond Williams wrote in *The Country and the City,* Austen's world was set against the backdrop of a particularly unsettled time in English social and economic history.[1]

Land—real property—dictated how this social world operated, and critic Tony Tanner usefully points out the etymological and thematic connections between *property* and Austen's other preoccupation, *propriety.* As Tanner shows, property rights were born as a sacred trust with John Locke's 1690 *Second Treatise of Government.* Sir William Blackstone's famous *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* published in four volumes between 1765 and 1769, discussed property rights as a law of nature. Tanner notes that laws about property offenses grew from fifty or so in 1688 to over 200 in 1820. Both economist Adam Smith and political thinker Edmund Burke also weighed in importantly on the relations between property ownership and the social order. Tanner points out that Austen's "proper" heroes all own land and, until ***Persuasion,*** her heroines all require a propertied man.[2] Similarly, Alistair Duckworth's important critical study of Austen's novels starts with the premise that the estate and its inheritance and improvement are central to Austen's imagined and real worlds.[3]

As the structure of the English economy changed during Austen's lifetime, so did English government and society. Coal and iron technologies and steam power supported new industrial developments and brought changes in agricultural and mechanical production. Material wealth increased and posed a challenge to the monopoly of aristocratic interests, and British power grew across the globe as a consequence. Railroads and free trade would come somewhat later, but the way was paved for these developments in the final decades of the eighteenth century.

When Jane Austen was born, the family was the central institution in English life. It bestowed rank or the lack of it on its members and dictated their place and expectations in the world. Eighteenth-century philosophers built a moral perspective on the notion that order and orderliness could coexist with enlightened self-interest, and that society should be utilitarian. The wealthy were expected to be benevolent and charitable, and the poor hardworking and grateful. Property owners came in ranks as well, with titled proprietors of large holdings at the top of the heap, those with smaller landed holdings beneath them, and the landed gentry, those whose land holdings provided their upkeep and social standing, anchoring this group. Austen's family belonged to this last group, the gentry, although her brother Edward became a substantial landowner through his adoptive parents the Knights, and Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra, and their mother eventually lived in a cottage he provided them on his estates.

At the same time, the new mercantile classes were gaining steadily in prestige and power. Trade allowed those who were not born into landed wealth to acquire it through commerce; trade provided for the rise of the "middling" or middle classes, those who could support themselves in comfort but without benefit of inherited wealth or land. Trade led to the birth of the British empire, particularly through the activities of the East India Company on the Indian subcontinent and sugar plantation owners in the West Indies. Below the merchant classes were yeoman farmers, artisans or skilled laborers, and country people who supported themselves directly from the land; and below these two groups were servants of the propertied and, increasingly, the moneyed classes.

For landed gentry families, there were two tiers in the passing of generations. Under the system of primogeniture, the eldest son inherited the whole of the estate.

Daughters were provided a "portion" to facilitate their marriages, and younger sons sometimes also received a monetary settlement or annuity. But for the most part, younger sons, such as Edmund Bertram in ***Mansfield Park,*** had to enter a profession, generally the military or the clergy. Jane Austen's novels depict many such men, from Admiral Crofts and Captain Wentworth in ***Persuasion*** to the plethora of churchmen in Austen's novels: John Dashwood and Edward Ferrars in ***Sense and Sensibility,*** Mr. Collins in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** Mr. Norris, Dr. Grant, and Edmund Bertram in ***Mansfield Park,*** and Mr. Elton in ***Emma.*** The Church of England was the country's largest and richest institution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; its twenty-six bishops each had a cathedral with deans, canon, and prebends, and there were about 26,000 parishes that encompassed all of England and formed part of the local government (parsons also often served as Justices of the Peace).

The church was thickly intertwined with politics and economics. Patronage was the key to clerical posts, and the clergy became an overcrowded profession in Austen's time. At the end of the eighteenth century, there were 11,600 benefices, or livings, which comprised a form of property that could be put up for sale or bestowed on those their owners patronized, and there was a fair amount of trafficking and speculation in church positions. Austen's clerical characters are rectors or vicars: the difference was that rectors received all their parish's tithes, whereas vicars were paid a salary. Both augmented their income by farming the property around the church and rectory. Both positions were forms of incumbency, but as they often paid little, many clergymen held more than one post, a circumstance that was called "pluralism" and provoked some controversy. In these cases, the vicar or rector often paid a stipend to a curate to perform the actual duties of the parish church, baptizing babies, performing weddings and funerals, and conducting Sunday services, while the incumbent served as an absentee. It was also difficult for clergymen to afford to retire, hence when livings were offered for sale, the life expectancy of their incumbents was frequently part of the advertisement. Those who had livings to bestow, such as Colonel Brandon in ***Sense and Sensibility,*** could offer them for sale or as gifts.[4]

As the eighteenth century progressed, new institutions that were devoted to caring for the very poor arose: voluntary social organizations to care for foundlings, orphans, the elderly, and the ill. There also appeared some class mobility for the first time. When they had acquired enough money, merchants could buy land and the social status that came with estate ownership (Charles Bingley does this in ***Pride and Prejudice***). So hard work and talent could buy one's way up the social ladder. This occurred in politics as well, because individuals could participate in local governance without benefit of aristocratic birth or title.

Industrial developments in the 1780s and 1790s—the Industrial Revolution—affected population and demographics, the growth of cities, trade expansion, and the enormous increase in production of goods such as cloth and copper. Edmund Cartwright set up the first power loom in 1786, which revolutionized cotton spinning and weaving, and cotton manufacturing became the most powerful industrial interest in England. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce was founded in 1754, and the Manchester Committee for the Protection and Encouragement of Trade appeared in 1774. Coal and iron replaced wood, wind, and water as power sources. Beginning in 1775, James Watt and Matthew Boulton began to patent new types of steam engines. Factories and mines changed the natural landscape and brought new ways of thinking, new social groups, and new social problems as well as wealth and global power to England.

Two other areas experienced major advances: transportation, with an increase in roads and the use of rivers and canals, and banking, with increased circulation and availability of capital, credit, and cash. Houses began to be built of brick rather than timber; sewers were constructed and sanitation improved; and increased use of soap and pottery led, in different ways, to improvements in hygiene and personal cleanliness.

At Austen's birth, England was still largely rural, with its population spread across the countryside and in small villages. By the end of her life, towns and cities were becoming the centers of population. For example, the population of Birmingham doubled in the last 40 years of the eighteenth century. There were industrial towns (such as Manchester and Birmingham), market towns (such as Liverpool), ports (such as Portsmouth and Southampton), and specialized centers such as watering places and university towns (for example, Bath and Oxford). And, of course, London grew enormously during Austen's lifetime, with its population accounting for ten percent of the people in England.

All of these changes produced a larger divide than ever between rich and poor. Individuals could become enormously wealthy almost overnight, and the labor force that the new industries needed to sustain them also expanded at a great rate. This represented a major change from the country squire who looked after the rural poor in his neighborhood. Parish administrations could no longer handle the needs of their poor, and working conditions for laborers in the new factories were often dismal. Philanthropy did not provide enough resources to handle the problem, which required new forms of social organization.

Women and children worked in factories, especially in the cotton industry; in fact, children accounted for up to two-thirds of the work force. Opposition to the new factory system was inspired by deplorable conditions and long hours for many workers; and social philosophers and politicians responded to the new regime of capital owners on the one hand and powerless laborers on the other with new laws. Along the way, traditional views of the social order were altered, in part because of the advent of the modern idea of *class.*[5]

In political terms, the England into which Jane Austen was born was a state run according to a Constitution written in 1688 and based on checks and balances as the guarantors of individual freedom, with the legislature (Parliament), the nobility, the executive (Prime Minister), and the King maintaining the civil order by regulating one another. The political order existed in tandem with the social order of property, the family, and professional rank and education. So inherited hierarchies and the attributes of merit coexisted in the way authority was conferred or denied. In Jane Austen's lifetime, the final decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth, social and political interests began to differentiate, the monarchy grew somewhat in power, and what we would call "public opinion" became more politically organized.

George III's madness in the late 1780s inaugurated a prolonged period during which the King relinquished most of the reins of state business, with the exception that he managed to achieve his goal of Catholic emancipation. This lasted until George III's son took over in 1811. (George himself didn't die until 1820, but the country was run by the Prince Regent, to whom ***Emma*** was dedicated at his request, from 1811 on.) William Pitt became Prime Minister in 1783, partly as a result of the American War of Independence; the loss of the war created a crisis in England. Pitt's administration set the tone of this period. Following the French Revolution, war broke out between England and France and involved two of Austen's brothers. During this period of turmoil abroad, Pitt restored national finances by reducing the national debt and expanding taxes on everything from horses to bricks to candles; put into place administrative reforms by increasing the powers of the Prime Minister; reorganized the workings of the British empire; and increased England's standing in Europe by making controversial trade agreements with Ireland and France and consolidating British holdings in Asia while the American colonies were being lost.

The American War of Independence was underway when Jane Austen was born, and the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Peninsular War, and the War of 1812 that followed in its wake marked European politics from the late 1780s until 1815, just three years before Austen's death. English political ideas were strongly influenced by the events in France that brought an end to feudalism and the monarchy, with heated debates between the Jacobins (radicals) and the anti-Jacobins (conservatives). As the French situation turned from revolution to repression and France turned its attention to wider European activities and became aggressive on military fronts, declaring war on Austria in 1792 and on England and Holland in 1793, the British became more Francophobic in public opinion as well as in governmental attitudes. When the French defeated the Austrians and Antwerp fell in 1792, new trade openings changed European diplomacy because France defied long-standing commercial treaties. By 1793 the national mood in England was ready for war. The British navy, the strongest of England's armed forces and the one to which Austen's brothers Francis and Charles belonged, was the decisive military force in England.[6]

Starting in 1792, the English government became more repressive against those seen as agitators or as treasonous, and in 1794, the law of *habeas corpus* was suspended. Two acts passed in 1795, one making some kinds of speech and writing treasonous (the Treasonous Practices Act) and another that required a special permit for large public gatherings (the Seditious Meetings Act). In 1796, stamp taxes were raised for newspapers, and printing presses had to be registered. In 1799, two more acts made it difficult to organize workers' groups.

At the same time, the English government was dealing with other kinds of pressing questions: Catholic emancipation, the Irish question (there had been armed rebellion in Ireland in 1798), and the price of corn (the Corn Law Act of 1815 barred foreign corn from Britain until a price goal was met). Once the wars ended, the influx of former military personnel into the working ranks and a decrease in urban employment meant difficult times.

Jane Austen's Time in History

Jane Austen was born into the end of the relatively stable world of the neoclassical Enlightenment, but almost immediately, revolutionary wars and often violent and vehement renegotiations of social, political, economic, and philosophical ideas interrupted that stability. Revolutionary claims battled anti-Jacobin resistance to reform, so the massive industrial and social changes of the period occurred against a backdrop of strife that fed into growing discrepancies between rich and poor. Aristocrats and landowners continued to enjoy their comforts while towns grew without benefit of sanitation systems, urban planning, or decent working conditions. When the writer and civil servant Daniel Defoe observed his country during Queen Anne's reign, he noted the orderliness of the social and economic systems. A hundred years later, the social activist William Cobbett noted that the poor had been disinherited and that rival social and economic interests dominated England.[7]

England was at war during most of Jane Austen's life. English soldiers fought against colonists in the American War of Independence, which ended with the defeat of the British at Yorktown in 1781 when Austen was six years old, although the official end did not come until the Treaty of Paris in 1783. From 1789 to 1799, the French Revolution captured the imaginations of the English, who were bitterly divided over which side to support. Beginning in 1793, England fought against France and Napoleon's bid for empire, a fight that did not end until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. And during that same period, from 1812 to 1814, England fought again with America in the War of 1812. There was periodic concern that England's coast would be invaded, and southern ports were filled with military personnel.

The birth of the middle classes introduced a relatively new distinction between the public and the private spheres. Such a distinction always existed between, for example, the state and its laws on the one hand and what went on in people's homes on the other. But something new occurred toward the end of the eighteenth century: a demarcation between the outside world of capitalist markets and rational economic and political forces and the internal world of emotion, religion, and morality. Individuals, predominantly men, began to amass power through their wealth and material activities, while behind them stood a network of family support influenced largely by women. So a sexual division of labor derived from the structure of the family itself and provided the foundation for capitalist values and enterprise outside the home.[8] These private, family activities served not only as a backdrop to public life, but dictated what happened to many social institutions and ideologies.

The new middle classes had much in common with the aristocracy and the gentry in terms of their desires for comfort. At the same time, they acquired their status through individual work, so they also had affinities with the work ethic of the poor and with a desire for independence from the established orders of the past. The revolutionary fervor of the period spoke to those desires, and nonconformist writers and thinkers as disparate as William Cowper, Austen's favorite poet, and the political theorists Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine, spoke out against the corruption of those in power and the need for liberatory reforms. Not surprisingly, there was also a backlash of reaction against such calls for reform. Not until the Reform Act of 1832 (the backdrop for George Eliot's 1872 novel, *Middlemarch*) did middle class households get some political clout, although, ironically, that act explicitly excluded women from political enfranchisement. And through it all, land remained the particular form of property ownership that conferred an authority unavailable from other forms of wealth.

A religious revival in England accompanied these social changes, as people became interested in the idea of individual salvation and turned to Evangelism.[9] The notion of a shared moral code united people from different walks of life—farmers and landowners, manufacturers and factory workers, Whigs and Tories, Anglicans and Puritans. This Evangelism coupled Protestant individualism with humanitarian ideas, public piety and strict morality, and unbending standards of personal conduct. Opponents of the French Revolution made much of the revolutionaries' supposed atheism; to be a supporter of the Constitution meant to be a good Christian, and to be a Jacobin was to be unpatriotic. Beginning as an anti-Jacobin reaction, the new religiosity persisted into the Victorian era. The Church of England, of which Austen was a member, continued to control the majority of England's religious activity, but dissenting groups such as the Evangelicals and the Wesleyan Methodists, not to mention the Roman Catholics, raised issues about everything from spirituality to clerical absenteeism (an issue for Austen in *Mansfield Park*) to political scandals. There was a staunch moral earnestness that made manners and morals into social and philosophical issues.

Austen's novels illustrate, perhaps better than anything else from the period, the crucial ways in which private behavior toward others stood in for broader questions of merit, social standing, and authority. Humanitarian ideals fostered by increased religiosity brought many religious sects into anti-slavery activities, as public opinion became more independent. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807, despite powerful opposition from vested economic interests, demonstrated this free thinking, and in 1834 all slaves in the British empire were freed.[10] There is evidence in Austen's novels that Jane Austen held abolitionist sympathies. In *Emma,* Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax have a conversation concerning Mrs. Elton's offer of help in finding a situation for Jane as a governess.

> "When I am quite determined as to the time, I am not at all afraid of being long unemployed. There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something—Offices for the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect."
>
> "Oh! My dear, human flesh! You quite shock me: if you mean a fling at the slave-trade, I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition."
>
> "I did not mean, I was not thinking of the slave-trade," replied Jane; "governess-trade, I assure you, was all that I had in view; widely differnt certainly as to the guilt of those who carry it on; but as to the greater misery of the victims, I do not know where it lies."[11]

In *Mansfield Park,* where the Bertram fortune derives from Sir Thomas's plantation holdings in Antigua and the slave-driven economy of the West Indies, a conversation between Fanny Price and her cousin Edmund

turns to Sir Thomas's new esteem for his young niece after his return from Antigua. Edmund suggests that Fanny should talk to her uncle more:

> "But I do talk to him more than I used. I am sure I do. Did not you hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?"
>
> "I did—and was in hopes the question would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of farther."
>
> "And I longed to do it—but there was such a dead silence! And while my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject, I did not like—I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at their expense, by shewing a curiosity and pleasure in his information which he must wish his own daughters to feel."[12]

Claire Tomalin argues that Fanny's abolitionist views are made clear by this exchange.[13]

Jane Austen's favorite poet was William Cowper, known as a vehement abolitionist. The Austens themselves had family connections to the slave trade; Austen's father, George Austen, was a trustee of a plantation in Antigua that belonged to one of his Oxford friends, James Nibbs. Claudia Johnson has made the persuasive point that Sir Thomas Bertram of ***Mansfield Park*** represents the ideal of the benevolent slave-owner, and that his kindness to Fanny stems from the same impulse of caring paternalism that assumes that dependents are better off being looked after than being granted autonomy.[14] In this way, Jane Austen may have made connections between the plight of enslaved Africans and the situation of dependent women.

Home, or cottage, industries, became fewer because home manufacture could no longer compete with the new machinery, particularly in the textile industry. This development impoverished many rural households and put many women, especially single women, out of work. Many women joined men in fieldwork, and others went to work in factories or as servants in the homes of people better off than they were. Women thus had access to fewer roles and occupations, and they were beset by more expectations about what a "proper lady" should be.

Other than dancing and occasional equestrian exercise or walking, middle- and upper-class women got little physical exercise. So in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** when Elizabeth Bennet decides to visit her ailing sister at Netherfield, her mother objects that there is too much dirt and that she will not be fit to be seen when she arrives.

> Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of excerise.[15]

She is received with polite surprise by the Bingleys: "That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it."[16]

Home and family dictated the world of women in Jane Austen's time. When capital became liquid and the middle classes redefined notions of property, women could leave production and be supported by their husbands (or fathers or brothers, as was the case for the Austen women after George Austen's death in 1805). At the same time, as marriage became based on the idea of a contract, the position of married women with respect to property became more encumbered by patriarchal ideologies of inheritance. Married women were unable to hold property until the landmark Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882.[17] Property was the key determinant of wealth and status in Austen's lifetime, because ownership of land continued to dominate the economic structure at the end of the eighteenth century. Commerce and credit were coming into play, but "real property" still meant land.

Lifestyle and Culture

Jane Austen's family was orthodox in its views: Church of England religious ideas and conservative Tory politics. The Austen family belonged to what we would call the upper middle class; they were members of the gentry class that produced landowners, clergymen, military officers, and women with domestic accomplishments and a basic literary education. Austen's novels are justly famous for their highly detailed and meticulously observed portrait of daily life among the English country gentry. Austen depicted a wide range of character types, from the haughty, aristocratic, overbearing Lady Catherine de Bourgh in ***Pride and Prejudice*** to the misguided commonsensical Lady Russell in ***Persuasion,*** and from the caddishly charming Willoughby in ***Sense and Sensibility*** to the moralistic but ambivalently motivated Edmund Bertram in ***Mansfield Park*** and the self-deludedly intelligent title character of ***Emma.*** Austen had a brilliant ear for realistic dialogue and an amazing intuition about human drama.

A woman of Austen's class was best situated to document the private world of human interaction: the subtle ways that families were built or destroyed; the casual interactions between the sexes and the formal relations that ensued and dictated family power, wealth, and lineage; and how people negotiated between moral strictures and human desires.

Education was a major component of domestic change. Upper-class men had had access to an elite, formal education in Europe since the Middle Ages. In the eigh-

teenth century, forms of education also became available to women and to the poor. Women were given greater access to book learning at home and sometimes were sent off to schools, as the Austen girls were, for several years. The poor had charity schools, though many still argued that these institutions would engender insubordination. One of the major proponents of broad schooling was the reformist philanthropist Hannah More, who opened a school for the poor that local farmers thought would incite children to be disaffected from their families and their lot in life.

Jane Austen received some formal training, but mostly she had the advantage of her father's extensive library. Here is her brother Henry's account of her intellectual accomplishments:

> Her reading was very extensive in history and belles letters; and her memory extremely tenacious. Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose, and Cowper in verse. It is difficult to say at what age she was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language. Richardson's power of creating, and preserving the consistency of his characters, as particularly exemplified in "Sir Charles Grandison," gratified the natural discrimination of her mind, whilst her taste secured her from the errors of his prolix style and tedious narrative. She did not rank any work of Fielding quite so high.[18]

So Austen had something a woman of her class and place might not have had even fifty years earlier: books and the ability to read.

Education in history, philosophy, and poetry was especially important for women because conversation was one of the arts an elegant, well-bred woman needed for social success. The Bertram sisters study at home in ***Mansfield Park*** and know how to read maps, and in ***Emma,*** Harriet Smith receives her training at a boarding school for girls. Elizabeth Bennet in ***Pride and Prejudice*** and Emma Woodhouse in ***Emma*** demonstrate most powerfully the scope and importance of a woman's ability to be articulate.

In addition to religious training and an education in letters, Jane Austen participated in the range of activities that were considered to be "feminine accomplishments" in the late eighteenth century. She was competent with a needle and made clothing and household textiles; she could draw and paint; she sang and played the pianoforte; and she was a prolific letter-writer. Darcy's sister plays the harp in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** as does Mary Crawford in ***Mansfield Park.*** Art and music rounded out the most central of women's expected accomplishments, which was needlework.

Much emphasis was placed on a woman's talent at embroidery and the neatness of her handwriting, and Austen excelled in both of these areas—she made shirts for her brothers, stitched a shawl for Cassandra in muslin with satin embroidery, and embroidered handkerchiefs. In 1811 Jane, Cassandra, and their mother created a patchwork quilt. Sometimes young women worked a sampler to complete their education in household skills. In ***Sense and Sensibility,*** Charlotte Palmer demonstrates the fruits of her education by displaying a landscape in colored silk. Lady Bertram spends her days doing needlework in ***Mansfield Park,*** and Mrs. Jennings makes a rug in ***Sense and Sensibility.*** Other artistic hobbies in the home included cutting paper, making designs with shells, and painting with watercolors. These skills fell into the sphere of women's activities; each of them could be undertaken in one's own home or in the homes of others. And certainly one of the goals of perfecting these accomplishments, like the goal of conversational decorum, was to draw the admiration of a suitable young man.

Austen's early anti-heroine, Lady Susan, sends an account to her confidante that satirizes prevailing ideas about women's accomplishments. After writing about her daughter Frederica's education, she remarks that she herself lacks the usual feminine skills.

> Not that I am an advocate for the prevailing fashion of acquiring a perfect knowledge in all the Languages Arts & Sciences; it is throwing time away; to be Mistress of French, Italian, German, Music, Singing, Drawing &c. will gain a Woman some applause, but will not add one Lover to her list. Grace & Manner after all are of the greatest importance. I do not mean therefore that Frederica's acquirements should be more than superficial, & I flatter myself that she will not remain long enough at school to understand anything thoroughly.[19]

While ridiculing the conflation of surface talents with the pitched battle to win a socially and economically appropriate husband, a battle fought feverishly in the novel, Lady Susan's speech nevertheless suggests the stakes involved in preparing women for society. Compare it with the more sophisticated addition Darcy makes to the usual list of "music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages" as well as "a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions" in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** "All this she must possess," he says, "and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading."[20]

Like Lady Susan, but utterly without her manipulative motives, Catherine Morland's mother in ***Northanger Abbey*** "did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste." Catherine's happiest day is when her music-master is dismissed, and she is described as equally mediocre at drawing, French, and accounts. On the other hand, Catherine's ignorance comes in for some satire when the narrator

suggests that her shame about her lack of accomplishments is misplaced, as ignorance is a virtue in a woman who wants to attract a man. "To come with a well-informed mind, is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid," the narrator writes. "A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing any thing, should conceal it as well as she can."[21] Yet both ***Lady Susan*** and ***Northanger Abbey*** present, in very different ways, the necessity that a young woman seek an acceptable husband. An unmarried woman risks poverty and humiliation and, as Elizabeth Watson points out in ***The Watsons,*** "my Father cannot provide for us, & it is very bad to grow old & be poor & laughed at."[22] This fear pervades Austen's writings.

Austen was also a competent dancer, card player, and dramatic reader, social endeavors that occupied leisure time in country villages. Country dances and balls featured prominently in Austen's life, as they do in her novels. Such dance assemblies had been around for several centuries, but they became especially ritualized events in Austen's time, when dancing was the most popular and most important recreational activity. For a local country dance, someone who could play the piano and wasn't dancing, often an older married woman, provided musical accompaniment, and the music consisted of dance tunes that we would now label as baroque or classical. Several couples (at least three) "stood up" with one another to dance, and they formed separate lines, with the men and women facing one another. Then they proceeded through a sequence of movements or figures in which they would advance and retreat, lock arms and swing one another around, or weave their way through the other couples. Sometimes everyone danced at once, and other times each couple did their set of figures in turn, following the lead couple, in groups that were called "sets."

Austen made important narrative use of the time a couple stood and watched the others, as these moments provided sanctioned time for an unmarried man and woman to be alone and to converse in private in an acceptable way. These moments also provided useful narrative opportunities for eavesdropping. In Austen's time, a country dance remained a highly social, even intimate, community gathering.

A ball differed from a country dance in that it was much larger, public, and entailed much stricter rules of etiquette. A young girl might participate casually in a country dance at the home of friends or relations, but to attend a ball required that she had officially "come out." Coming out entailed a formal entry into womanhood and into matrimonial availability. In ***Mansfield Park,*** for example, Mary Crawford asks whether Fanny Price is *out,* because this is crucial information among young women looking for husbands.[23]

An orchestra provided the music at balls and the décor was often elaborate. Invitations went out weeks in advance and replies were expected almost immediately. A supper room was set up in a space separated from the dance floor, and a cloakroom was provided for attendees' wraps. At a very public gathering, a master of ceremonies made sure that decorum was maintained and introduced gentlemen to ladies they did not know. For example, Mr. King, the actual Master of Ceremonies of the Upper Rooms at Bath during the period the novel takes place, introduces Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney in ***Northanger Abbey.*** Introductions are also stressed at the assembly that opens Austen's unfinished fragment ***The Watsons,*** where readers can find detailed information about such events and the way they worked. Events where dancing took place were carefully chaperoned and regulated, and the highly codified rules of dancing informed Austen's plots.

A woman could not dance with a man to whom she had not been properly introduced, and it was considered improper for a woman to dance more than two dances with the same partner unless they were engaged or married. The hostess or her eldest daughter would begin the dancing with a gentleman of appropriate rank. Emma is annoyed, for example, when Mrs. Elton's status as a new bride mandates that she be asked to begin the ball in ***Emma.*** Once engaged to dance with a gentleman, a woman could not accept further offers to dance with others. Dancers took time out for supper, and a standard refreshment was a hot spiked wine punch or soup called negus, mentioned as the refreshment in ***The Watsons.***[24]

A highly charged discussion of dancing as a social metaphor occurs in ***Northanger Abbey,*** when Henry Tilney proposes that dancing serves as an analogue for marriage. He offers the theory that an engagement to dance represents a contract between the parties. "I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage," Henry says to Catherine Morland. "Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both; and those men who do not chuse to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours." Catherine remonstrates that the two things are very different, in that "People that marry can never part, but must go and keep house together" whereas "People that dance, only stand opposite each other in a long room for half an hour." Henry extends his metaphor in response, arguing that in both dancing and marriage, the man has the advantage of choosing while the woman can only accept or refuse, that both contracts are exclusive and involve duty and fidelity, and that the chief difference lies in a turnabout in the obligations. In marriage, the man must support while the woman please, whereas in dancing, the man is expected to please "while she furnishes the fan and the lavender water."[25]

Those who did not dance often played cards, and card games took place in the evenings after dinner parties as

well. Popular card games in Austen's day consisted of, among others, whist, speculation, loo, casino, and quadrille. Whist, like bridge, required a set number of players. Loo and speculation were "round" games, which meant that any number could play. A set of games was called a "rubber." ***The Watsons*** contains some detailed discussions of card-playing both at the opening ball, where the game of choice is casino, and at a later social visit, where there is a sharp competition between the games speculation and vingt-un (twenty-one) for social superiority. Casino is the game of choice for Lady Middleton in ***Sense and Sensibility.*** This game entailed trying to match your cards until they were all used up. Mrs. Bates in ***Emma*** favors quadrille, which was played by four people using a deck from which the 8s, 9s, and 10s had been removed; it was a variant of ombre, an older game that was disappearing by Austen's time. Quadrille resembled whist and had a trump suit. A game of speculation figures in ***Mansfield Park.*** This is a round game with a trump suit: Players sought to get a card higher than the one displayed as trump; and they could sell the card if they chose. The player with the highest card won. Whist was played by two couples with the partners sitting opposite one another and is the ancestor of bridge; the partners tried to match each other's suits. Round games seem to have been played by younger people and entailed a rowdier, less serious demeanor. In ***Mansfield Park,*** the speculation players are portrayed as enjoying themselves more than the older, stodgier whist players, who conducted their game in silence.

More intimate social gatherings such as visits to neighbors and dinner parties occupied Jane Austen's time as well. As with dances, there were more elaborate rules of etiquette required by these social rituals than exist today. For example, visitors to one another's homes left a calling card, a small card bearing the visitor's name. The use of cards presupposed a servant to answer the door and take the card to the master or mistress or (if they were "not in") to place it in the card tray for their later inspection. People often displayed these cards in a dish in the hallway or on the mantel as signs of their social status, as they provided a way to show off one's connections in society. And visits needed to be returned in kind in order not to risk impoliteness and social censure. These visits occurred in the morning. The time category "morning" referred to daylight hours and could last until dinner.

Later in the day, the social gathering of choice was the dinner party. In addition to serving one's guests food and drink, these gatherings served as ways to increase one's social acquaintance. Dinner was prepared and brought to the table by servants, but they were not addressed or spoken about during the meal. After dessert, the women adjourned to the drawing (or "withdrawing") room for tea while the men drank port and sometimes smoked (neither of these activities was acceptable behavior in front of women). Later, the men joined the women for tea and conversation. In London during the social "season," dinner guests often proceeded to a ball or assembly at this point.

Rules of etiquette were stringent and strictly defined by gender. Men were introduced to women and not the other way around, and a man waited for a woman to acknowledge or speak to him before he approached or nodded to her. Introductions in general were formal, ritualized, and based on hierarchies. For example, Elizabeth Bennet is highly distressed in ***Pride and Prejudice*** when the obsequious Mr. Collins insists on introducing himself to his social better, Mr. Darcy. A man also looked after women in various ways: walking or riding along the street side, taking the backward-facing seat in a carriage, entering a public place first to find a seat for his female companion, removing his hat when women were present, and so on. An unmarried woman under thirty would not usually be in a man's company without a chaperone, and she did not often walk alone other than in a park or to church in the morning. Outdoors, a man and woman could converse only while walking; they would not simply stand in the street to talk, hence the occasional invitation in an Austen novel to "take a turn" round the gardens or wherever the couple happened to be.

Throughout Austen's private correspondence and often in her novels, there is discussion of visiting the homes of relations and friends for what appear to modern readers as extended periods of time. Explanations for these lengthy visits involve the practical details of travel at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the days before the railroad made long-distance travel more feasible, roads were poor and travel took place by horse-drawn carriage or coach. So there was little point, and no practicality, to making a visit that lasted only a few days when the getting there and returning was so arduous and uncomfortable (for example, springs were not invented until the 1790s, and prior to the ability to suspend the coach, a coach ride was stiff and quite grim). During these visits, men spent their days hunting and fishing, while the women went for walks, wrote letters, or went on brief excursions to town; the day's big event was a formal dinner followed by cards or other games.

Mail or stage coaches (so called because they proceeded in stages with fresh horses) took ordinary people long distances. Private carriages of different sorts—such as barouches and landaus, gigs and curricles—had greater social status. These would be additional vehicles (on the order of a second or sports car today), as a family of wealth required a coach-and-four for general transportation. In some cases, as with Mrs. Long and the Hearst family in ***Pride and Prejudice,*** the family owned the coach but hired the horses. Most of Austen's characters drive in gigs, which were one-horse carriages

that could carry two people. In ***Northanger Abbey,*** Catherine Morland favors the curricle, essentially a gig that accommodates two horses so costs more and has more prestige value, over the chaise and four, a sturdier and more sedate means of transportation. The coachman for the Bertrams in ***Mansfield Park*** worries about the scratches on his carriage as he is in charge of maintaining the equipage. In general, these vehicles carried the kind of status symbolism that characterizes today's cars. They are toys and prized possessions as well as the means of transportation.

As Austen's novels amply demonstrate, the point of the social life young women led was to yield an appropriate marriage partner. Professional employment for women was out of the question. Jane Austen herself earned money from her writing—enough to increase her comfort and that of her sister and mother—but still an inadequate amount to offer them any real independence. Fanny Price considers with a shudder the dire prospects of returning to life in an impoverished port city with a dissolute father and ill-mannered mother and siblings in ***Mansfield Park.***

The continuation of families and the consolidation and maintenance of real property depended upon the orderly and socially acceptable marriages of a family's children, and it was especially crucial that daughters find suitable men to take them off the hands of their fathers and brothers. A woman could not marry without her parents' permission until 1823, a detail made stark in ***Pride and Prejudice*** when it is pointedly underscored that Lydia and Wickham are in London and have not gone to Gretna Green, just across the border in Scotland, to marry. (After 1823, girls and boys could marry without consent at the startlingly young ages of twelve and fourteen, respectively.)

The institution of marriage underwent some change during the course of the eighteenth century, with the 1753 passage of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act the key event. After the Marriage Act took effect in 1754, only a church wedding legally bound a couple to one another. Prior to 1754, marriage involving a propertied family consisted of five parts: a written legal contract between the couple's parents, stipulating financial arrangements; a formal exchange of oral vows, termed "spousals," usually before witnesses; three public proclamations of the banns in church to permit claims of pre-contract to be heard; a church wedding; and, finally, the sexual consummation of the marriage. However, the spousals or oral contract were legally binding in and of themselves: any sort of exchange before witnesses followed by cohabitation constituted a legally valid marriage. In Scotland, Wales, and parts of the southwest of England, the "handfast" was considered an adequate sign of marriage, and unscrupulous clergymen conducted a thriving trade in marriages performed with no questions asked about age or parental consent. The Marriage Act changed that.[26]

After 1754, the only recourse for eloping couples was flight to Scotland, where the new Marriage Act did not apply and a new trade in commercial marriage arose. Marriage was by and large indissoluble except by death; divorce that permitted remarriage was not available within the Church of England, so an unhappy couple could separate with a financial settlement, but neither of them was free to remarry. But by Scottish law, any unchaperoned meeting or an elopement that crossed the border constituted a marriage—and was therefore valid in England. Hence the feverish quality with which the Bennets and Gardiners speculate about whether Lydia and Wickham are "gone to Scotland" (282 and 290) and their palpable relief when they learn that the lovers are in London.[27]

As the frantic search for the eloped Lydia Bennet in ***Pride and Prejudice*** illustrates, courtship is a solemn matter of enormous consequence for all parties, and families often intervened. Once the principals and the parents of the bride-to-be agreed upon an engagement, serious economic negotiations ensued and produced detailed, legal marriage settlements. One's place in the larger society depended upon these family connections. The financial health of the whole family often depended on one good marriage among its children. Elizabeth Bennet's marriage to the generous and wealthy Fitzwilliam Darcy sets up the whole clan in comfort in ***Pride and Prejudice.*** General Tilney opposes the connection between his son Henry and Catherine Morland in ***Northanger Abbey*** when he discovers that he was mistaken in thinking Catherine an heiress. In ***Emma,*** Mr. Knightley supports Harriet Smith's connection with the farmer Robert Martin; he recognizes that Emma's ambitions for Harriet will be frustrated by the fact that Harriet's lack of family prevents her from aspiring higher in social rank. And, perhaps most poignantly, Charlotte Lucas is willing to settle for Mr. Collins in preference to a life of dependence in ***Pride and Prejudice.***

Austen's lifetime represents the period when, some historians have argued, it became the norm for people to marry for love—or at least to expect that they could find appropriate partners for whom they could feel esteem and affection. This view has been hotly contested by social historians, and probably applies more to the upper bourgeoisie and the aristocracy than to the poor or even the gentry.[28] Nevertheless, Austen's novels are a study in the development and care of the companionate marriage, and historical evidence supports the idea that finding a mate with whom one could share conjugal love became a greater priority and subject of discussion in the eighteenth century than it had been in earlier periods in England.[29] A young woman's life could be in-

fluenced in complex and fraught ways by the marital options at her disposal. All of Austen's novels attest to the rich narrative possibilities represented by the courtship plot.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England and throughout the European continent produced an art and culture that has attracted scholars as well as appreciators of the visual arts, music, architecture, and literature. In England, Franz Joseph Haydn composed music, J. M. W. Turner and John Constable painted, and Georgian architecture lent itself to some of the finest domestic buildings in English history, landscaped with the aesthetic ideas of garden designers such as Humphrey Repton and Lancelot "Capability" Brown. Classical order still reigned when Austen was born, but was soon challenged by the Romantic idealism engendered by revolutionary politics and social change. Austen's literary contemporaries included William Blake and William Wordsworth among poets, Frances Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith, and Maria Edgeworth among novelists, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft among social theorists who also wrote novels, and Adam Smith, Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine among economic and political thinkers. It was a time of cultural richness and diversity, and of artistic ferment.

Notes

1. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
2. Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 16-17. Neither Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* nor Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* are themselves inheritors of estates, but they both come from established landowning families, and they both achieve clerical livings adequate for the support of a family. For a broader discussion of land ownership and its social ramifications, see F. M. L. Thompson, *Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
3. Alistair M. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).
4. For a discussion of the complexities of church positions, see Irene Collins, *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993).
5. The terms "common people" and "lower orders" referred to the working poor through most of the eighteenth century; class terminology came into use during the 1790s.
6. For a detailed account of England's role in the Napoleonic wars, see Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867* (London: Longman, 1959), pp. 129-83.
7. For a discussion, see G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1944), pp. 463-66.
8. A fine book about the role of gender in the development of modern capitalism is Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
9. Over 100 religious periodicals began publication between 1790 and 1820, and for many people these would have been the main reading material in the home. See A. D. Gilbert and T. W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).
10. After May 1807 ships could not legally sail with slaves from any port in the British empire. The slave trade continued illegally, however, and remained divisive and controversial.
11. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. IV, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 300-01.
12. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. III, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 198. Brian Southam has argued that *Mansfield Park* takes place in the years 1810-1813, after the abolition of the slave trade (that is, after it became illegal to transport slaves by ship; slavery itself continued). Hence, the Bertram silence when Fanny raises the subject. See Brian Southam, "The Silence of the Bertrams," *Times Literary Supplement* (17 February 1995), pp. 13-14.
13. Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 230.
14. Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 107. Johnson discusses the passages in *Mansfield Park* and in *Emma.*
15. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 32.
16. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* 3rd ed., Vol. II, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 32-33. This passage is a fine example of Austen's use of free, indirect style to represent the thoughts of people without quoting them directly.
17. For a comprehensive history of married women and property law, see Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

18. Henry Austen, "Biographical Notice of the Author," published in 1818 as the front matter to the posthumous publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* and reprinted in *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, Vol. V of *The Novels of Jane Austen*, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 7.

19. *The Works of Jane Austen*, Vol. VI: *Minor Works*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 253.

20. *The Novels of Jane Austen*, Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 39.

21. *The Novels of Jane Austen*, Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 14; 110-111.

22. Ibid., p. 317.

23. There are useful discussions of many of these issues in Susan Watkins, *Jane Austen: In Style* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

24. For a useful discussion of dancing and other social activities as Jane Austen depicted them, see David Selwyn, *Jane Austen and Leisure* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1999).

25. Op. cit., pp. 76-77.

26. For a discussion of marriage practices, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

27. See the article on "Marriage" in *The New Companion to Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993), pp. 208-10.

28. The theory of the development of "affective individualism" is connected largely with Lawrence Stone's influential and controversial book, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York, Harper & Row, 1977); the phrase is Stone's. See also Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), and John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). The book that inaugurated the modern study of family social history is Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Knopf, 1962).

29. For other discussions, see Jean H. Hagstrum, *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and Joseph Allen Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Jane Austen's Works

Juvenilia

Volume the First, Volume the Second, Volume the Third

Jane Austen's first literary efforts date from 1787, when she was almost twelve years old, and continue until 1793 or so, when she was nearly eighteen. Two of the juvenile works that bear commentary in their own right—***Love and Freindship*** [*sic*] and ***Sir Charles Grandison***—are discussed below. One other, ***The History of England,*** is a minor masterpiece of a sort, compressing centuries of English history into an uproarious synopsis of monarchs and their foibles. Other early writings, such as ***Lady Susan*** and ***The Watsons,*** more properly belong to Austen's minor works and are discussed in that section.

Austen divided her earliest works into three volumes and made fair copies of them. She continued to correct and revise these volumes until 1809. She never intended to publish them—they were strictly written for family and private amusement—but she kept them in good order. As Austen's extant letters date only from 1796, these volumes are the earliest surviving Austen writings, and they contain twenty-seven separate items.

In themselves, most of Austen's juvenile writings are slight literary games, fascinating for their window into her stylistic and thematic development and often quite funny, but certainly not masterpieces. For Austen students, however, this work reveals Austen's comprehensive knowledge of eighteenth-century prose traditions, her interest in the nature of women's voices in eighteenth-century narrative, and her sense of how those traditions and voices might be recast. The most common narrative device she used for this work is that of presenting a series of letters. The juvenilia mimic and puncture the conventions of the popular sentimental fiction of the decades that preceded them, and rework some of those conventions in what are Austen's earliest experiments with narrative presence and narrative voice.

Some of the juvenile pieces are brief anecdotes, while others are more extended burlesques. Many are mere fragments and remain static, and others begin in midstream. There is a tough mind at work here, as Austen shows little mercy to the targets of her satire. As with her later fiction, she attacks vanity and hypocrisy and ridicules superficiality and self-importance. The attacks are real, but so is the sense of mischief that softens them. Austen's subject matter ranges from the decoration of a new carriage to murder, adultery, tea, fainting

fits, letter-writing, shoes and bonnets, and the trappings of domestic civility. She practices deploying various rhetorical modes and moral stances, and hones her command of language and ironic wit.

Love and Freindship

Love and Freindship (this was Austen's spelling) is the best known of Austen's juvenile writings, and the earliest whose transcript bears a date (13 June 1790). She was not yet fifteen when she wrote it, and it is an extended joke on epistolary form and on sentimental fiction. Already in this early work, Austen demonstrates a literary sophistication capable of dissecting both the forms of storytelling and the inherent absurdity of popular sentimental themes. Most comic epistolary intrigues depend upon a continuous revisionism: Each letter corrects, amends, interprets, or contradicts the perceptions gathered in the letter before it. ***Love and Freindship,*** however, opens with a jab at the conventional apologies that had been synonymous with epistolary novels, undercutting the immediacy of "writing to the moment" that Samuel Richardson had claimed for the form, in which the heroine traditionally fends off unwanted suitors with one hand while writing frantically, and often in the present tense, with the other.

The subject of this hilarious burlesque is "[a] sensibility too tremblingly alive" and the moral is "beware of fainting fits.. . . Beware of swoons."[1] The story revolves around exaggerated outbursts of emotion, or rather, around the collected, objective, retrospective description of such outbursts, as "Sophia shrieked & fainted on the Ground—I screamed and instantly ran mad—. We remained thus mutually deprived of our Senses some minutes, & on regaining them were deprived of them again—" (p. 99). The humor derives not so much from the instantaneous swooning depicted, which would be merely silly in a third-person narrative, as from the absurdity of a retrospective account of such behavior. The epistolary framework of the story gives it a direct address that claims an utter lack of self-consciousness: "It was too pathetic for the feelings of Sophia and myself—We fainted alternately on a Sofa" (p. 86).

Austen parodies her heroines' hothouse sensibilities by overemphasis as well as by a near-maniacal linguistic skewering of the conventional gestures of sentimentalism in the eighteenth-century novel. Laura's and Sophia's fainting fits also serve as an ironic commentary on the decorative role of women. These heroines manipulate and exaggerate the outward appearance of frailty in order to gain power over others. The heroines' helplessness is a façade, much like the epistolary form in which it is couched. As fainting suggests female frailty and invalidism, so the letter promises an authentic intimacy and confidentiality that it does not deliver.

Sir Charles Grandison

Sir Charles Grandison or The Happy Man, billed as "A comedy in Five Acts," is a slight dramatic work and the only play of any length that Jane Austen wrote. It is based on Samuel Richardson's seven-volume novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison,* published in 1753 and 1754. The manuscript remained in the family of Austen's oldest brother, James, and was commonly thought to have been the work of James's oldest daughter, Anna Austen Lefroy, but it is in Jane Austen's hand. The manuscript's existence was not widely known outside the Austen family until it emerged in 1977, stunningly, as a "new" work by Jane Austen. Critical consensus now makes it part of the Austen canon, and Brian Southam published a scholarly edition in 1980, with a Foreword by Lord David Cecil.[2]

Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* is not as well known as his earlier novels, *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), and remains virtually unread. But it was the favorite Richardson novel of the Austen family. Southam refers to the book's "chilling reputation for long-windedness and tedium, and its unstomachably perfect hero." Grandison represents exemplary goodness as a Christian virtue, and is "a paragon of gentle gentlemanliness, of English virtues and Christian benevolence, Chaucer's 'verray parfit gentil knight' translated into the mid-Augustan chivalry of domestic honour, social cultivation, and the errantry of good works."[3] Given the perfection of his hero, it is no wonder that the Austen family found Richardson's novel ripe for burlesque treatment in a family theatrical performance.

Austen's ***Sir Charles Grandison*** belongs with her earlier, slight juvenile work; it is, essentially, an extended joke. There are amusing moments for an Austen reader. Sir Hargrave Pollexfen announces, "I wish women were not quite so delicate, with all their faints and fits!" (p. 42). Charlotte Grandison, Sir Charles's willful sister, presents the satirical view to the heroine, "There is something monstrous frightful, to be sure, my dear Harriet, in marrying a man that one likes" (p. 55). On the whole, however, Austen's ***Sir Charles Grandison*** cannot compete for stylistic mastery or ironic meaning with the more accomplished of her early work such as ***Love and Freindship*** [*sic*].

The Six Major Novels

Northanger Abbey

The plot of ***Northanger Abbey*** uses a device standard to many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels: A young woman is either bereft of parental, and especially maternal, guidance, or she finds herself in a situation where this guidance is unavailable to her, or she

is given parental figures who are unable or unwilling to provide guidance. Thus the heroine is left on her own to form judgments, make decisions, and forge her way in the world. Catherine Morland's childhood is unexceptional, and her key characteristic is an addiction to reading gothic romances, especially those of Ann Radcliffe.[4] At first glance, she does not appear to embody the usual trappings of a heroine, as the novel's first sentence points out: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be a heroine."[5]

Catherine visits Bath under the chaperonage of the Allens, kind but rather ineffectual people, so she is separated from her family and set more or less on her own. In Bath, Catherine forms a friendship with the vapid Isabella Thorpe, and she meets the Tilney siblings, Henry and Eleanor, when Henry arranges to be introduced to her and asks her to dance. She forms an attachment to Henry without fully understanding her own mind. In contrast to the manipulative and self-interested Thorpes, the Tilneys represent good breeding and good family, as well as landed wealth. John Thorpe, Isabella's brother, is pushy, self-absorbed, and boorish. The Thorpes incorrectly believe the Morlands to be wealthy, and Isabella sets out to capture Catherine's brother James. John pursues Catherine, who is too naïve and blind to social nuances and expectations to realize what he is about. The jealous John Thorpe thwarts Catherine's growing intimacy with the Tilney family.

The central action of ***Northanger Abbey*** concerns Catherine's four-week visit to the house of the title's name, the home of the Tilneys. There she receives her education, in the form of disenchantment from the illusions and fantasies she has harbored about Gothic buildings and the secrets they might hold. Each time she wanders into a corridor or room expecting darkness and cobwebs, she finds light and space. Having talked herself into and out of various sinister surmises and suspicions, including the notion that General Tilney had mistreated his wife, Henry finally sets her right with a famous speech.

> Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understaning, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetuated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open?
>
> (Henry Tilney in ***Northanger Abbey,*** pp. 197-98)

Catherine retreats from this speech with tears of shame: "The visions of romance were over" (p. 199).

Yet, having been humbled by the absurdity of imagining General Tilney a murderer and Montoni-like villain, she misses something more plausible but equally sinister. When General Tilney learns that she has no wealth or portion and believes that she has imposed upon his family, he treats her with real cruelty by abruptly sending her away to travel seventy miles alone by post, and without understanding her offense. When she finally learns the truth, it appears that "in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty" (p. 247).

Catherine returns to Fullerton after an absence of eleven weeks, and the narrator gives us an ironic picture of this homecoming to an ordinary country village. Her parents and siblings, who join her in the realization that General Tilney has been inhospitable and dishonorable, greet Catherine warmly. Her heart has been broken and her illusions shattered because of money. Throughout this novel, Austen offers detailed discussions of estates and expectations in the form of raw numbers. In ***Northanger Abbey,*** more than in Austen's later novels where economic foundations are equally present, the reader learns the details of exactly how much wealth each character commands.

But, of course, ***Northanger Abbey*** is a comedy of manners and must end happily with the settling of the hero and heroine into a marital bliss approved by both their families, and such does occur in due course. Henry breaks faith with his father in a quarrel and follows Catherine home, where he behaves very much like an Austen hero, making his professions of love without the narrative quoting him directly: "his first purpose was to explain himself, and before they reached Mr. Allen's grounds he had done it so well, that Catherine did not think it could ever be repeated too often" (p. 243). Among the earliest of Austen's six major novels in composition date, ***Northanger Abbey*** is also the lightest. A comedy of manners like the other novels, ***Northanger Abbey*** at the same time parodies the popular genre of the Gothic romance with which the protagonists are so enamored, and whose heroines Henry Tilney refers to as "Julias and Louisa" (p. 107). At the same time that she makes fun of this sensational, hothouse genre (while extolling the virtues of engrossing fictional entertainments and giving Ann Radcliffe her due as a skillful and imaginative storyteller), Austen also portrays her main character as wanting the life of a romance heroine while actually being a thoroughly ordinary young bourgeois woman with a good heart, very little experience or psychological insight, and a tendency to occasional lapses of rational judgment. Well-educated, widely read, worldly, and prone to intelligent raillery, Henry Tilney represents the mentor figure who teaches Catherine how to read situations and people, how to ascribe motives to others, and how to know her

own mind. Henry is a younger and more casual and forgiving version of Austen's later mentor-hero, Mr. Knightley, in ***Emma.***

Catherine Morland remains bluntly straightforward in saying what she thinks, thinks the best of everyone until forced to recognize that many people have flaws, and believes what she reads until humiliation makes her realize that common sense does not always accord with romance fiction. People are not what they seem to be, and neither are circumstances or even physical environments.

Northanger Abbey establishes Austen's novel-writing artistry by building on, playing off, and ultimately differentiating itself from the popular strain of women's fiction of the period. Austen takes on a powerful foremother in Ann Radcliffe, and she uses irony to turn General Tilney into a bourgeois villain and to make his treatment of Catherine underscore the ways in which she represents an ordinary bourgeois woman who slowly learns to think for herself and trust her own moral instincts. Disenchanted at the end, Catherine is nevertheless rewarded with the love of a handsome, comfortable, and kind hero who understands her and loves her for the artless person she is.

Like Don Quixote before her and Emma Bovary after her, Catherine Morland has read too much and believed too much in her formative reading of romances and fantasies. Unlike them, she forms an adult mind of her own in the course of the novel. The narrative irony of ***Northanger Abbey*** emphasizes these lessons, as Catherine's views are formed in subtle moments of realization. Irony is nowhere used to greater effect than when the narrator, largely through the consciousness of Henry Tilney, makes fun of the propensities of Gothic fiction, as Catherine's "passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney" (p. 141).

Catherine and the Tilneys discuss literature and history in addition to theories of the picturesque in landscape and attitudes toward drawing and taste. This extended conversation covers many kinds of reading and intellectual reverie and includes remarks about the play between fact and invention in historical writings. Catherine has little patience for the "quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome" (p. 108). Catherine also paints an interesting picture of the sort of home schooling many children received when she comments that learning one's letters can be torturous. "You think me foolish to call instruction a torment," she tells Henry and Eleanor Tilney, "but if you had been as much used as myself to hear poor little children first learning their letters and then learning to spell, if you had ever seen how stupid they can be for a whole morning together, and how

tired my poor mother is at the end of it, as I am in the habit of seeing almost every day of my life at home, you would allow that to torment and to instruct might sometimes be used as synonymous words" (pp. 109-10).

In many ways, ***Northanger Abbey*** is Jane Austen's novel of education. As reading is a central activity in ***Northanger Abbey,*** the novel serves as a precursor to the more psychological focus on the cognitive development of Austen's later and more complex protagonist, Emma Woodhouse of ***Emma,*** a woman who begins many books but completes few.[8]

Because the parody of a popular genre so defines ***Northanger Abbey,*** it is especially compelling that this is the work in which Austen offers up her most powerful defense of the novel as a legitimate genre of social commentary and literary artistry. Thus ***Northanger Abbey*** represents Austen's most self-conscious and self-reflexive work of fiction. While the Tilneys offer a spirited defense of the pleasures of serious history, in the end Catherine Morland and the comic novel carry the day.

Sense and Sensibility

During the final editing of ***Sense and Sensibility*** in April of 1811, Austen remarked to her sister Cassandra: "I am never too busy to think of S&S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child." Written at around the same time as ***Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility*** bears some resemblance to Austen's more overtly satiric effort. Both works contain ironic discussions about the picturesque and the fashion for landscape appreciation; both involve a world where gossip reigns supreme; both delve in detail into the economics of family alliances and marriages; both treat social hypocrisy with ironic contempt; and both concern female protagonists whose romantic idealism causes them difficulties and requires them to suffer disenchantment before they can gain real happiness. Yet ***Sense and Sensibility*** is notably darker than ***Northanger Abbey.*** Austen's first published novel tasks its main characters, both female and male, with severe disappointments in love.

Austen writes in ***Sense and Sensibility*** with a less mature ironic voice, more overt satire, and less sophisticated narrative interventions than she was to develop in her later novels, but the story she tells is as complex and fraught as any she ever invented. The central characters are the Dashwood women, a mother and her three daughters. Left with little to live on after Mr. Dashwood dies, they leave Sussex for Devonshire, where they encounter a dashing visitor to the neighborhood, John Willoughby, and he and the middle daughter, Marianne, form a flamboyant and ill-disguised liaison that flouts propriety and flourishes on private outings and poetry. When Elinor's beau Edward Ferrars proves to be engaged to another woman and Willoughby abruptly leaves, publicly snubs Marianne, and marries an heiress, Elinor and Marianne are devastated, and each responds to these severe disappointments in accordance with her temperament.

The novel opens with an extended discourse on the financial circumstances of the Dashwoods, and the economic arrangements of John Willoughby and the Ferrars family come importantly into play as the plot unfolds. When Willoughby marries Miss Grey, who brings him the vast sum of £50,000, the voluble Mrs. Jennings reports the gossip: "Fifty thousand pounds! And by all accounts it won't come before it's wanted; for they say he is all to pieces. No wonder! Dashing about with his curricle and hunters!" (p. 194). And when the secret engagement between Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele is revealed to Edward's imperious mother, Mrs. Ferrars disowns him and bestows the family estate on his younger brother, Robert.

Behind the unfolding of the economic and romantic dramas that take center stage in ***Sense and Sensibility*** lies an embedded and centrally important story concerning one of Austen's most unprepossessing and unpromising heroes, Colonel Brandon, the 35-year old who is described as "silent and grave"[4] and who falls under Marianne's spell almost immediately. Marianne and Willoughby make fun of him, and he remains a kind of background figure in the novel's first volume. Yet in many ways, Brandon's situation reflects Austen's extensive reading in eighteenth-century fiction and echoes the dark, mysterious circumstances that shadow the romantic heroes created by Austen's predecessors. As a young man, Brandon had fallen in love with a childhood friend named Eliza, who was forced to marry his brother and was mistreated by him in such a way that they divorced. Eliza fell into sexual dissolution and penury, and she died of consumption, leaving an illegitimate infant daughter. Colonel Brandon raises the daughter, also named Eliza, and local gossip purports him to be her natural father. On a chaperoned visit to Bath, the second Eliza is seduced by Willoughby and becomes pregnant, and Willoughby abandons her shortly before he meets the Dashwoods. Brandon sends her and her child to the country and fights a duel with Willoughby.

The importance of the Eliza stories lies in the way the events of the novel echo the secret past that haunts several of the characters. In ***Sense and Sensibility,*** none of the key romantic alliances that become permanent derive from first loves. This is very much a novel about learning from disappointment, disillusionment, and tragedy, and moving on to find a mature marital love. Elinor is Edward's second attachment, as Marianne is Brandon's second love.

Sense and Sensibility speaks of settlements and annuities, jointures and income, the cost of keeping servants and carriages, furniture and plate, and hunting dogs and horses. The characters all come from the landowning classes, but they are constrained by intricate rules about the way property moves from one generation to the next. The entrenched system of primogeniture—the inheritance by the first-born son of the entire estate, so that younger brothers have to make their way in the world through a career in the Church or the military—makes rivals of siblings. Family values may receive great lip service, but the property system as Austen depicts it in fact divides rather than unites families, especially siblings, and it treats women most unfairly.

Therein lies the novel's moral center. To gain comfort and social standing, a woman needs a man of a certain status. At the same time, to maintain her moral worth, she must resist the goads to pursue and "catch" a wealthy man. When the Dashwood sisters dispute how much money is necessary to maintain a comfortable household, it is the sensible Elinor who speaks a central economic truth. To Marianne's question, "What have wealth and grandeur to do with happiness?" her older

sister replies, "Grandeur has but little . . . but wealth has much to do with it" (p. 91).

While the novel's title appears to suggest that the Dashwood sisters' characters are to be compared and contrasted, in a world in which marriage leads primarily to material prosperity, as critic Margaret Anne Doody points out, the nature of a woman's temperament hardly matters.[9] In many ways, the men are as much reflected in these comparative terms as the women. Colonel Brandon becomes sensible and rational after grievous and tragic disappointments, Edward Ferrars recovers from early impetuosity to become solemn but happily rational, and Willoughby suffers more lastingly from the fruits of his own indulgence in sensibility than any of the other characters. At the same time, Elinor and Marianne differ more in their surface behaviors than in their deepest emotions.

Austen's narrator remains at the side of Elinor, through whose eyes the reader receives and judges the story. The novel seems chilly to many readers, partly because Elinor, long-suffering and selfless, seems insufficiently rewarded in the end with Edward Ferrars, who is one of the more melancholy and feckless men in Austen's repertoire. Elinor thinks for herself and keeps her own counsel. Unlike Austen heroines such as Catherine Morland, Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, and Emma Woodhouse, Elinor does not require a moral or romantic education. Until Austen created Anne Elliot in ***Persuasion,*** Elinor Dashwood represented her most mature, intellectual protagonist, a woman who knows what she has to learn and learns what she has to know.

Much of the novel is told in *style indirect libre* (free indirect style) from Elinor's point of view. That is, Elinor does not speak directly, but the narrator recounts what goes on in her mind in a nearly conversational way. As Doody notes, Elinor's careful approach to the world of appearances is crucial because ***Sense and Sensibility*** is a novel about knowing and about epistemology, the philosophy of what is knowable.[10] *Sense* and *sensibility* are not so much modes of being or distinctions of character and temperament, as many critics have taken them to be, as they are ways of approaching the world and taking in evidence.

In the world that Austen depicts in ***Sense and Sensibility,*** there is little hard evidence. Clues abound—rings that contain locks of hair, faces that blush or go pale, behaviors that seem to communicate something but then are followed by actions that communicate the opposite—but it is nearly impossible to know anything for certain. Characters constantly wonder and conjecture, guess and assume, doubt and become misled. As one critic has remarked, the novel's language is filled with modal verbs: "might," "would," and "should."[11] And Elinor understands more than the others both the ways in which she can be misled and the stakes involved. Yet despite this insight, a series of misapprehensions of just these sorts propels the novel's action. Austen's irony serves to ensure that ***Sense and Sensibility,*** whatever its serious moral lessons, remains a comedy of manners.

Pride and Prejudice

While ***Northanger Abbey*** parodies the genre of the female Gothic, and ***Sense and Sensibility*** in part satirizes the novel of sensibility, ***Pride and Prejudice*** is harder to categorize. The novel features a number of common plot devices: an infelicitously married couple who bear their incompatibility for the sake of social propriety (Mr. and Mrs. Bennet); proud, aristocratic heroes whose first declarations of love to the heroine offend her because of their arrogant claim that only an inability to overcome their feelings prompts them to seek a wife in a lower social circle (Fitzwilliam Darcy); heroes who initially accommodate the wishes of indomitably judgmental elders whose belief in social rules thwarts individual desire (Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh); society women whose frustrations lead them to treat sarcastically those they resent (the Bingley sisters); and hedonistic characters who ruin themselves and bring sorrow to others (Lydia Bennet and George Wickham). But much as ***Pride and Prejudice*** emerges from various eighteenth-century novel traditions, it does not depend upon the literary forms or conventions of the past, but forges a new and ironic comedy of manners all its own. The verbal sparring between Elizabeth and Darcy perhaps recalls the depiction of courtship in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing,* but it is new to prose fiction.

The plot of ***Pride and Prejudice*** is better known than that of any other Austen novel. The Bennet family has five daughters, and with no male heir, their family home at Longbourn and its £2,000 a year will go to a distant cousin, the obsequious Mr. Collins, upon Mr. Bennet's death. Hence the famous opening line—"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife"[12]—might be better phrased, as Isobel Armstrong points out, as "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman without possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a husband."[13] This novel tells a story about the possibility of social mobility at the turn of the nineteenth century. Can class be overcome, either by moving from the bourgeoisie to the landed gentry as Bingley does, or by forging a contract between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, as Darcy and Elizabeth arguably do in the end through their marriage? Most readers have understood ***Pride and Prejudice*** to concern only social and personal relations, but the presence of the army and the allusion in the last pages to "the restoration of peace" (p. 387), a reference to the 1802 Peace of Amiens, would have situated the work clearly for contemporary readers as a story set after the French

Revolution and during the Napoleonic wars. This was a period in which the merchant and professional classes took up their positions in a challenge to the landed aristocracy, of which Darcy represents one of the last scions.

Charles Bingley rents Netherfield Park with money earned from trade, and brings his sisters to the neighborhood of Longbourn to take up residence there and his friend Darcy to visit. The local families, principally comprising the Bennets and the Lucases, immediately want to be included in this new and high social circle, and everyone meets at the Meryton assembly. The Bingleys admire the eldest Miss Bennet, Jane, and invite her to visit. While at Netherfield she falls ill, prompting her younger sister Elizabeth to walk several miles across muddy fields to tend to her, arriving in the flush of exercise to the ridicule of the Bingley sisters, who think her unrefined. Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley develop an attachment during this visit, while the "lively, playful" (p. 12) Elizabeth judges Darcy cold and critical as he begins to find himself admiring her intelligence and becoming bewitched by her "fine eyes" (p. 27). The key to this courtship lies in the gradual change from Darcy's original contempt for Elizabeth as a dance partner and her persistent dislike of him to something that comes about precisely because she so firmly resists him. The attractiveness of an uninterested woman also plays a role in the later ***Mansfield Park,*** in which Henry Crawford pursues Fanny Price more intently as she makes it increasingly clear that she will not change her mind and accept him.

Two key subplots augment and interrupt the romantic and satiric conquests of the elder Bennet sisters. The distant cousin upon whom Longbourn is entailed, Mr. Collins, a clergyman, comes to visit because he has heard it reported that the Bennet daughters are amiable, and his position as inheritor of their home leads him to feel obliged to court one of them as a recompense for taking his cousins' estate. Finding that Jane's affections are elsewhere drawn, he settles on Elizabeth. Mr. Collins is one of Austen's finest comic creations, a delightful caricature who is by turns ridiculous and pathetic, oily and awkward; he represents obeisance to the older aristocratic classes in the way that he fawns on Lady Catherine de Bourgh. When Elizabeth declines him, Collins proposes to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's closest friend and a woman who sees the practical need that she marry with clear-eyed sense.

A militia corps encamps at Meryton, and Elizabeth develops an attachment to the charming George Wickham, an officer who tells her that his boyhood friend Darcy has betrayed him by refusing him a living that he had to bestow, fueling Elizabeth's already settled dislike of Darcy into real hostility.

Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth is one of the most amazing and brilliantly contrived scenes in Austen's repertoire and perhaps in all English fiction. Agitated and uncomfortable, he opens his declaration with "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (p. 189). The rest of the discussion follows in free indirect style with Darcy alluding not only to his emotional attachment but also to his sense that a connection with the inferior Bennets will degrade his family. Elizabeth's response, equally indirect at first, consists largely of resentful anger. This unprecedented anti-courtship exchange between an unmarried wealthy man and a comparatively poor unmarried women remains a literary classic, capped by Elizabeth's pronouncement that "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry" (p. 193).

Darcy leaves with dignity, and he writes to Elizabeth to explain his history. "How differently did every thing now appear in which he was concerned!" thinks Elizabeth (p. 207). "Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd," and she feels shame at herself and humiliation at her actions: "Till this moment, I never knew myself" (p. 208). Shortly, Lydia Bennet is invited to Brighton, where the regiment is encamped, "a situation of such double danger as a watering place and a camp" (p. 237). Lydia's heedless behavior produces a key goad to the plot of ***Pride and Prejudice*** when she runs off with Wickham. Much of the rest of the novel is taken up with laborious efforts to find Lydia and Wickham, to discharge Wickham's debts, and to arrange their marriage, much of it brought about by Darcy's good offices. When Elizabeth learns the details, her view of Darcy undergoes a final metamorphosis: "For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself" (p. 327).

The marriage, however, does not take place until a second unprecedented scene occurs in which Lady Catherine de Bourgh condescends to visit Elizabeth in order to warn her away from her nephew, calling her "a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family" (p. 355) and famously asking, with reference to the scandal of Lydia and Wickham, "Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?" (p. 357). Elizabeth refuses to promise that she will not marry Darcy, asks Lady Catherine to leave, and assets that she is "resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to *you,* or to any person so wholly unconnected with me" (p. 358).

On one if its surfaces, ***Pride and Prejudice*** might appear to be a Cinderella fairy tale: two deserving but

poor women win the hearts of handsome, rich, and kind men. The Collins and Wickham subplots, however, mar this surface appearance. Wickham's elopement with Lydia rocks even the somewhat fatuous Bennets in its production of gossip, scandal, and threat of ruin, even though Darcy's money and influence salvage the connection. Less obviously, Collins's indiscriminate courting of whoever looks game to be his wife and his acceptance by a talented and sensible woman raises more profound questions about marital arrangements. Charlotte's decision to marry Collins represents the most straightforward comment Austen ever made on the economic constraints that dictate women's ability to choose a husband.

Charlotte bears her lot because marriage to the painfully formal Collins is preferable to the alternative of dependent spinsterhood. Obsequious Collins may be, and embarrassingly gauche in his slavish obeisance to Lady Catherine, but he is neither improper nor evil. Charlotte has become accustomed to being the one sensible person in a silly family, and her marriage will conform to that experience. Mr. Collins saves Charlotte from the even greater humiliation of poverty and dependence, and for her part, Charlotte sees her marriage for exactly what it is and no more.

In contrast, George Wickham is a true if light-hearted and charming villain. Importantly, he first appears in the novel with "all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and a very pleasing address" (p. 72). Like John Willoughby in ***Sense and Sensibility,*** Wickham has been brought up and educated with many advantages and has intelligence, good looks, and an easy glibness in conversation. Also like Willoughby, Wickham's tastes are expensive, he grows dissipated and unable to command his own desires, and he adds manipulative economic contrivances and near blackmail to these faults. Unlike Willoughby, Wickham never sees the folly of his ways and repents, nor does he snare a wealthy woman to subsidize his pleasures (although arguably he gains access to Darcy's wealth through his marriage to a Bennet). The Wickham story takes up much of the novel and synthesizes its themes of appearance versus reality and the trials of what people say and think against how they behave.

When the characters fail to understand the nature of social interaction—most notably in the Bennet parents' failure to realize that Lydia cannot be safe in Brighton—misunderstandings ensue. Much of ***Pride and Prejudice*** turns on the nature of gossip, news, and information in a circumscribed society, where judgments are formed by hearsay and innuendo. What, finally, can be told and what must remain secret? That question haunts the novel as does a related question concerning whether it is ever possible to know others with justice and to judge rightly other people's motives (not to mention one's own).

The original title of this novel, ***First Impressions,*** alludes to personal characteristics. The changed and final title, ***Pride and Prejudice,*** is more philosophical. A similar change of title occurs in the predecessor novel when ***Elinor and Marianne,*** with its lens trained on two particular women, becomes ***Sense and Sensibility,*** with a focus on more abstract concepts. In ***Pride and Prejudice,*** Austen does not simply contrast a proud man who learns to be humble and a prejudiced woman who learns to ask more questions before she passes judgment. Rather, she asks the reader to consider to what degree any of us can ever know another fully, without tainting our knowledge with our preconceptions and our wishful thinking. In this sense, Austen's first two published novels resemble one another as works about epistemology, the ability to know. Austen portrays a world where appearances reign and social stature depends on public perception. At the same time, she tells her readers that true knowledge may not be visible through a social lens.

Mansfield Park

Whereas ***Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility,*** and ***Pride and Prejudice*** all had their beginnings in the 1790s when Austen was in her early twenties, ***Mansfield Park*** dates from the years immediately preceding its publication, when Austen was in her late thirties. Austen remarked of ***Mansfield Park,*** "Now I will try to write of something else;—it shall be a complete change of subject—Ordination."[14] This passage also presents Austen's sense that this novel would be a departure from her earlier marriage plots.

Although ordination indeed forms an aspect of the novel—and Austen had asked her sister to inquire about some of its details from their ordained brother James Austen—service to the Church and ideas about Evangelicalism form only a small portion of the concerns of ***Mansfield Park.*** Indeed, given that the stupefyingly inane Mr. Collins was her previous clergyman character, ordination seems an odd choice for a subject. The story opens with a portrayal of the Ward sisters and their history. Maria Ward married Sir Thomas Bertram and became Lady Bertram, the mistress of a large estate and the mother of two sons and two daughters; Miss Ward had to settle for the Reverend Mr. Norris, a friend of Sir Thomas who was given the Mansfield living (neither member of this couple has a given name and Mr. Norris dies before becoming a real character in the story); and Frances imprudently married a Lieutenant in the Marines, broke with her sisters, and began to have "a superfluity of children."[15] Fanny Price, Frances' eldest daughter, arrives as a charity project at the age of ten amid some concerns on the part of the Bertrams that she can never be an equal to her cousins and might become a burden.

The diffident Fanny Price comes to Mansfield and is lodged in an attic room and treated as though she be-

longs in a rank somewhere between a servant and a poor relation. She is of no importance to the elder Bertram son, Tom, and is held in contempt by her cousins Maria and Julia. The younger Bertram son, Edmund, befriends her and becomes a welcome companion. Sir Thomas and Tom leave to tend to unspecified troubles on their plantations in the West Indies. During their absence, Maria, the older daughter, becomes engaged to a wealthy neighboring landowner, Mr. Rushworth, "a heavy young man, with not more than common sense" (p. 38) who has little beyond his wealth and family connections to recommend him. The Mansfield living was destined for Edmund but the reversion was sold to help pay Tom's gaming debts; upon Mr. Norris's death it is assumed by the purchaser, Dr. Grant, and Mrs. Grant's half-brother and sister, Henry and Mary Crawford, come to visit. If Fanny and Edmund are the novel's heroine and hero, Mary Crawford and her brother Henry are its anti-heroine and anti-hero.

The first volume of ***Mansfield Park*** contains two of Austen's great set pieces, the visit to Rushworth's Sotherton estate and the family's plan to put on a play, *Lovers' Vows,* Elizabeth Inchbald's version of August Kotzebue's *Natural Son.* As ***Northanger Abbey*** had introduced the subject of the landscape picturesque into Austen's works, and ***Pride and Prejudice*** turns part of its plot on Elizabeth Bennet's visit to Pemberley with the Gardiners into an occasion for disquisitions on views and houses, so ***Mansfield Park*** uses the houses and grounds of its title location and of Sotherton to depict the domestic spaces, the furnishings, and the gardens of the landed classes, using these geographical and spatial markers as metaphors for the scope of their class influence. This was an age of "improvements" and "prospects" and competing theories of landscape architecture. Several of Austen's novels, most notably ***Mansfield Park,*** contain references to the chief garden designer of the day, Humphrey Repton. The playacting episode focuses on the morality of the particular play *Lovers' Vows* and of acting more generally, and sets up the novel's key plot developments in the intricate erotic dance of jealousy between Edmund and Mary and Fanny, and Maria and Henry and Julia and Rushworth.

At Sotherton, Mary and Edmund discuss the clergy, the expectations of second sons, and morality and wit. As they fall into a dispute about the size of the woods, they leave Fanny alone on a bench, and Maria Bertram, Rushworth, and Henry Crawford join her. When Maria wants to pass through a locked iron gate into the park, Mr. Rushworth goes off to fetch its key. Henry urges Maria to pass around the edge of the gate to circumvent its "feeling of restraint and hardship" (p. 99) and, thus challenged, the two leave Fanny alone a second time, to be joined by Julia, who likewise "scrambled across the fence" (p. 101). Rushworth arrives soon after, "mortified and displeased" (p. 101) to find the others gone off without waiting for him. Rushworth, too, leaves, using his key. Fanny goes off to seek Edmund and Mary, and finds them after their own visit to the park through an unfastened side gate. Eventually, everyone reconvenes, many of them quite out of sorts or out of breath: "By their own accounts they had all been walking after each other, and the junction which had taken place at last seemed, to Fanny's observation, to have been . . . much too late for re-establishing harmony" (p. 104).

The maneuverings and conversations of all these characters at Sotherton mirror the operations of the novel as a whole. Clusters of characters come together, part, and regroup in an elaborate choreography that reflects one of Austen's concerns in ***Mansfield Park,*** to depict a world in which alliances shift and reform, and where very high stakes attend the arrangements that remain when the music stops. The Sotherton episode opens in the confined chapel with serious discussions about family prayers, the role and status of the clergy, and the moral value of marriage, then moves outdoors to a more expansive round of imprisonment and escape through and around locked gates and doors, where the game of partnering and triangulating has clear erotic overtones.

Tom Bertram returns from Antigua before his father, who is detained by business, and he introduces to Mansfield an Oxford friend, John Yates, a younger son of a lord, who is as idle and irresponsible as Tom. The two young men put forward a theatrical presentation, and they turn Sir Thomas's billiard room into a theater for the purpose. Edmund at first objects on moral grounds.

> I think it would be very wrong. In a *general* light, private theatricals are open to some objections, but as *we* are circumstanced, I must think it would be highly injudicious, and more than injudicious, to attempt any thing of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father's account; absent as he is, and in some degree of constant danger; and it would be imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate.
>
> (Edmund Bertram in ***Mansfield Park,*** p. 125.)

Maria's flirtations with Henry Crawford have become evident to all, including Rushworth, and Julia Bertram has set her marital sights on Henry, with the family's approbation, as well. Edmund calls upon the rigidity of Sir Thomas's sense of decorum, especially for his daughters, but he is overruled and eventually, through the seductions of Mary Crawford, he joins in the acting plans after saying unequivocally at first that he would not do so. The group scraps over what sort of play to put on—comedy or tragedy—before settling on *Lovers' Vows,* a play that turns on the abandonment of a pregnant woman, the recognition of an illegitimate child, and a woman who avows her love to her tutor, and would have been considered quite risqué in Austen's time.

Edmund asks Maria to give up her idea of acting in the play, finding it unsuitable, but is laughed at for his prim scruples. In the event, everyone participates, even luring Fanny into a small part. The play serves as a microcosmic variant on the relationships between these characters, with jealousy flaring as Rushworth slowly realizes how Henry Crawford and Maria are making a fool of him, and Fanny uneasily watches the growing attraction between Mary Crawford and Edmund. Fanny herself becomes a more central figure in the household through this episode. Once Edmund compromises with his conviction that acting is wrong and decides to be in the play, the novel's moral compass turns.

The household begins to deteriorate as scene painters arrive, Fanny and Julia retreat, and "Every body began to have their vexation" (p. 164). This episode contains both burlesque elements and aspects of near-tragic chaos, and hence remains one of Austen's most unsettling extended narrative sequences. The climax occurs when Edmund and Mary ask Fanny to help them to rehearse a scene that Fanny finds shocking and, to end the first volume of the novel, Sir Thomas unexpectedly arrives home, announced by Julia throwing open the door and uttering the news with "a face all aghast" (p. 172).

Sir Thomas finds his house in disarray, disapproves, and in short order burns every copy of *Lovers' Vows* he finds. A cynicism pervades ***Mansfield Park.*** The novel focuses on two sets of threesomes: Edmund and Mary and Fanny on the one hand, and Henry and Maria and Fanny on the other. They work in opposition to one another. The decent and judicious Edmund is nearly seduced into a calculated and too worldly love by Mary, who disapproves of his professional plans, until he finds redemption in Fanny's devotion and propriety. And Henry is nearly redeemed by his love for Fanny until he runs off with the married Maria Bertram Rushworth and condemns her to irrevocable ignominy.

Austen readers tend to hold extreme views about her third published novel. Readers either love it passionately as their favorite of the six major novels, or they find it to be the weakest of the six. Few hold a middle position about this complex work. The reason for this polarizing of positions about ***Mansfield Park*** rests in its heroine. Fanny Price begins the novel as a diffident refugee brought to her uncle's mannered estate from her dubious lower-class home in Portsmouth. The most docile, mousiest, and oddest of Austen's heroines, Fanny moves more and more to the center of the novel, until at the end she represents the moral anchor of Mansfield itself.

A key source of recent critical debate about ***Mansfield Park*** has concerned the Bertram colonial possessions in the West Indies, where they raise sugar cane and keep slaves. In some ways, this backdrop, alluded to frequently but only clearly discussed a handful of times in the novel, relates to the theme of ordination, in that the Evangelical movement in which Edmund would seem to fit opposed slavery and worked for the abolition of the slave trade during Austen's lifetime, and Austen's own religious and moral sympathies lay in that direction. ***Mansfield Park*** was written during the final years of the Napoleonic wars, a period in which agriculture in England was relatively depressed, much of the economy depended upon sugar from the West Indies, and the professional classes were beginning to forge new ideas about public service. The younger son Edmund in this novel represents hard work and self-discipline in opposition to characters such as Tom Bertram and John Yates, who represent the lazy self-importance of the dissolute gentry. Edward Said has argued that the colonial background to ***Mansfield Park*** makes the novel a landmark in colonial literature, and much has been written in response to his argument.[16] Certainly, Fanny Price is the only character in the novel who purports to be interested in her uncle's stories about Antigua.[17]

The colonial debates have focused on Austen's interpretation of the economic underpinnings of life on an estate such as Mansfield Park. Another approach might be to examine the microcosm of colonialism represented by the way Fanny is plucked from her impoverished and disadvantaged home in a naval port to be rescued with education and civility at Mansfield in the safe interior of Northamptonshire. Treated virtually as a servant and given accommodations unlike those of the rest of the family, Fanny eventually asserts herself, revolts against expectations by refusing to marry Henry Crawford, and returns to redeem at least two of her siblings, William and Susan, the latter of whom takes her place at Mansfield. Ironically, William's naval promotion is a calculated part of Henry Crawford's courtship of Fanny; his situation also makes likely the success of the younger seagoing Price brothers. Fanny wins her emancipation and eventually marries one of her colonizers, the benevolent second son Edmund Bertram. The turnabout in Fanny's situation might, after all, be a clearer way to understand Austen's global and economic politics than an attempt to elevate the brief discussions of slavery in Antigua to the forefront of the novel. The younger Prices have more energy, capacity, and ambition than any of the Bertrams; this, too, provides clues to Austen's class politics.

Emma

John Murray offered Austen £450 for the copyright of ***Emma,*** but he wanted ***Mansfield Park*** and ***Sense and Sensibility*** to be included in the package, and she turned down the offer. Austen wrote a letter in December 1815 in which she expressed anxiety that readers would find ***Emma*** less witty than ***Pride and Prejudice*** and less

sensible than ***Mansfield Park.*** To the Countess of Morley, an early reader of the novel who had sent a note of praise, Austen wrote on December 31, 1815, that she was encouraged to find "that I have not yet—as almost every Writer of Fancy does sooner or later—overwritten myself."[18]

Emma returns Austen to her preoccupation with epistemology: What can we know and, more important, how can we make sense of our knowledge? She asks other questions as well: What should we try to know about others, and when should we mind our own business? All of Austen's major works are comedies of manners, but ***Emma*** is Austen's purest comedy and her most reassuring portrait of manners. There are no tragic backgrounds with stories like those of Colonel Brandon and the two Elizas, no charming but dangerous seducers such as Willoughby and Wickham, not even a difficult and unforgiving character such as General Tilney. Characters have their weaknesses, but none is so glaringly weak and misjudging as Emma Woodhouse herself, a beautiful and wealthy young woman who dominates the village of Highbury.

Emma contains forays into the problems of class mobility and exegeses on social hypocrisy, as do all of Austen's works. But in ***Emma,*** these passages are comically ironic without having a submerged dark side. The secret engagement of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax exhibits qualities of deception that verge on the sinister but never arrive there. The spirit of separation that creates an almost carnivalesque disorder at Box Hill is ultimately put right, and everyone's happy place is restored.

Emma believes her understanding and psychological insight to be completely reliable. In the course of the novel, she discovers the opposite to be true, and learns to exert less power over others and to pay more attention to knowing and controlling herself. In her first disagreement with Mr. Knightley concerning Harriet Smith and Robert Martin, Knightley expostulates, "Upon my word, Emma, to hear you abusing the reason you have. . . . Better be without sense, than misapply it as you do."[19] The novel abounds with variations on the word "blunder," a word that at one point is the answer to a word game in a story filled with riddles, charades, puzzles, and enigmas. Emma improves in sense as her small humiliations mount, and she is finally rewarded with knowing who she is and what she wants. Because the novel's village is so circumscribed, and Austen's focus remains so thoroughly on Emma and stays almost entirely within Emma's perspective on events and feelings, ***Emma*** has the tightest plot line of the major novels.

The opening sentence lays open the whole of the Emma problem, as Austen's opening sentences tend to do: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twentyone years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (p. 5). Emma's problems derive, in fact, from her comfort and her temperament.

> The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.
>
> (On Emma Woodhouse in ***Emma,*** pp. 5-6)

Emma centers on the education of Emma Woodhouse: learning to be humble and to examine her own motives as she comes to an enlightening self-knowledge.

Pride and Prejudice features a mother who does a poor job of raising her daughters in Mrs. Bennet, and ***Mansfield Park*** features bad mothers indeed, with Lady Bertram's indolent inattention to her children, Mrs. Price's overlooking her daughters and poor household management that creates chaos around them, and the childless Mrs. Norris's busybody meddling in the affairs of other people's children. In ***Emma,*** the adult characters have virtually no mothers at all. The characters Emma, Harriet Smith, Frank Churchill, and Jane Fairfax each must manage without mothers, and when Miss Taylor leaves, Emma experiences her first real grief from the loss. Harriet Smith, "the natural daughter of somebody" (p. 22), lives as a boarder in a girls' school. Jane Fairfax faces the real possibility of having to work as a governess, a position she likens to that of a slave whose life is not her own to regulate. Churchill himself bears an oblique relation to the woman who might have mothered him, his vain and tyrannical aunt Mrs. Churchill, and some of his weakness and vanity might be said to derive from poor or absent mothering.

However, the focus stays fully on Emma Woodhouse throughout this novel. First, she takes up the unpromising Harriet Smith as a project. She finds Harriet attractive and pleasant to be with and at the same time unthreatening to Emma's own reign in Highbury. She separates Harriet from Robert Martin, a local farmer, and decides on a plan of action: "she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners" (p. 24). Emma persuades Harriet to aspire to Mr. Elton, the Highbury vicar and "a young man whom any woman not fastidious might like" (p. 35). Then she encourages Harriet to fantasize about first, Frank Churchill (fantasies that exist only in Emma's mind) and, by accident, Mr. Knightley himself, the highest-ranking man in the village, as potential suitors before poor Harriet is finally able to get out of Em-

ma's clutches and reconcile with Mr. Martin, a man she loves and with whom she can be happy and appropriately settled.

Emma misses the fact that she is the woman Elton, in fact, aspires to, and that he is a conceited man who thinks Harriet too common for him. Emma endures an embarrassing but wonderfully rendered carriage ride while Elton makes his unwanted professions to her, and she has to take responsibility for humiliating her friend. Emma's conversation with Mr. Knightley about class and rank, along with Elton's more self-serving definitions of these positions, anchor the novel in its social analysis as a book with a very clear sense of who belongs where. Those who maneuver around their class positions, such as Jane Fairfax, find themselves in a social limbo that disconcerts everyone around them and makes them vulnerable to embarrassment and hardship.

The story of the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax provides one of the novel's central intrigues. Even before she meets Frank, Emma decides that, were she to marry, he might be a suitable match for her. And even before Jane Fairfax arrives in Highbury, she feels threatened by having a potential rival for the role of most beautiful and accomplished young woman in Highbury. Unlike Emma, Jane is a woman educated to be a governess; however, her relative impoverishment does not take away her independence of experience or spirit. Emma indeed has reason to be jealous, because Jane is her equal except in social and economic rank. Her presence reminds readers that Emma's position in society very much depends upon her family and her wealth.

From early in the novel, the consummate matchmaker Emma declares that she herself will never marry. "I cannot really change for the better," Emma tells Harriet. "If I were to marry, I must expect to repent it." "I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry," she goes on. "Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house, as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's" (p. 84). Mr. Woodhouse, a cantankerous invalid, indeed proves a small obstacle to Emma's marriage to Knightley, and will have to be accommodated with unorthodox measures, requiring that her husband come live with her rather than the reverse. When Harriet worries that Emma will have the dreadful fate of being an old maid if she persists in her decision not to marry, Emma makes an odd speech about independence and economics in relation to marital alliances:

> "Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! The proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else."
>
> (p. 85)

As it happens, these remarks describe one version of Miss Bates, and suggest the cloud that hangs over both Jane Fairfax, who speaks of the governess trade as akin to the slave trade, and Harriet Smith. The trajectory of the novel works away from Emma's rather thoughtless if sociologically astute musings, until she comes to find herself alone and discontent and self-reproachful at the moment when she learns to understand herself at last.

The set piece and climax of ***Emma*** comes in the Box Hill episode, which takes place on midsummer's day and bears some phantasmagoric relation to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* As critic Terry Castle points out, Austen captures in this scene the quality of cranky, overheated discontent that a failed group outing can have, and it causes Emma to be struck with a stab of malice delivered toward the comic-pathetic character of Miss Bates, a poor spinster who is always good-natured despite her rather depressed situation.[20] The outing begins well, then rapidly deteriorates:

> Nothing was wanting but to be happy when they got there. Seven miles were traveled in expectation of enjoyment, and every body had a burst of admiration on first arriving; but in the general amount of the day there was deficiency. There was a languor, a want of spirits, a want of union, which could not be got over. They separated too much into parties . . . during the whole two hours that were spent on the hill, there seemed a principle of separation . . . too strong for any fine prospects, or any cold collation, or any cheerful Mr. Weston to remove.
>
> (p. 367)

The wandering disharmony at Box Hill reminds Austen readers of the gate-evading misconnections and annoyances that plague the party at Sotherton in ***Mansfield Park.*** Some of the same principles of misunderstanding and self-delusion operate at Box Hill, though without the adulterous undercurrent of sexual immorality that buzzes around Sotherton. Frank works to amuse Emma, and she becomes "gay and thoughtless" (p. 368), producing the most trivial yet also the most heinous of Emma's social misjudgments when she openly insults Miss Bates by making fun of her tendency to talk incessantly about nothing. Even Miss Bates, slow on the uptake and nearly incapable of anger, realizes that she has been insulted.

As he hands her into the carriage to leave Box Hill, Knightley, who is "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (p. 11), upbraids her for using

insolent wit "to a woman of her character, age, and situation" (p. 374). Emma blushes and tries to shrug off the reprimand, which comes not because Miss Bates is not as ridiculous as Emma sees her to be, but because her poverty and discomfort require compassion. Her mortification at the rightness of his reproach causes her to act sullen, and the day ends with Emma "vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life" (p. 376). Extraordinarily, Emma weeps "almost all the way home," tears that Castle argues may be the first real tears, and the most realistic, in all of English literature.[21]

Emma visits Miss Bates, makes amends, and is forgiven, but the episode remains odd. In a story in which Emma's deluded errors cause real mischief to the material lives of others, it is a brief, thoughtless remark to an older woman who is a relative nonentity in Highbury society that reveals the crux of Emma's self-destructive lack of insight and self-knowledge. In minding the manners of everyone around her, she has failed to mind her own.

Some critics have proposed that ***Emma*** bears a resemblance to the detective novel, as Emma tries to solve various mysteries, notably concerning the shady character presentations of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. If so, Emma Woodhouse may be the literary world's most inept detective, missing every clue and hint until she is thunderstruck with the realization that she loves Mr. Knightley: "It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" (p. 408). After Knightley's profession of love and Emma's famous and maddening non-reply—"What did she say?—Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does" (p. 431)—the narrator provides a commentary on their zigzagging non-courtship that could stand for the novel as a whole: "Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken" (p. 431). In the comic world of Highbury, relative truth rises to the surface and wins the day, but not before it is ringed about with the enticing possibilities of self-deception.

Persuasion

Jane Austen spent almost a year composing ***Persuasion,*** from August 1815 to August 1816. There are two versions of the ending, and the two final chapters of ***Persuasion*** represent the only surviving manuscript portions of any of Austen's major novels. In the last months of her life before illness forced her to stop writing, Austen worked on ***Sanditon,*** a work that, even in its unfinished state, suggests a return to high satire and the precise delineation of social and personal absurdities. But ***Persuasion*** was a bit of a departure from her usual affectionate assault on sentimentality and romance.

Persuasion continues a narrative tactic that also characterized ***Emma***: There is a rhythm that moves from ease to tension, then to reversal and renewed ease. Both novels have theatrical qualities in their plot trajectories, as circumstances build to a suspenseful turn, coalesce and explode, calm again, then crystallize into significance. This rhythm derives from the central plot scenario. When she was nineteen, Anne Elliot fell in love with Frederick Wentworth, a naval officer, and accepted his proposal of marriage. Anne's father, the proud and snobbish Sir Walter Elliot for whose character "vanity was the beginning and the end,"[22] opposed their alliance, as did Lady Russell, a family neighbor and friend who became a mother-figure to Anne when Lady Elliot died. Neither Sir Walter nor Lady Russell could brook an alliance with a man who had no fortune and not much of a family name, and Lady Russell persuaded Anne to give up an imprudent engagement and separate from Wentworth. At the same time, Anne is little valued by her family. Although she possesses "an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, [Anne] was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne" (p. 5).

The title of ***Persuasion*** returns Austen to the abstract conceptual titling of ***Sense and Sensibility*** and ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Anne "had used him ill; deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure," Wentworth believes, and he remains resentful. "She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity" (p. 61).

When the novel opens, nearly eight years have passed since the lovers' parting; the Elliot finances have seriously dwindled; and Sir Walter is forced to let Kellynch Hall to Admiral and Mrs. Croft. This arrangement brings Wentworth, now a Captain in the Navy who has distinguished himself in the service, advanced in rank, and "made a handsome fortune" (p. 30), back into Anne's purview, as Mrs. Croft is his sister. Wentworth has not married; and Anne, who "had been forced into prudence in her youth, . . . learned romance as she grew older—the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning" (p. 30). Anne Elliot is twenty-seven years old when the novel opens, by far the most mature of Austen's heroines. She is the only Austen heroine who has a past.

Persuasion is a more physical novel than Austen had previously written. Two accidents form climactic moments: young Charles Musgrove's fall in which he breaks his collar bone and injures his back, and Louisa

Musgrove's near-fatal fall on the Cobb in Lyme Regis. Both accidents test Anne's resilience and coolness in a crisis. Captain Harville's lameness dates from a war injury, and Richard Musgrove died of a fever in the West Indies. Multiple deaths precede the novel's action as well, most notably those of Lady Elliot and of Mrs. Elliot. Mr. Elliot wears a black band around his hat and the Elliot women wear black ribbons. Mrs. Smith's illness defines her decline and makes her helpless and older than her years. Anne Elliot herself begins the novel with the note that "her bloom had vanished early" and she has become "faded and thin" (p. 6); Wentworth remarks to Anne's sister Mary Musgrove that Anne is "so altered he should not have known" her again (p. 60). Critic John Wiltshire has argued that the human body is at its most vulnerable in ***Persuasion.***[23] From this perspective, ***Persuasion*** may have paved the way for Austen's focus on invalidism in her final fictional effort, ***Sanditon,*** a fragment in which she otherwise seems to move in new directions.

Human emotions are more vulnerable in ***Persuasion*** as well. As Anne has to come to terms with having been influenced in an intensely private decision and repented of that decision, so Wentworth has to overcome his bitterness in order to find his way back to Anne and to forgive her. Austen carries out the details of these emotional developments with some of her most powerful and effectively staged scenes. Most notable is her use of eavesdropping, an activity often engaged in by Austen characters, but nowhere more intensely than in ***Persuasion.***

On a walk early in the story, Anne finds herself behind a hedgerow from which vantage point she overhears a conversation between Louisa Musgrove and Wentworth. The conversation snippet begins *in medias res* and its context makes no difference. Anne hears Louisa tell Wentworth, "What!—would I be turned back from doing a thing that I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right, by the airs and interference of such a person?—or, of any person, I may say. No,—I have no idea of being so easily persuaded. When I have made up my mind, I have made it" (p. 87). Wentworth responds, "It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended on.—You are never sure of a good impression being durable. Every body may sway it; let those who would be happy be firm" (p. 88). The second notable eavesdropping scene decides the conclusion of the novel. Wentworth overhears a conversation about constancy in men and women.

Emma moved Austen in the direction of a tighter plot structure; ***Persuasion*** is Austen's shortest and most tightly plotted novel. There is the usual allotment of misunderstandings; however, all the plot elements serve the tension—erotic and narrative—that builds when Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth meet so many years after their failed engagement.

Persuasion has one of the clearest temporal structures of any of Austen's novels. Characters frequently allude to the precise dates of events, and the years that have intervened between the broken engagement and the current narrative loom large. For Sir Walter, the past represents the family tradition and status that he wishes to uphold; for his daughter, who looks toward the future, the past represents the mistake of her life and its turning point. Like Elinor Dashwood, Anne must struggle for self-control, and she must balance self-respect with emotional repression as she confronts a renewal of acquaintance with Wentworth.

Most of Austen's novels offer little prehistory before the narrative begins. In ***Persuasion,*** foreshadowing and decisive pasts abound: Sir Walter Elliot has lost his wife and become estranged from his male heir, Mr. Elliot. Mr. Elliot has failed to marry Elizabeth, Anne's older sister, and then married a woman who has died. Charles Musgrove proposed first to Anne before he married her younger sister, Mary. At school, Anne Elliot became friends with Miss Hamilton, now Mrs. Smith, who has her own sad history. Frederick Wentworth has a long and distinguished war history and set of naval friends in Harville and Benwick. And, of course, Anne and Wentworth became engaged and then Anne succumbed to "persuasion" and broke the engagement.

This dwelling on the past establishes one of the novel's major themes, the changing of the guard from the old, landed aristocracy typified by Sir Walter Elliot and his obsession with Debrett's *Baronetage of England* [that "book of books" (p. 7) to the new professional classes]. The Napoleonic wars that pitted Britain against France enriched a new group of military and commercial men whose class claims have nothing to do with inherited estates or birth. The narrator holds up for ridicule Sir Walter and the other representatives of the aristocracy in the novel, Lady Dalrymple and her daughter Miss Carteret. In contrast, the naval officers who abound in ***Persuasion*** represent education and self-sufficiency. The aristocrats lack manners and hospitality and fall back on empty formality, while the professional men exemplify inner substance, the value of friendship, tolerance, an embrace of change, and inner strength.

An early conversation about naval men sets up the class conflict that anchors part of the plot of ***Persuasion.*** "The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give," Anne argues when Admiral Croft presents himself as a possible tenant for Kellynch Hall. "Sailors work hard enough for their comforts, we must

all allow," she continues. Sir Walter feels differently, finding the naval profession offensive, "as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of" (p. 19). In Sir Walter's world, personal worth is based on birth and heritage. In the new professional world, worth (part of Wentworth's name) depends upon merit.

Austen's previous heroes had been landowners or clergymen; Wentworth deviates from that background in important ways. As a consequence, the ending of the novel contains some ambiguities. Whereas Austen's earlier heroines move into a world they know when they marry, Anne Elliot looks forward to a life of adventure, movement, and change. Admiral and Mrs. Croft represent not only the happiest married couple in all of Austen's works, but also the most unconventional couple. Mrs. Crofts challenges gender roles when she accompanies her husband on board ship, participates in financial negotiations, and intervenes to give the reins of the family equipage "a better direction." Self-sufficiency and new forms of status may be available for women as well as men, the novel suggests.

The long series of wars between France and England that ended in 1814 made naval officers wealthy and rendered them prominent social figures as well. Napoleon's unexpected escape from Elba renewed hostilities in Europe and suggested that no peace would ever be reliably lasting. The "dread of a future War" (p. 273) referred to in the novel's last sentences is quite real. So readers cannot be sure what the future holds for the Wentworths, other than a happy acceptance of change and social progress.

Minor and Incomplete Works

Lady Susan

Lady Susan did not appear in print during Austen's lifetime. James Edward Austen-Leigh published it for the first time in the 1871 edition of his *Memoir of Jane Austen,* and he gave the work its title.

Two eighteenth-century novels may have influenced ***Lady Susan***: Henry Fielding's 1741 parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* a wicked send-up of its inspiration called *Shamela,* and French novelist Choderlos de Laclos' 1782 *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons).* These earlier works use epistolary form with multiple correspondents, and their competing and crossing letters, like those of ***Lady Susan,*** unmask rank hypocrisy and display outrageous manipulation of the emotions of the characters whom the protagonists exploit. Lady Susan Vernon, like her notorious predecessor Madame de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons dangereuses,* captivates the reader's imagination even as she behaves with repellent amorality to get what she wants.[24]

The plot of ***Lady Susan*** is as outrageously complicated as its heroine. Lady Susan Vernon, thirty-five and a widow billed as "the most accomplished Coquette in England," comes to visit her brother-in-law and his wife in "that insupportable spot, a Country Village"[25] in order to escape a mess that she has created by having an affair with a married man. On arrival, Lady Susan promptly sets about to seduce Mrs. Vernon's brother Reginald de Courcy, the only son and heir of his venerable family. At the same time, she plots to marry her daughter Frederica to the oblivious, dim-witted, but wealthy buffoon Sir James Martin. Lady Susan uncharitably and unfairly describes her daughter as "the greatest simpleton on Earth . . . who was born to be the torment of my life" (p. 245), and "a stupid girl, & has nothing to recommend her" (p. 252).

Letters fly chiefly between Lady Susan and Mrs. Johnson, her confidante and co-conspirator in London, and between Mrs. Vernon and her mother, Lady de Courcy, with occasional missives from others and a lot of quoted and indirect dialogue. The pleasure in ***Lady Susan*** derives from its eponymous heroine's "captivating Deceit" (pp. 248-49). While Lady Susan herself delights in what she calls the "exquisite pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit, in making a person predetermined to dislike, acknowledge one's superiority" (p. 254), the other characters are alternately charmed by her considerable art and artifice and horrified at her duplicity and their own susceptibility to it. The reader follows suit.

Lady Susan works her art through her linguistic fluency, and she prides herself on being able to persuade anyone of anything and being able to talk her way out of any difficulty. "If I am vain of anything, it is of my eloquence," she writes. "Consideration & Esteem as surely follow command of Language, as Admiration waits on Beauty" (p. 268). Her technique involves the fine use of words to maneuver through any social pitfall.

Lady Susan's analysis of her first pass at coercing her daughter into a marriage with Sir James illustrates her simple philosophy: She aims to maximize her economic and social status and her emotional power over others, because for her, all personal pleasure derives from status and power.

> Upon this whole I commend my own conduct in this affair extremely, & regard it as a very happy mixture of circumspection & tenderness. Some Mothers would have insisted on their daughter's accepting so great an offer on the first overture, but I could not answer it to myself to force Frederica into a marriage from which her heart revolted: & instead of adopting so harsh a measure, merely propose to make it her own choice by rendering her thoroughly uncomfortable till she does accept him. But enough of this tiresome girl.
>
> (Lady Susan in ***Lady Susan,*** pp. 253-54)

For Lady Susan, social life is a game that involves high stakes and risks, and she is its consummate player. In complaining about her daughter, she writes, "Artlessness will never do in Love matters, & that girl is born a simpleton who has it either by nature or affectation" (p. 274).

Yet, of course, Lady Susan gets her comeuppance in the end. An expository "Conclusion" to the epistolary narrative explains that because some of the characters are together and others permanently estranged, the correspondence has ended ("to the great detriment of the Post office Revenue" [p. 311]). Readers learn that Frederica is living under the care of her aunt and uncle, and that Lady Susan herself will marry Sir James Martin. The narrator remarks at the end that it is not possible to know whether Lady Susan was happy with the choice of Sir James, "for who would take her assurance of it, on either side of the question?" She remains an anti-heroine and tantalizingly enigmatic.

Critic Terry Castle has pointed out that Lady Susan's double standard infects the reader and that Austen herself does not entirely condemn her character's subversive talents. Castle writes of Lady Susan's "incorrigible will to power, her gaiety, her erotic rebelliousness, her triumphant contempt for all the 'romantic nonsense' that keeps other women subservient."[26] She may be evil, but the form that evil takes is quite compelling.

In ***Lady Susan,*** Jane Austen initiated the fictional use of twin psychological concepts, employing the terms *consciousness* (in the sense of "self-consciousness") and *embarrassment* in what were early instances of these rather modern concepts.[27] So while ***Lady Susan*** carries on the parodic digs at hypocrisy that preoccupy Austen's earlier juvenile writings, this extended and more accomplished short novel moves significantly toward Austen's mature facility with ironic social satire and psychological judgment.

The Watsons

Jane Austen began writing ***The Watsons*** in Bath in 1804 (the manuscript bears an 1803 watermark), and she abandoned it in 1805 following her father's death. Austen never returned to this story despite hints about how the plot would have unfolded and real narrative promise. ***The Watsons*** is the darkest of Austen's fictions, and when she put it aside, she remained silent, with the exception of some verses and an inquiry concerning the copyright of ***Susan,*** until she began to revise ***Elinor and Marianne*** into ***Sense and Sensibility*** in 1809 or 1810.

If Jane Austen introduced modern psychological concepts into her work with ***Lady Susan,*** she constructed a story around the psychology of anxiety and dread in the unfinished ***The Watsons.*** This brief work abounds with multiple references to awkwardness and anxiety and mentions of consciousness and conscience, embarrassment, shame, and alienation, all relatively new terms for the period. Emma Watson is a sophisticated heroine who analyzes her social and emotional situation with acute insight.

The plot of ***The Watsons*** is complex. Emma Watson has been living with her aunt and uncle, and she returns home at age nineteen after her uncle has died and her aunt has remarried an Irishman, thus cutting her out of the inheritance she and her family had expected for her. After an absence of fourteen years, during which she has had no contact with her family, Emma finds a sensible but invalid father, two petulant, irritable, and self-interested sisters who see her as an unwelcome rival for the small number of available men in the neighborhood, and a boorish brother who has moved to a neighboring town and married a wealthy but vain wife. An older sister, Elizabeth, worries and meddles but is good-natured and warm-hearted. As with many novels from the eighteenth century, the Watson mother has died before the novel begins.

The Watsons opens with a local ball, a segment that offers an intriguing historical account of the social protocols of assemblies. Emma finds herself the center of attention as a new face in the circumscribed social gathering. She marks herself as kind, amiable, and morally responsible when she rescues a boy of ten whose haughty dance partner has reneged on her promise to him, thus making herself interesting to the boy's aristocratic companions. By the end of the fragment we have of this story, Emma has attracted the attentions of the arrogant and socially inept Lord Osborne, the smooth-talking but vapid social climber Tom Musgrave, and the agreeable, gentlemanly clergyman Mr. Howard.

Meanwhile, Emma's straitened economic situation pains her, and she fights back tears when her cruelly dismissive brother remarks, "What a blow it must have been upon you!—To find yourself, instead of heiress of 8 or 9000£, sent back a weight upon your family, without a sixpence." He goes on mercilessly: "After keeping you at a distance from your family for such a length of time as must do away all natural affection among us & breeding you up (I suppose) in a superior stile, you are returned upon their hands without a sixpence."[28] Toward the end of the fragment, the narrator sums up Emma Watson's predicament quite grimly:

> [S]he was become of importance to no one, a burden on those, whose affection she could not expect, an addition in an House, already overstocked, surrounded by inferior minds with little chance of domestic comfort, & as little hope of future support.
>
> (pp. 361-62)

A dismal set of circumstances indeed, with people characterized by "Hard-hearted prosperity, low-minded Conceit, & wrong ûheaded folly" (p. 361).

For all the gloomy prognostications, the existing text of ***The Watsons*** hints that Emma, more congenial and better brought up than her sisters, may find a husband who is both in possession of a comfortable income and social standing and worthy of her affections. Cassandra Austen reported that Emma would have received and declined an offer of marriage from the wealthy if slightly creepy aristocrat Lord Osborne, who can speak of nothing but horses and ladies' fashions in shoes, and she was to have ended up happily engaged to Mr. Howard, whose love she was to have won despite the efforts of Miss Osborne to secure him for herself.

Yet despite the apparently intended happy ending, ***The Watsons*** diverges from the plot of ***Pride and Prejudice,*** with which it shares some superficial plot resemblances: a group of sisters with little fortune to recommend them as marriage partners; ineffectual parental guidance; obnoxious suitors; and a heroine whose sensibility permits her to see with great acuity precisely where her social situation places her. In ***The Watsons,*** the sisters without means who are in search of suitors are snappish, cross, jealous, and resentful of one another and the world. More important, women must compete fiercely with one another for eligible men in the world of ***The Watsons,*** a world of palpable social awkwardness, disappointments in love that cause shame as well as heartache, and excruciating anxieties about the future.

In addition to the psychological complexity and anxiety exhibited in ***The Watsons,*** bursts of inspired prose enliven this work. As the novel progresses, Austen reveals a developing narrative style and set of writerly techniques that she was later able to deploy more fully. The fragment opens with an effective method of speaking for and about a group consciousness with a writing method that might be called the communal passive voice. Here is the opening sentence:

> The first winter assembly in the Town of D. in Surry was to be held on Tuesday October 13th, & it was generally expected to be a very good one; a long list of Country Families was confidently run over as sure of attending, & sanguine hopes were entertained that the Osbornes themselves would be there.
>
> (p. 314)

Far from representing a lack of agency, the passive verbs here and throughout ***The Watsons*** present a social ethos that controls the lives of everyone in this well-defined, hierarchical, rule-bound community, introducing a theme of social politics that defines all of Austen's mature fiction.

Given the unpromising future the Watson sisters face, it would have been interesting to know how Austen would have resolved their fates. Austen's grasp of economics is forthright in this fragment of a novel, extending even to the stunning moment when Emma chastises Lord Osborne for not understanding that "Female Economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one," at which "Lord Osborne was silenced" (p. 346).

Snatches of the famous Austenian irony appear in ***The Watsons.*** Using a combination of the communal passive voice and indirect discourse, the narrator paints a satiric picture of the ball atmosphere:

> The cold & empty appearance of the Room & the demure air of the small cluster of Females at one end of it began soon to give way; the inspiriting sound of other Carriages was heard, & continual accessions of portly Chaperons, & strings of smartly-dressed girls were received, with now & then a fresh gentleman straggler, who if not enough in Love to station himself near any fair Creature seemed glad to escape into the Card-room.
>
> (p. 328)

Some turns of phrase reflect Austen at her wicked best. The tongue-tied, dense Lord Osborne can think, for example, of little to say when he pays a post-ball visit, but "after hard labour of mind, he produced the remark of it's being a very fine day" (p. 345). And Emma's self-absorbed, conceited sister-in-law "eyed her with much familiar curiosity & Triumphant Compassion" (p. 349), lording it over her impoverished relative at the same time that she reveals her own moral inferiority in this brief phrase.

Austen also sets out her trademark character and plot devices in ***The Watsons.*** The dilemmas Emma Watson faces seem trivial—how to avoid being escorted home in Tom Musgrave's curricle, for example—but represent the typical Austenian method for revealing depth of character in confrontation with social proprieties. Emma wants to get home as quickly as possible and Tom's offer would facilitate this. Yet she does not want to invite intimacy with this forward young man. She needs to remain proper and polite, yet dislikes the pressure to act in a way that displeases her and invites misunderstanding. These are the moments in Austen's fiction that prove decisive, and Emma's superior strength of will emerges as she negotiates this social precipice with aplomb, creativity, and decorum, as befits an Austen heroine.

Sanditon

Nothing can be quite so simultaneously depressing and exhilarating for a lover of Jane Austen than to read the wonderful fragment of a novel she left when she died. In the last months of her life, Austen composed the beginnings of ***Sanditon,*** a work she was obliged to abandon during her final illness. She began to write ***Sandi-***

ton in January 1817, and the last date on the manuscript is 18 March 1817. She died on 18 July, exactly four months later, and her health quickly deteriorated during the period in which she composed this last work of fiction. It seems fitting, then, that ***Sanditon*** concerns health and invalidism and paints an especially vivid picture of hypochondriacs.

This novel fragment is magnificent, and thus underscores the enormous loss to the canon of English literature represented by Austen's premature death. "There are some great writers who wrote too much," novelist Margaret Drabble wrote. "There are others who wrote enough. There are yet others who wrote nothing like enough to satisfy their admirers, and Jane Austen is certainly one of these."[29]

Sanditon departs from Austen's serious later novels and returns to the sort of burlesque she practiced in ***Northanger Abbey,*** but on a different subject, that of invalidism and fashionable watering places. The idea that a dying woman depicted hypochondriacal characters with so much energy and real fun and such a skewering of the state of medical knowledge gives some hints about Austen's own character and courage in the face of her last illness.

Highly satirical and at times hilarious, ***Sanditon*** presents some of Austen's most promising comic characters and situations. Mr. Parker is "an Enthusiast;—on the subject of Sanditon, a complete Enthusiast" and a man "of a sanguine turn of mind, with more Imagination than Judgement."[30] His wife is "the properest wife in the World for a Man of strong Understanding, but not of capacity to supply the cooler reflection which her own Husband sometimes needed, & so entirely waiting to be guided on every occasion, that whether he were risking his Fortune or spraining an Ancle, she remained equally useless" (p. 372). As "Every Neighbourhood should have a great Lady," the imperious Lady Denham, seventy years old, "born to Wealth but not to Education" (p. 375) fills that role exquisitely. When the heroine Charlotte Heywood becomes experienced with Lady Denham's economic interactions and judgments and her notion that lawyers and clergymen and military officers are worthless because they produce no heiresses for her nephew to marry, she thinks, "She is thoroughly mean. I had not expected any thing so bad." "Thus it is, when Rich people are Sordid," she concludes (p. 402).

The three hypochondriacs, Diana, Susan, and Arthur Parker, are drawn with exaggerated raillery and comic glee. The Parker siblings combine extreme preoccupation with their bodies and bodily functions, with eating and exercise and air, that they take to extravagances such as bleeding themselves with leeches for ten days running or pulling three teeth at once. Their vocabulary tends to phrases such as "Spasmodic Bile" (p. 386). Far from appearing to be as ill as they pretend, Diana officiously organizes the lives even of strangers; Arthur sits next to a roaring fire to nurse his burly constitution with cocoa and buttered toast; and Susan "had no Hysterics of consequence" on their journey until they arrived just in sight of Sanditon (p. 407).

The pompous sentimentalist Sir Edward Denham provides equal mirth to the reader and returns us to Austen's narrative concerns about novel-reading in ***Northanger Abbey.*** Sir Edward fancies himself erudite and sensitive, and he virtually pummels Charlotte with ridiculous quotations from Scott, Campbell, and Burns until she "began to think him downright silly" (p. 398). Sir Edward's disquisition on novels and literary taste beautifully sends up the intellectual snobbery of the day while offering a parody of fashionable language. Poor Charlotte survives this onslaught of words to conclude that their tastes in reading do not coincide and to discover that Sir Edward has primarily enlarged his vocabulary and denigrated his own style through his reading, without in any way improving his mental acuity or capacity for critical judgment.

Sanditon begins more actively than other Austen fictions, with a dramatic carriage accident on a country lane. In the twelve extant chapters, an intriguing scene is set for various plot developments, but not much actually transpires. It is clear that more raillery at the expense of invalidism and hypochondria would have filled many pages. In addition, Austen presents a strong grasp of economic conditions in the Parker-Denham effort to merchandize and turn a profit from Sanditon. The presence of several unmarried and various situated young men and women—one of them described as a West Indian mulatto—offered rich material for Austen to have mined had she lived to do so. It is not surprising that several writers have made attempts to complete this promising narrative material.

Adaptations

A spate of imitators and completers have finished Jane Austen's unfinished works, published fictional sequels to the novels, and even published historical murder mysteries with a fantasy Jane Austen playing the plucky detective.[31] The latest entry into what we might call the Austen augmentation market—often these works pretend to be found manuscripts—is a slim volume purporting to print the expurgated sex scenes from the Austen *oeuvre.*[32] These works are not part of the Austen canon, but they represent a phenomenon that is very much tied to the world of Jane Austen and deserves some attention.

In addition to the literary additions to Jane Austen's output—with works by writers such as Joan Aiken, Julia Barrett, and Emma Tennant, entries by Austen kin Anna

Austen Lefroy and Joan Austen-Leigh, and a novel inspired by Austen by Fay Weldon[33]—the movie industries in England and the United States have found Austen's novels to be fertile ground for cinematic treatment. Austen movies first appeared in 1940, with a production of ***Pride and Prejudice*** that starred Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson. Interestingly, it was Harpo Marx who presented this idea to Hollywood after seeing a 1935 Australian theatrical production based on ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Marx sent a telegram to producer Irving Thalberg proposing that the role of Elizabeth Bennet would be perfect for Thalberg's wife, actress Norma Shearer. Shearer postponed the project, and Thalberg died before MGM made the film. The English writer Aldous Huxley helped with the screenplay, and the studio advertised the movie with the tag line "Bachelors Beware! Five Gorgeous Beauties are on a Madcap Manhunt!" The plot is significantly altered by having Lady Catherine de Bourgh, played by Edna May Oliver, arrange the match between Darcy and Elizabeth.[34]

A particularly strong set of movie productions of Austen novels appeared in the mid-1990s. Seven movies or television series came out between 1970 and 1986, and in 1995 and 1996, six additional adaptations of Austen novels for the screen appeared. These movies of Austen fiction brought with them new mass market editions of the novels on which they were based. Scholars and literary critics have begun to look at the Austen filmography as a way to recover how readers have interpreted Austen's meanings for their own times.[35]

In 1995, British actress Emma Thompson worked with director Ang Lee to produce a relatively faithful screenplay of ***Sense and Sensibility.*** Thompson played Elinor Dashwood, with Kate Winslet as Marianne, Hugh Grant as Edward Ferrars, Greg Wise as Willoughby, and Alan Rickman as Colonel Brandon. The movie enjoyed box office as well as critical success and brought renewed popular attention to Austen's work. Also in 1995, the BBC and writer Nick Dear produced a film of ***Persuasion,*** directed by Roger Michell, with Amanda Root as Anne Elliot, Ciaran Hinds as Captain Wentworth, Corin Redgrave as Sir Walter Elliot, and Sophie Thompson as Mary Musgrove. The same year, a BBC and Arts and Entertainment production of ***Pride and Prejudice*** written by Andrew Davies and directed by Simon Langton scandalized some Austenites with a version of ***Pride and Prejudice*** in which Colin Firth, playing Darcy, dived into a lake on the Pemberley property and emerged dripping wet. This sexualized portrait made Firth a screen idol. That production also starred Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and was shown on television in a mini-series format.

The following year, in 1996, another major movie star, Gwyneth Paltrow, brought attention to Austen with a movie of ***Emma.*** Jeremy Northam played Mr. Knightley and Ewan McGregor played Frank Churchill in this movie, written and directed by Douglas McGrath. The same year, a television production for the Arts and Entertainment Network, written by Andrew Davies (who also wrote the televised version of ***Pride and Prejudice***) and directed by Diarmuid Lawrence, featured Kate Beckinsale as Emma. So suddenly in 1995 and 1996, Austen novels seemed to be everywhere in popular culture.

In 1999, a movie adaptation of ***Mansfield Park*** took more liberties with the story than had the earlier films. Writer and director Patricia Rozema, known for experimental and feminist movie work, created a movie that brought some of the recent critical work on colonialism to bear on ***Mansfield Park,*** the epicenter for global analyses of Austen. Rozema gave Fanny Price more backbone than she appears to have at the beginning of the novel. In addition and more controversially, she created a movie in which the slave trade and the presence of slaves at the Bertram plantations in Antigua figure as a nightmarish backdrop to the action in England.

The renewed and popular appeal of Austen's work in Hollywood cannot be explained simply. The factors that help us understand the sudden ubiquitous mass cultural presence of Austen in the 1990s might include the fact that Austen's work, after all, arguably focuses on three best-selling topics: money, sex, and love. In addition, in a period in which values are splintering and new forms of technological media are proliferating, Austen provides a glimpse into a simpler world where moral issues were clearer, life options were more circumscribed, and choices were, in general, fewer.

Two recent Austen-related works, updates rather than true adaptations, deserve some mention. In 1995, alongside the Austen movie mania, Paramount produced a movie titled *Clueless,* written and directed by Amy Heckerling, and starring Alicia Silverstone and Paul Rudd. The movie is set at a high school in Los Angeles and offers a comic send-up of angst among wealthy American teenagers with cell phones. *Clueless* is a funny coming of age story that works in its own right. At the same time, its plot closely follows that of Austen's ***Emma.*** The protagonist meddles in the affairs of others while failing to understand the nature of her own feelings. Other parallels abound. The protagonist falls for a man who turns out to be unavailable, as was Frank Churchill, but here because he is gay, and everyone realizes it but the heroine. The man the protagonist loves is under her nose all along—he is her stepbrother. And an incident in a mall replaces the attack by gypsies in the novel. In *Clueless,* albeit in a late twentieth-century context, Heckerling captures on film Austen's ironic voice, something most of the movie adaptations of Austen's novels fail to do.

Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones' Diary,* is less successful than *Clueless,* both as a work of fiction and as a movie, but it became wildly popular.[36] The movie casts Colin Firth, to date the sexiest Darcy, as Mark Darcy. Like *Clueless,* the story is set entirely in the modern day, in fashionable London rather than Los Angeles, and features a plot closely based on the plot of ***Pride and Prejudice.*** Renée Zellweger is the heroine torn between a handsome cad (Hugh Grant as the Wickham character) who is her boss and the distant and proper Darcy, about whom the cad has told her what turn out to be lies to cover for his own misdeeds with respect to Darcy. Both *Clueless* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* bring a sharp focus to the ongoing appeal of Austen's irony and cutting wit. At the same time, these contemporary stories also update and renegotiate the marriage plot for a post-feminist era.

Notes

1. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 78; 102. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.
2. *Jane Austen's "Sir Charles Grandison,"* ed. Brian Southam (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980). References to the text of the play will be given parenthetically.
3. Southam, "Introduction," ibid., p. 20.
4. Ann Radcliffe was the major practitioner of the female Gothic novel that Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland so dote on. Her two best-known works are *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797).
5. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 13. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
6. Many Austen characters are judged by what and how much they read and by how they respond to their reading.
7. Ibid., p. 182.
8. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. I, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 34. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
9. Margaret Anne Doody, "Introduction" to *Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility,* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xiii.
10. Ibid., p. xxxiii.
11. Zelda Boyd, "The Language of Supposing: Modal Auxiliaries in *Sense and Sensibility,*" in Janet Todd, ed., *Jane Austen: New Perspectives* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), pp. 142-52.
12. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. II, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 3. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
13. Isobel Armstrong, "Introduction" to *Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice,* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xxiv. Note that this revision, however apt, destroys the comic irony of the original.
14. *Jane Austen's Letters,* 3rd ed., ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 202. *Mansfield Park* is set in Northamptonshire.
15. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. III, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 5. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
16. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 92-93. Moira Ferguson offers a postcolonial analysis of *Mansfield Park* in "*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen,* ed. Laura Mooneyham White (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), pp. 103-120. See also *The Postcolonial Jane Austen,* ed. You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge: 2000) for readings of *Mansfield Park* from a global economic perspective.
17. Austen does require, to be sure, a plot device for removing Sir Thomas from Mansfield. The lack of his moral guidance fuels much of the story; the Rushworth engagement would no doubt not have taken place had he remained at home.
18. *Jane Austen's Letters,* 3rd ed., ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 309.
19. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. IV, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 64. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
20. Terry Castle, "Introduction" to Jane Austen, *Emma,* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
21. Ibid., p. xx.
22. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. V, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 4. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.
23. John Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body: "The Picture of Health"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992).

24. The situation in *Lady Susan* also forecasts Austen's portrait in *Mansfield Park* of the complicity between Mary Crawford and her brother Henry in his amorous intrigues and, ultimately, his pursuit of Fanny Price.

25. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 248; 245-46. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

26. Terry Castle, "Introduction," to Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

27. Samuel Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language* defines "consciousness" as the perception of what passes in one's own mind, citing Locke, and the internal sense of guilt or innocence. Johnson offers two definitions of "embarrassment": perplexity and entanglement. Margaret Anne Doody has written about Frances Burney's modern and new presentation of embarrassment in *Evelina,* a novel published in 1778 that Jane Austen knew well, in *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988). Ruth Bernard Yeazell writes about these concepts in women's fiction in *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), which includes a chapter on *Mansfield Park.*

28. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 352. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

29. Margaret Drabble, "Introduction," *Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 7.

30. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Vol. VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 371; 372. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

31. Helen Barton has written *The Jane Austen Quiz Book* and Maggie Lane published *The Jane Austen Quiz & Puzzle Book.* Stephanie Barron has written five detective novels that feature Jane Austen as the main character. There are also whole industries of Austen memorabilia, from umbrellas to playing cards to bumper stickers.

32. Arielle Eckstrut and Dennis Ashton, *Pride and Promiscuity: The Lost Sex Scenes of Jane Austen* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001). For a list of pre-1975 adaptations, see Andrew Wright, "Jane Austen Adapted," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30 (1975): 421-53.

33. This is only a very partial list of the most prolific of the Austen adapters. Joan Aiken's books include *Emma Watson: The Watsons Completed* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), *Eliza's Daughter* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), *Jane Fairfax: A Novel to Complement Emma by Jane Austen* (London: Gollancz, 1990), *Mansfield Revisited: A Novel* (London: Gollancz, 1984), and *The Youngest Miss Ward* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). Julia Barrett's books include *Presumption* (New York: M. Evans, 1993), *The Third Sister: A Continuation of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1996), and *Jane Austen's Charlotte: Her Fragment of A Last Novel* (New York: M. Evans and Co., 2000). Emma Tennant has published *Emma in Love: Jane Austen's Emma Continued* (London: Fourth Estate, 1996), *Pemberley, or, Pride and Prejudice Continued* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), and *An Unequal Marriage, or, Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

    Austen's niece Anna Austen Lefroy (1793-1872) wrote *Jane Austen's Sanditon: a Continuation,* ed. Mary Gaither Marshal. (Chicago: Chiron Press, 1983). A great-great-grandniece, Joan Austen-Leigh, published *A Visit to Highbury/Another View of Emma* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) and *Later Days at Highbury* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Fay Weldon wrote *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1984). Weldon also wrote a novel called *Darcy's Utopia* (London: Collins, 1990) and a screenplay of *Pride and Prejudice* that the BBC produced in 1979.

34. See Rachel M. Brownstein, "Out of the Drawing Room, Onto the Lawn," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood,* second ed., ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001): 13-14.

35. For a collection of such essays, see *Jane Austen in Hollywood,* second ed., ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

36. Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary: A Novel* (New York: Viking, 1998); the Miramax film appeared in 2001 and was written by Richard Curtis and directed by Sharon Maguire.

Jane Austen as Studied

Jane Austen's works made a small splash when they were published, fell into relative neglect for a time, were revived in the later part of the nineteenth century, and have become increasingly popular. The novels enjoyed fair success during Austen's lifetime, and re-

ceived relatively positive critical reviews. But the books were published anonymously, and nothing was known about the novels' author outside her immediate circle.

Following Jane Austen's death, her brother Henry Austen published a "Biographical Notice" in the 1818 posthumous printing of ***Northanger Abbey*** with ***Persuasion.*** Henry Austen's "Biographical Notice" painted a portrait of a traditional, devout spinster who existed solely in the bosom of her family. The "Notice" included some details about profits from the novels, presented Austen as having read extensively in history and literature (with a special fondness for Samuel Johnson's prose, Samuel Richardson's novels, and William Cowper's poetry), and extolled her quiet kindness to others, her wit, her "placidity of temper" and lack of affectation, and her piety (saying that "her opinions accorded strictly with those of our Established Church").[1] Henry Austen also cited the famous passage in which she describes her novelistic technique as "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour"[2]; he dubbed this "a playful defence of herself,"[3] but critics then as now have often neglected to see that she was being ironic and self-deprecating.

Austen's novels were reissued as a set in 1833 in the Bentley *Standard Novels* series, an inexpensive series of reprints. The printings diminished in size over time as sales were smaller than the publisher had anticipated. So Austen's readership remained steady if relatively small through the middle part of the nineteenth century. Critics during this period treated her work as old-fashioned and out-of-date until another family member's biography in 1870 changed Austen reception.

Austen's novels have attracted two overlapping but disparate types of readers: general readers who tend to be overwhelmingly middle-class white women and are sometimes referred to as "Janeites," and literary scholars, who come in many different stripes, from formalist to Marxist, feminist to new historicist and postcolonial. The only other major English author of whom this kind of doubled readership—both popular and academic—can be said to exist side-by-side is William Shakespeare.[4] In 1948, R. W. Chapman wrote, "I have it on good authority that Jane Austen is now the only nineteenth-century prose writer with whom the rising generation (including aspirants to honours in English Literature) can be assumed familiar."[5]

Yet even more than Shakespeare, Austen's dramatic predecessor in the English canon of literary masters, Austen has inspired a dual approach to reading her works. Austen readers in the general public identify with her plots and people and think of characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and Captain Wentworth as friends, or at least as people to identify with and gossip about. Scholars, in contrast, mine the relation of Austen's works to a range of academic concerns, from their use of an omniscient narrator and an ironic voice to British politics and the status of women during the regency, social conservatism, feminist literary strategies, and postcolonial critical theory.

Renewed attention came to the novels with the publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870 by Austen's nephew James-Edward Austen-Leigh. The scholarship of R. W. Chapman and B. C. Southam and the 1932 publication of Austen's letters and the subsequent editions of the juvenile and minor writings caught the attention of the scholarly community.[6] Other writers have responded with varying degrees of admiration and disdain for Austen's work, from Sir Walter Scott's contrasting of Austen's delicacy to his own "Big Bow-wow strain" of writing to Charlotte Brontë's notion that "Miss Austen is only shrewd and brilliant" to Henry James' commentary on readers who turned the author into "their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear Jane."[7] Even Mark Twain weighed in with this biting remark: "Whenever I take up ***Pride and Prejudice*** or ***Sense and Sensibility,*** I feel like a barkeeper entering the Kingdom of Heaven."[8]

Austen's influence as a quintessential representative of British culture is famously apparent in Rudyard Kipling's 1924 short story, "The Janeites," in which a company of artillerymen in World War I establishes a secret Austen society as a way to cope with the atrocities of trench warfare.[9] To the uninitiated, Austen is described this way: "Why, she was a little old maid 'oo'd written 'alf a dozen books about a hundred years ago. 'Twasn't as if there was anythin' *to* 'em either.. . . They weren't adventurous, nor smutty, nor what you'd call even interestin'—all about girls o' seventeen (they begun young then, I tell you), not certain 'oom they'd like to marry; an' their dances an' card-parties an' picnics, and their young blokes goin' off to London on 'orseback for 'air-cuts an' shaves." In the end, the main character and last surviving Janeite explains that he continues to reread the six novels and proclaims "there's no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight place. Gawd bless 'er, whoever she was."[10]

There are two parts to Austen's continuing popularity. First and foremost, of course, she was a great artist: She invented a new genre of fiction, and her ironic prose style is often compared to Shakespeare's use of language for its power and mastery. She is much read in middle and high schools and in university literature courses, some of which are devoted exclusively to her writings. Scholars have dissected every scrap of evidence from her writings to produce multiple biographies and editions of her six major novels, her juvenile writings, and her letters, and collections of critical essays on every imaginable topic and theme in Austen's

work. Conferences are held to discuss Austen's work, and Jane Austen societies and Web sites have appeared in England and the United States and even in Japan. Contemporary writers have produced sequels, spin-offs, and parodies of the novels as well as multiple television and movie adaptations, not to mention the puzzles, cards, clothing, and bumper stickers ("I'd rather be reading Jane Austen") that have made Jane Austen a virtual industry. Jane Austen's consummate skill as a storyteller and prose stylist repays all this attention with continuing new insights into her methods and her meanings.

At the same time, there is a second aspect to the popularity of Jane Austen as one of the greatest of all literary artists in the English language. While scholars and university syllabi ply the Austen trade, there is a parallel cultural phenomenon that makes Austen's novels books well-loved by people who have no aspirations to or interest in the academic study of literature. Henry James referred to this phenomenon disparagingly when he wrote impatiently of "everybody's dear Jane"; Katherine Mansfield, a twentieth-century English novelist, wrote similarly: "The truth is that every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone—reading between the lines—has become the secret friend of the author."[11] Readers feel as though they know Jane Austen, that she is their friend, and there is a rhapsodic quality to some of her fans, for "fans" does seem to be the apt word. It is interesting to ask why this should be the case.

Austen has also been misread. As we have seen, Austen wrote her fiction against the backdrop of churning social turmoil at home and political and military turmoil abroad. Yet she also managed not to transgress in any obvious way the strictures on behavior or the social expectations that genteel women contended with at the turn of the nineteenth century. With a nod to Kipling's conceit in "The Janeites," some doctors even recommended that shell-shocked soldiers in World War I hospitals read Austen for therapy. In this view of Austen, her novels represent a world of limitation, of clear rules, of domestic life as a sanctuary; thus reading these books is reassuring, unthreatening, and salutary.

Other Authors Frequently Studied with Jane Austen

Jane Austen wrote in a pivotal moment in literary history. Her dates place her squarely in the Romantic period, but her poetry receives little attention and her forays into Gothic fiction are satiric, so she fits uncomfortably in literature classes studying Mary Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron. The novels occasionally surface in discussions of the Romantic period; there are critical debates about her place in Romanticism, and she is sometimes understood to represent sensible moral prudence as a counter-Romantic.

Austen's importance rests with the genre of the novel. She tends either to serve as the culminating point for courses on the novel's first major century in England, the eighteenth century, or as the starting point for its second flowering in the Victorian period. So sometimes she is the goal to which Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Frances Burney lead. At other times, she inaugurates a tradition of epic prose narrative epitomized by Emily and Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Henry James. In women's studies classes, she is read alongside lesser-known women novelists such as Jane West, Mary Manley, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Sheridan, Elizabeth Inchbald, Charlotte Smith, and Mary Wollstonecraft, with French women sometimes added to the mix: Madame de Lafayette, Madame de Genlis, and Madame de Staël. She is also studied with more modern women writers such as Jean Rhys and Barbara Pym.

And, of course, Austen often appears on the reading lists of survey and "Great Books" courses that sample a range of literary classics. Austen's novels also appear, often as the first assigned reading, in courses on the English novel that go on to read the Brontës, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Eliot, and James. No matter where Austen appears on a school or college syllabus, she represents the apex of novelistic achievement: She invented the detached, all-knowing narrator whose intelligent perspective provides the story's moral underpinnings.

Nineteenth-Century Views of Jane Austen

Early critical writings on Jane Austen's novels make pretty unexciting reading. There were twelve contemporary reviews published as the novels were issued, and not much of substance before 1870. The novel itself remained somewhat suspect as a literary form, so novel criticism wasn't of much scholarly interest.

While Austen's novels were fashionable during her lifetime, she was well-regarded but not much read in the fifty years or so after her death. As Virginia Woolf later put it, Jane Austen is "of all great writers . . . the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness."[12] The first critic to read Austen with critical seriousness may have been Richard Whately (1787-1863), Archbishop of Dublin, who wrote an unsigned review of the posthumous publication of ***Northanger Abbey*** and ***Persuasion*** in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1821. Whately was the first to realize the important literary innovation represented by Austen's focus on ordinary middle-class life, and to see that writing about ordinariness need not itself be ordinary. He understood that Austen conveyed a moral world-view and set of values in her novels.

Austen's consummate skill at depicting people as they are is also a source of negative criticism for those who downplay this talent as "mere" miniature portraiture.

An unsigned 1830 essay makes this point well, asserting that readers undervalue the skill required to present characters who behave "as any body might be expected to behave under similar circumstances in real life." This writer goes on to point out that Jane Austen is "too natural" for some readers, as "the highest triumph of art consists in its concealment; and here the art was so little perceptible, that they believed there was none. Her works, like well-proportioned rooms, are rendered less apparently grand and imposing by the very excellence of their adjustment." And Austen's plots and characters are probable and commonplace, in this view: "No novelist perhaps ever employed more unpromising materials, and by none have those materials been more admirably treated."[13]

This strain of criticism characterized commentaries for the first hundred years or so after Austen's death. Her works are seen as judicious, prudent, proper, sensible, and instructive. In short, Austen was a safe writer, one whose works could be recommended for impressionable young people, quite the opposite of the sensational kinds of fictions Catherine Morland so loves in ***Northanger Abbey***. Here, for example, is the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow on her novels: "She has great power of discrimination in delineating common-place people; and her writings are a capital picture of real life, with all the little wheels and machinery laid bare like a patent clock."[14]

In this view, Austen avoided romance at all costs, a point of view that would surprise the current crop of Austen aficionados. Still, readers (and moviegoers) continue to agree that Austen surpassed all others in representing human nature in all its foibles and insecurities and ridiculousness. As Thomas Babington Macauley, historian and politician, wrote in 1843, Austen comes nearest in stature to Shakespeare of all English writers because she "has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense, common-place, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings."[15]

George Henry Lewes, a journalist who was the companion of Victorian novelist George Eliot, concurred with the Shakespeare comparison.

> A novel may by the dashing brilliancy of its style create a momentary sensation; by some well-kept mystery, some rapid incidents, or some subject of horror dragged from the reeking shambles of civilization, it may hurry the reader onward through its three volumes; but to produce a pleasant, satisfactory, and lasting impression, it must be true to nature. It will then live. It will bear reading and re-reading.[16]
>
> (George Henry Lewes on Jane Austen)

Not everyone was this positive. One of Austen's notable detractors was Charlotte Brontë, author of *Jane Eyre*, for whom Austen's anti-Romanticism represents a failure of imagination. Brontë responded to G. H. Lewes's assertion that he would rather have written ***Pride and Prejudice*** than any of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels with a letter:

> I had not seen ***Pride and Prejudice*** till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses."[17]

G. H. Lewes remained one of Austen's staunch early champions, despite Charlotte Brontë's protestations. His 1859 article in *Blackwood's Magazine,* entitled "The Novels of Jane Austen," praises Austen as "the greatest artist that has ever written, using the term to signify the most perfect mastery over the means to her end."[18]

In America, Ralph Waldo Emerson recorded a view similar to that of Charlotte Brontë in a journal entry written in 1861:

> I am at a loss to understand why people hold Miss Austen's novels at so high a rate, which seem to me vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world. Never was life so pinched and narrow.[19]

Again, Lewes was her major defender against charges of prosaic smallness of reach and lack of passion. And each of these positions had its counterpart. Where Emerson condemns Austen for the meanness of what he sees as her exclusive focus on marriageability, Richard Simpson justified his praise by arguing that Austen's irony derived from her acute understanding of the distance between the ideal of romantic love and the social realities of alliances made under the pressures of economics and family expectations.[20]

Response to the Memoir of Jane Austen of 1870

Prior to 1870, there was little formal commentary on Jane Austen's works other than the reviews that appeared in periodicals as the novels were published. Even so, Austen was not in danger of complete obscurity, thanks to the attention paid to her by Sir Walter Scott and other well-known literary personages. In 1870, Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh published a full-length memoir of his aunt that produced a spike of critical attention, as the *Memoir of Jane Austen* was widely reviewed.[21] Austen-Leigh, a clergyman, presented a quite staid portrait of his aunt, presenting her, in the words of one reviewer, as "easily contented, a small modicum of general approbation satisfied her, and what she coveted most was that of her own family. She

was willing, like the mole, to make her ingenious structures in the dark."[22] Austen-Leigh's genteel portrait of tranquil, unruffled domesticity, similar to the 1818 portrait presented by her brother Henry Austen, provided the basis for subsequent biographies. And for the first time, Jane Austen the woman was someone about whom at least something was known.

Austen-Leigh was concerned about his family; when he first planned to write a biography of his aunt, several family members had objected to the invasion of her privacy (and, presumably, theirs). In 1865, Austen's last surviving brother, Frank, died, and the family objections seemed to wane. The *Memoir*'s publication sparked immediate public interest and renewed critical appreciation. Virginia Woolf cites one of the most striking assertions that the *Memoir* makes, quoting Austen-Leigh: "I doubt whether it would be possible to mention any other author of note whose personal obscurity was so complete."[23] Through her nephew, we receive a vision of Aunt Jane as a woman who seized on the spare moment to put down her sewing and take up her pen as a private amusement, and who otherwise quietly watched the world go by, paying attention to conversations and manners along the way, a spinster clergyman's daughter. In many ways, this version of Austen did not begin to be challenged until after World War II, and recent biographies have made it clear that, not surprisingly, Austen's life was not quite this uncomplicated.

In a review of Austen-Leigh's biography of his aunt, Richard Simpson presented for the first time the view that Austen has a distinctive ironic voice and moral philosophy. "She is neat, epigrammatic, and incisive, but always a lady; there is no brandy and cayenne in her farrago," wrote Richard Simpson. Simpson's long article dealt with philosophical issues, yet it also ended with this sentence: "Might we not for like reasons borrow from Miss Austen's biographer the title which the affection of a nephew bestows upon her, and recognize her officially as 'dear aunt Jane'?"[24]

In one of the most important post-1870 appreciations of Austen, Henry James echoed Simpson's epithet. In a 1905 essay called "The Lesson of Balzac," James commented on the resuscitation of Austen by a publishing industry that had overlooked her for several decades following her death. Publishers and editors, James wrote, "have found their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear, Jane." He went on to write that Austen's art was "unconscious"; James's Austen has no premeditated artistry.

In 1883, George Routledge published the first inexpensive, popular edition of Austen's novels, with gaudy covers to attract browsers at bookshops. Then Routledge began to issue illustrated versions of the novels in the Sixpenny Novels series. In 1884, Lord Brabourne edited a two-volume edition of Austen's ***Letters*** and dedicated the publication to Queen Victoria.[25] Brabourne was Austen's great-nephew through his mother, Fanny Knight, and he inherited letters from Knight and from Cassandra Austen. There were ninety-four letters in his collection, and their publication followed soon after Fanny Knight's death.

By the late nineteenth century, publishers began to compete for popular editions with well-known illustrators who could render period costumes, and at the same time more ornate editions aimed at bibliophiles began to appear, sometimes in limited releases. These editions needed prefaces as well, so some of the important early critical and scholarly commentaries came in this form, by writers such as Austen Dobson, E. V. Lucas, R. Brimley Johnson, Joseph Jacobs, and George Saintsbury. Writers such as H. G. Wells, William Dean Howells, G. K. Chesterton, E. M. Forster, Thornton Wilder, and Willa Cather commented positively about Austen's contribution to literature and influence on the history of fiction. Mark Twain was an exception to the general accolades Austen's works received; he set himself as an enemy and admitted to feeling an "animal repugnance" for her writing. In a letter from 1898, Twain wrote: "Every time I read '***Pride and Prejudice***' I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shinbone."[26] And Austen began to appear on university syllabi as well. By 1907, when Henry James rated Austen with Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Fielding, her literary stature was secure.

Reginald Ferrar wrote several influential essays in the second decade of the twentieth century. Notably, Ferrar referred to "the Divine Jane" in an article he published on the occasion of the centenary of her death in 1917, in which he seemed to be addressing Janeites. Ferrar wrote:

> When we speak of her as our greatest artist in English fiction we do not mean that she has the loudest mastery of any particular mood, the most clamant voice, the widest gamut of subjects; we mean that she stands supreme and alone among English writers in possession of the secret which so many French ones possess—that is, a most perfect mastery of her weapons, a most faultless and precise adjustment of means to end. She is, in English fiction, as Milton in English poetry, the one completely conscious and almost unerring artist.[27]

Ferrar here comes full circle from Henry James' castigation of Austen's "unconsciousness" in 1883.

Modern Austen Criticism

A landmark in Austen reception occurred when R. W. Chapman published a complete scholarly edition of the novels in 1923 with Oxford University Press.[28] In 1932, Chapman published an edition of Austen's collected let-

ters, and in 1954 his edition of her ***Minor Works,*** including juvenile writings and fragments, appeared.[29] The Chapman editions continue to provide the basis for scholarship, as they serve as the definitive texts of the novels, correcting textual errors and restoring Austen's original volume divisions. At the same time, a complete edition with scholarly apparatus gave Austen's work canonical status in the pantheon of English literature.

The first serious full-length study of Austen as a great writer is Mary Lascelles' 1939 *Jane Austen and Her Art.*[30] Lascelles pointed out the subtlety of the way Austen's social criticism emerged through the consciousness of her characters and examined the art in the apparent simplicity of Austen's prose style and narrative voice. At this point, Austen began to earn her current unshakeable reputation among scholars and popular readers alike as one of the greatest writers in the English language. One important commentator was the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, who proposed that Jane Austen was interested in theoretical problems of human nature and human conduct, and that the consideration of moral dilemmas in her novels amounts to a secular ethics.[31]

D. W. Harding's 1940 article, "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen," represents another turning point in Austen studies in the twentieth century.[32] Harding's thesis remains controversial, and sparked debate. He proposed that what many critics call Austen's satire is actually her way of resolving a dilemma. On the one hand, there are distasteful and difficult people in the world, and on the other hand, one has need of these people for maintaining social decency and respect. Harding views Austen as portraying the "eruption of fear and hatred into the relationships of everyday social life."[33] For Harding, Austen was a writer who found a measured method for expressing her values without risking censure.

Since World War II, the volume and range of Austen criticism has spanned every conceivable approach to literature. As Lionel Trilling put it, writings about Austen are almost as provocative as her work.[34] In fact, it might be possible to claim that the major strain of Austen criticism from the mid-twentieth century onward has been "political" in the broadest sense of that term. That is, critics have wanted to pin down Jane Austen's ideological worldview as either conservative, subversive, or radical. At the same time, much modern criticism continues to take an aesthetic or formalist approach, reading the novels as works of artistic imagination that deploy literary language to enshrine universal truths about human nature, and an underlying appreciation of Austen's artistry founds political readings of her work as well, of course. That the novels are masterpieces of their form is now an assured and established fact, accepted by critics from every approach and every camp of literary interpretation. As Austen criticism is second in quantity perhaps only to Shakespeare criticism, no brief sketch can cover the entire, ever-expanding territory of Austeniana.

Marvin Mudrick, one of the most influential of twentieth-century Austen critics, noted the crucial role of irony as a defining attitude in his 1952 study, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery.*[35] The particularities of Mudrick's readings have been disputed, but not his assertion that irony is central to Austen's art. A decade later, Frank W. Bradbrook took up the proposal made by the important British critic F. R. Leavis in 1948 that Jane Austen was heavily indebted to the novelists who came before her, and therefore she provides a fruitful test case for the nature of originality.[36] Bradbrook examined in Austen what T. S. Eliot has called the relationship of the "individual talent" to literary tradition.[37] Following Leavis and R. W. Chapman, Bradbrook studied Austen's readings in philosophy, journalism, and fiction to understand what had influenced her views about life and her artistic production. Ian Watt also considered Austen's inheritance of eighteenth-century novel conventions, and argued that her strength comes from a fusion of the external techniques of Fielding with the internal psychological understanding of Richardson.[38]

In 1962, a year after Bradbrook's work appeared, Howard S. Babb published a close study of Austen's language use.[39] Babb analyzed Austen's use of dialogue and the way she balances syntax, and he argued that her characters' use of language provides the key to their moral worth. Three years later, A. Walton Litz argued that Austen worked rhetorically and thematically to accommodate the eighteenth-century antitheses she had inherited, such as those between art and nature and reason and feeling (sense and sensibility).[40]

In *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels,* Alistair M. Duckworth proposed that "Jane Austen maintained an ideal conception of society, even as she represented, ironically and critically, her experience of morally corrupt and economically debased behavior." Duckworth reads ***Mansfield Park*** as the centerpiece of Austen's *oeuvre* in that it presents "the estate as an ordered physical structure" that also represents other ordered structures in society, such as inherited values, manners, social systems, and codes of morality. According to Duckworth, whose approach has been placed with that of Marilyn Butler and pigeonholed as politically conservative, the theme of the estate unifies Austen's major work and articulates "an authentic commitment to a social morality and a continuous awareness and exposure of attitudes destructive of social continuity."[41] For Austen, in this view, the individual's ultimate responsibility lies in improving traditional society.

Marilyn Butler's 1975 book, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* and her 1981 study, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1860-1830,* which contains an important section on Austen, also follow a conservative point of view in arguing that Austen championed the individual and was "the gentry's greatest artist" even while engaging in "the controversies of her class and generation."[42] For Butler, Austen was an anti-Jacobin who supported the established social order against the radical ideas of the French Revolution and Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism. Butler was among the first scholars to recognize the political ramifications of Austen's portraits of the domestic sphere of women, and she placed her novels in the context of the Jacobin debates of the 1790s. Butler saw Austen as a counterrevolutionary who believed that the individual should submit to the larger social and moral order and who distrusted Romantic notions of the self.

Later in the 1970s, the conservative view of Austen was challenged by the landmark publication of a book by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar called *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.*[43] Gilbert and Gubar inaugurated the notion that while Austen appeared to hold conservative views, her ironic stance actually disguised a subversive attitude toward the social world in which she lived and, especially, toward the place and treatment of women in that world. This view was given substantive and subtle support by Mary Poovey in 1984; Poovey understood Austen to be offering a critique of the ideologies of marriage and romantic love as regulators of social and sexual life for women.[44] In 1986, Jane Spencer took an intermediate position, placing Austen within a conservative didactic tradition of reformed heroines, but at the same time recognizing that Austen "wants a better status for women within [the established] hierarchy."[45]

Other important feminist work followed. Critics such as Margaret Kirkham, Nancy Armstrong, Claudia Johnson, Alison Sulloway, and Deborah Kaplan published important book-length studies of Austen from varying feminist perspectives.[46] Kirkham presented the view that Austen was a conscious feminist whose "viewpoint on the moral nature and status of women, female education, marriage, authority and the family, and the representation of women in literature is strikingly similar to that shown by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*"[47] Armstrong reads Austen through the lens of historical materialism, analyzing Austen's depiction of the bourgeois marriage market that prescribes heterosexual monogamy and endorses a sexual contract that disempowers women. Johnson argued that Austen belongs to "a largely feminine tradition of political novels" and that it is crucial to consider her sex in understanding her work. In Johnson's view, Austen uses irony in a political way.

Sulloway reads Austen primarily as a satirist, but one who comes to her satirical voice as an outsider and who uses it to channel her anger at women's circumscribed roles. Sulloway wrote that Austen was "a provincial Christian gentlewoman whose contempt for the overt and hidden ethical disjunctions at the heart of all satire politely but obsessively pierces destructive myths and assumptions about her own sex."[48] Kaplan saw Austen as part of a women's culture that needs to be evaluated in its historical context and social circumstances. Although she falls short of being someone we can claim for twenty-first century feminist goals, Austen still represents for Kaplan a figure who may have spoken for the patriarchal values of her gentry class but who also understood the stakes involved in the domestic ideology that she wrote about.

A recent strain of Austen criticism has controversially examined her emphasis on close relationships between women.[49] The suggestion that there might be something "queer" in this emphasis created an outcry of scandal, explained by Claudia Johnson as deriving from "the enormity of Austen's status as a cultural institution" and her "centrality to the canon of British literature."[50] In fact, gender as a factor has simply become a given in recent scholarly and critical work on Austen.[51]

Feminist scholars have been, with Marxists and other historical materialists and cultural critics, among the first to read Austen ideologically, but certainly not the only critics or the last ones to do so. In a comprehensive 1986 study of Austen's work, Tony Tanner examined what he called Austen's "habitual cool irony" and her "wit, ironic reflectiveness and moral intelligence" to argue that she was better informed about and more aware of the main historical events through which she lived than she has been given credit for, and that this awareness comes through in her fiction. "That Jane Austen held many Tory sympathies need hardly be questioned," Tanner wrote, "but it does not follow that her work is uncritical of her society in many profound ways." Indeed, he concluded, "by the end of her work social systems themselves are called in question and found increasingly inadequate to satisfy her heroines' needs."[52]

New historicists and followers of Michel Foucault's approach to cultural studies have also taken up the banner of ideology, but have subordinated gender to class and economics in their readings of Austen's novels. The Marxist scholar Raymond Williams, who insisted that we not idealize rural poverty and country nostalgia, has influenced some interpretations of this sort. Williams wrote this intriguing passage comparing Austen to the

social thinker William Cobbett, who lived during the same period and in the same part of England:

> What [Cobbett] names, riding past on the road, are classes. Jane Austen, from inside the house, can never see that, for all the intricacy of her social description. All her discrimination is, understandably, internal and exclusive.[53]

Cultural historian James Thompson has written that Austen portrays the conflicts between landed property interests and the new values of commodity exchange.[54] Mary Evans published a book with the title *Jane Austen and the State* in 1987 and argued that Austen deplored economic individualism and skewered the world of monetary self-interest that her novels depict.[55]

A 1999 book about Austen's politics contends that Austen has achieved such a mythic stature because she represents something fundamental about English patriotism. Jane Austen, Edward Neill writes, is "one of the great formative and founding influences on how we think about 'England' and 'Englishness'" and has become "something of a Tribal Totem, a prime exhibit in a version of Our Heritage."[56] This argument quarrels with Marilyn Butler about Austen's alleged Burkean Toryism. Julian North puts forth a similar perspective:

> Austen has become something of a conservative icon in popular culture: a canonical author whose life and work signify English national heritage and all that implies of the past as an idyll of village life in a pre-industrial society, of traditional class and gender hierarchies, sexual propriety, and Christian values.[57]

The contemporary British novelist Fay Weldon, author of a novel entitled *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen,*[58] has also weighed in on Austen as an icon of English patriotism and culture in a discussion of recent movie adaptations.

> When we say 'Jane Austen' everyone knows what we're talking about. Austen means class, literature, virginity and family viewing.. . . The clip-clop of horses over cobbles suggests the past, and the past was when jobs were safe, and bouquets flowed, not brickbats.. . . or one could say, with a little more charity, but not much: 'Why we love Jane Austen because she's Heritage'.[59]
>
> Fay Weldon on Jane Austen

Janet Sorenson writes in a similar vein:

> Interested in the experiences of a gentry located in the lush green Home Counties and offering only fleeting impressions of spaces beyond fashionable watering holes and country residences, let alone the country of England, Jane Austen's novels have come to signal to generations of critics and readers the Englishness of England.[60]

The focus on the "Englishness" of Austen's world arguably comes from the writer herself. After all, in ***Emma,*** she has the narrator refer to "English verdure, English culture, English comfort."[61]

The controversy over the offstage events beyond England in ***Mansfield Park***—the Bertram sugar plantation holdings in Antigua that take Sir Thomas and Tom Bertram away from the central plot for so many pages—focuses on the flip side of Austen's Englishness. The historical and Marxist strands of Austen criticism have put economics on center stage. In particular, critics have raised the question of the effects of British colonial imperialism on Austen's perspective. Palestinian activist and literary critic Edward Said famously put forward this analysis in a reading of ***Mansfield Park,*** the novel around which the colonial allegations swirl. (***Mansfield Park*** has taken its place with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a core text of English colonialism.) According to Said, Austen's moral philosophy cannot be separated from the economic substrate which shores it up materially: "[R]ight up to the last sentence," Said wrote, "Austen affirms and repeats the geographical process of expansion involving trade, production, and consumption that predates, underlies, and guarantees the morality."[62]

This global, postcolonial approach to Austen studies characterizes a major strain of recent Austen criticism influenced by the work of Said and cultural theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This criticism claims, as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan phrases it, that "[r]eading Austen postcolonially is not one critical 'approach' among others, uniquely propagated by 'postcolonial' critics, but rather, an inescapable historical imperative in our times."[63] This argument looks at the particular geographical world of European expansion and commerce and sees Austen's country village worlds as representations of a certain type of Western power in a world dominated by imperialism. Raymond Williams inaugurated this approach when he situated Austen with the journalist William Cobbett and the naturalist Gilbert White as residents of Hampshire and Surrey and proposed that Austen provides us with a "social history of the landed families."[64]

It is also plausible to say that Austen portrays only a carefully selected subset of English people, those in the "middling" classes. Servants and the poor do not find their portraits in Austen's fiction, even though this was the period in which class distinctions began to blur. Austen's gentry class, from the struggling to the aristocratic, seems to represent the heart of a broader national experience. "Austen's focus on the domestic does not make her novels apolitical," writes critic Barbara K. Seeber, "for it is precisely the private matters that were the site of the ideological battles of the times."[65]

It is difficult to find any consensus in political readings of Austen. If Marilyn Butler sees her as a crusty antifeminist and staunch conservative who disliked romantic individualism, Alison Sulloway allows her to be "as insurrectionary as Mary Wollstonecraft" and Mary

Poovey and Claudia Johnson try to find a middle ground between the two in which Austen can be viewed as a careful progressive. It may even be that this plethora of approaches and views adds to Austen's immense popularity by letting readers choose for themselves in what vein to read her work.[66]

So the question posed by critics who give pride of place to economics and politics is this: Did Austen champion the old order of gentry tradition, or did she recognize the social instabilities of the new order and the precarious place of women during this period of turbulent socioeconomic change? Was she a nationalistic Church of England Tory, or a progressive egalitarian feminist? One argument that all sides might agree upon is that for Austen, the personal is never isolated from the social. We become who we are in relationship and connectedness to others and to a larger social fabric that defines our choices and our options.

Notes

1. R. W. Chapman reprints the "Biographical Notice" in Volume V of *The Novels of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 6, 8.
2. Letter 146 to James Edward Austen, 16-17 December 1816. *Jane Austen's Letters,* New Edition, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 323.
3. "Biographical Notice," p. 8.
4. For general accounts of the history of Austen readership and criticism, see the introduction to *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) and Southam's "Janeites and Anti-Janeites," in *The Jane Austen Companion,* ed. J. David Grey, A. Walton Litz, and Brian Southam (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 237-43; Juliet McMaster, "Jane Austen as a Cultural Phenomenon," in her *Jane Austen the Novelist: Essays Past and Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 3-17; Claudia Johnson, "The Divine Jane Austen: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies," *boundary* 2.23 (1996) and reprinted in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees,* ed. Deirdre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 25-44; Laura Mooneyham White, "Introduction," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen,* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), pp. 1-12; Barbara K. Seeber, "Introduction: 'Directly opposite notions': Critical Disputes," in *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), pp. 3-17.
5. R. W. Chapman, *Jane Austen: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 161.
6. Jane Austen, *Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others,* two vols., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932). *Volume the First,* ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), *Volume the Second,* ed. B. C. Southam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), and *Volume the Third,* ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).
7. *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.106 (Scott) and p. 126 (C. Brontë); Henry James, "The Lessons of Balzac," in *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel,* ed. Leon Edel (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1957), pp. 61-63. James' essay first appeared in 1905.
8. Cited in "Introduction," *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Ian Watt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 7. B. C. Southam discusses Twain's antipathy in the "Introduction" to his *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 74-75. The 1898 letter sentiment is cited in ibid., p. 232.
9. Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites," in *Debits and Credits,* ed. Sandra Kemp (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 99-128. Many scholars have noted that Austen novels were often prescribed to World War I veterans who suffered from shell shock.
10. Ibid., pp. 132; 146.
11. Katherine Mansfield, *Novels and Novelists,* ed. J. Middleton Murray (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 302.
12. Cited by Southam in the "Introduction" to *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 3.
13. Unsigned review by Thomas Henry Lister in the *Edinburgh Review* (July 1830), in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 113-114.
14. Extract from Longfellow's journal entry of March 23, 1839. Ibid., p. 117.
15. From an article on Frances Burney in the *Edinburgh Review* (January 1843). Ibid., p. 122.
16. From an unsigned review in *Fraser's Magazine* (December 1847). Ibid., p. 124.
17. Ibid., p. 126.
18. Cited by John Lauber, *Jane Austen* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. 123.
19. Cited by B. C. Southam in the "Introduction" to *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C.

Southam, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 28.

20. From an unsigned review of Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* in *North British Review* (April 1870). Ibid., pp. 241-265.

21. *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1st ed., London, 1870; 2nd ed., enlarged, London, 1871); ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926). A second expanded edition appeared in 1871, accompanied by the most important of the unpublished manuscripts: *Lady Susan, The Watsons,* and parts of *Sanditon* as well as the cancelled chapter from *Persuasion* and some letters.

22. From an unsigned article in *St. Paul's Magazine* (March 1870); R. W. Chapman supposed that novelist Anthony Trollope might have been the reviewer, but B. C. Southam disagrees. *The Critical Heritage,* op. cit., p. 237.

23. From a 1923 review of the five-volume Oxford edition of *Jane Austen's Works,* reprinted in *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), p. 182.

24. Ibid., p. 265.

25. Edward Brabourne, 1st Lord, *Letters of Jane Austen,* 2 vols. (London, 1884).

26. B. C. Southam discusses Twain's antipathy in the "Introduction" to his *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987): 74-75. The 1898 letter sentiment is cited in ibid., p. 232.

27. From "Jane Austen, ob. July 18, 1817," *Quarterly Review* (July 1917). Rpt. in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage,* ed. B. C. Southam, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987): 250.

28. The first edition of R. W. Chapman's *The Novels of Jane Austen* was published by Oxford University Press in 1923 in five volumes. Volume I contains *Sense and Sensibility,* Volume II *Pride and Prejudice,* Volume III *Mansfield Park,* Volume IV *Emma,* and Volume V *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion.* A second edition appeared in 1926 and a third in 1933. The set was subsequently reprinted in 1940, 1944, 1946, 1949, 1952, 1959, 1965 (with revisions), 1967, 1971, 1973, 1976, and 1982. In 1954, Chapman published Volume VI, *Minor Works,* which contains the Juvenilia, *Lady Susan,* the unfinished novels *The Watsons* and *Sanditon,* the *Plan of a Novel,* Austen's gathering of opinions of *Mansfield Park* and *Emma,* and Austen's extant poetry and prayers.

29. *The Works of Jane Austen,* Volume VI, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

30. Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (1939; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

31. Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen,* ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968): 118.

32. *Scrutiny* 8 (March 1940): 346-362. Reprinted in *Critics on Jane Austen,* ed. Judith O'Neill (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970): 42-49.

33. Ibid., 45.

34. Lionel Trilling, "*Emma* and the Legend of Jane Austen," written as the "Introduction" to the Riverside edition of *Emma* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957) and reprinted in Trilling's *Beyond Culture* (New York: Viking, 1968).

35. Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

36. F. R. Leavis made his claim in *The Great Tradition* (London, 1948), 5.

37. Frank W. Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Predecessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961). T. S. Eliot's influential essay is called "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and was published in a collection of his essays, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920).

38. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977): 338. For a more recent discussion of Austen's literary forbears and their influence on her work, see Jo Alyson Parker, *The Author's Inheritance: Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, and the Establishment of the Novel* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998). Parker connects Austen's focus on the inheritance plot with her effort to claim a literary inheritance, and thus literary authority, for herself.

39. Howard S. Babb, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962).

40. A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965).

41. Alistair M. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971). Duckworth's book was reissued in 1994 in paper with a new introduction that illuminatingly reviews the criticism subsequent to its first publication. Quotations come from the 1994 edition: xv, xxix.

42. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1860-1830* (1981; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 99, 98. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

43. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

44. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

45. Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 169. Both Spencer and Dale Spender, in *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora Press, 1986), place Austen squarely within a tradition of women's writing.

46. Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Alison G. Sulloway, *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Deborah Kaplan, *Jane Austen Among Women* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

47. Kirkham, op.cit., xi.

48. Sulloway, op.cit., xvii.

49. See the chapter on *Sense and Sensibility* in George E. Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections: Women and Fiction in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) and the chapter on *Emma* in Lisa L. Moore, *Dangerous Intimacies: Toward a Sapphic History of the British Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

50. The controversy over Austen and lesbianism erupted when a review by Terry Castle of Deirdre Le Faye's edition of Austen's letters was headlined by editors with the title "Sister-Sister" in the *London Review of Books*, 3 August 1995, 3-6. Castle mildly and judiciously raised the issue of a homosocial and homoerotic dimension in Austen's depictions of female friendship, especially that between sisters such as Elinor and Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. A great brouhaha ensued, and the letters, with Castle's response, were published in the next issue, on 24 August 1995. Even *Time* magazine reported on what they called this "kerfuffle" (4 September 1995). Claudia L. Johnson offers a useful discussion of this incident, which really amounted to a scandal, in "The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deirdre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 25-44; the quotation appears on p. 27.

51. A useful collection of feminist essays on Austen's work reflects the legacy of these early feminist readings: *Jane Austen and Discourse of Feminism*, ed. Devoney Looser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

52. Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (London: Macmillan, 1986): 1, 9, 5, 11.

53. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973): 117.

54. James Thompson, *Between Self and World: The Novels of Jane Austen* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981). See also Beth Fowkes Tobin, who understands Austen to respond in her works to her contradictory circumstances by depicting property ownership as a virtue and commerce as a sign of corruption in "The Moral and Political Economy of Property in Jane Austen's *Emma*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2 (April 1990): 229-54; Terry Lovell, "Jane Austen and Gentry Society," in *Literature, Society, and the Sociology of Literature*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1977); and Judith Weissman's chapter on Austen in *Half Savage and Hardy and Free: Women and Rural Radicalism in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

55. Mary Evans, *Jane Austen and the State* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987).

56. Edward Neill, *The Politics of Jane Austen* (London: Macmillan, 1999): ix, 1.

57. Julian North, "Conservative Austen, Radical Austen: *Sense and Sensibility* from Text to Screen," in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelchan (London: Routledge, 1999): 38.

58. Fay Weldon, *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* (c. 1984; New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1985). This book concerns the nature of fictional worlds, with Jane Austen serving as a touchstone for the discussion.

59. Fay Weldon, "Star of Stage and Screen," *Guardian* 2, 12 April 1995, 2.

60. Janet Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 197.

61. *The Novels of Jane Austen,* Vol. IV, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 360.

62. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993): 92-93. Moira Ferguson offers another postcolonial analysis of *Mansfield Park* in "*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen,* ed. Laura Mooneyham White (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998): 103-20. White's "Introduction" to this volume usefully reviews critical approaches to Jane Austen's work (1-12). Many of the essays in *The Postcolonial Jane Austen,* ed. You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge, 2000) offer readings of *Mansfield Park* from a global economic perspective.

63. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, "Austen in the World: Postcolonial Mappings," in *The Postcolonial Jane Austen,* ed. Rajan and Park, op. cit., 3.

64. Williams, *The Country and the City,* op. cit., 113.

65. Barbara K. Seeber, *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000): 5.

66. This appealing view is presented by Christopher Clausen in "Jane Austen Changes Her Mind," *The American Scholar* 68.2 (Spring 1999): 90. Clausen goes on to argue that *Persuasion* represents a distinct shift away from the claustrophobic world of the landed gentry and offers a new and riskier approach to the world.

Additional coverage of Austen's life and career is contained in the following sources published by the Gale Group: *Authors and Artists for Young Adults,* Vol. 19; *Concise Dictionary of British Literary Biography, 1789-1832; Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vol. 116; *DISCovering Authors; DISCovering Authors: British; DISCovering Authors: Canadian; DISCovering Authors: Modules, Most-studied Authors and Novelists; DISCovering Authors 3.0; Novels for Students,* Vol. 1; *World Literature Criticism.*